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Scottish Book Trust  
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bringing people and books together

James Boyle, Chair  
The Cultural Commission for Scotland  
Broughton High School  
1 Carrington Road  
Edinburgh  
EH4 1EG

08.03.05

Dear James

As requested, the Literature Group has reviewed and reconsidered literature in relation to the work of the Commission. It has proved almost impossible to convene a new set of meetings but I have consulted with the group members by email, phone and face to face.

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Scottish Book Trust?

The consensus is firmly behind the Literature Forum's original submission both in terms of the broad introductory themes (with their potential to engage with all of Scotland's citizens/consumers) and the Literature Scotland organisation, whether free-standing or as a distinctive part of a new integrated NGO structure.

Our central points remain - the need for visibility and clarity for literature. In addition, while relating creatively to an arts sectoral body, Literature Scotland needs also to deal in its own right with **libraries, languages** and **education** in strategic and coherent ways. The combinations are important and distinctive.

I attach the Literature Forum's detailed submission for the Commission's final deliberations. I also enclose a copy of the Demos/Scottish Book Trust *Scotland 2020* publication. I hope you will agree that it provides much food for thought in terms of the work of the Commission and Scotland's future.

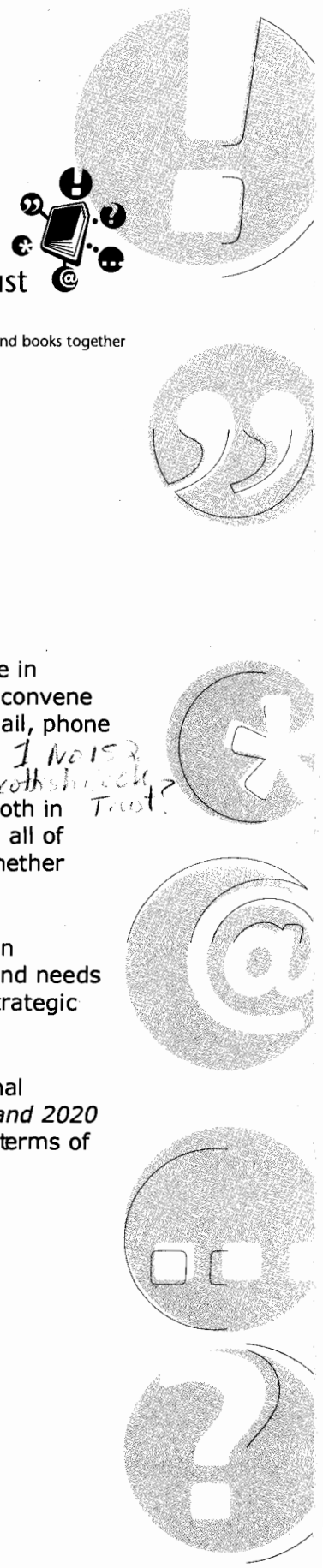
Thank you for giving us this further opportunity for constructive dialogue.

With best wishes

*Marc*

Marc Lambert

Ceo



# LITERATURE FORUM FOR SCOTLAND

## Scottish Executive Review

### Literature Scotland

"To place literature at the heart of every community in Scotland"

*Literature, Nation*

#### Introduction

Literature is the creative use of language, the foundation of thought and the focus of imaginative expression. It gives coherence to the arts and languages of Scotland and influences the whole of society through literacy and education. These, in turn, underpin democracy, enabling constructive argument and informed choice. Literature has the widest reach of any artform.

Scotland has a distinguished place in the pantheon of world literature through its poets, novelists, philosophers, screenwriters, playwrights, storytellers, songmakers, scientists, historians and biographers. It also has an unrivalled asset in its committed readers and listeners, and an enormous reservoir of public interest. In the globalised world Scotland is the kind of society in which creativity, access and excellence can spark off each other and encourage writing and learning of the highest quality to flourish.

#### Scenario

No area of culture has contributed so much as literature to Scotland's identity nationally and internationally. But, at a decisive turning point in Scotland's story, it is vital that we have a framework for the future.

The Literature Forum for Scotland proposes a scenario that places literature at the centre of our cultural endeavour with the highest possible profile. We further propose that our writers be offered an honoured place in new institutional support structures that are visible to all. We also urge targeted sustainable investment in literature commensurate with the potential returns in social, creative and economic terms, rather than the conventional supposition that, because literature in Scotland is successful, it requires limited support.

#### Literature Scotland

Scottish literature needs

- a designated advocate and champion
- a lead agency that utilises the best in our existing infrastructure and proactively researches, pilots and supports new initiatives
- a coherent support structure for writers in all media, publishing, readership and literature in education
- an international ambassador commanding institutional status and respect.

The Literature Forum is warmly appreciative of the support given to literature by the Scottish Arts Council. The *Literature, Nation* strategy, developed jointly by the Council and the Literature Forum in 2001–02, remains a constructive benchmark, while recent work undertaken by the Literature Department has highlighted the strong links between writing and the creative industries.

However, the Literature Forum believes that the present position does not adequately reflect the importance of literature or provide the basis for capitalising on literature's potential for Scotland. This is because:

- (a) the general public, the schools and many politicians do not realise that literature is included in the catch-all term "the arts". Even many writers do not understand the present arrangements.
- (b) Scottish Arts Council support for literature has never risen above 4.5% of its core budget. This is historically based on perceived need vis-à-vis relative costs rather than an analysis of investment return or public benefit.
- (c) literature has a different set of social and cultural interactions from the other artforms. This was recognised in the traditional distinction between "arts" and "letters" but is obscured within the present structures. For example, literature's educational contribution to literacy and language is fundamentally different in its curricular impact from that of the visual or performing arts.
- (d) writers have had only a minimal role in the structures of the Scottish Arts Council
- (e) the multi-arts remit of the Scottish Arts Council does not assist clear definition and promotion of Scottish literature internationally. The profile in web terms, for example, is low.

The Literature Forum therefore submits that a distinctive organisation, Literature Scotland, be established to take forward these five vital functions for literature:

- advocacy
- funding and coordination
- development and innovation
- honour and recognition
- international ambassadorship.

Literature Scotland would contain a tight-knit development unit working in close co-operation with existing literature organisations to monitor funding and research and ensure economies of scale and efficiency. It would also include a representative Literature Council to formulate policy and honour achievement. Finally, Literature Scotland would create a promotional strategy to ensure that excellence and access advance together.

Literature Scotland would be an authoritative voice because it would represent all the different facets of literature, working with active practitioners to support

creative talent and to ensure maximum social exposure to and benefits from literature.

Literature Scotland would play a full part in the overall strategic frameworks the Scottish Executive develops for culture, and maximise the ability of literature to deliver benefits across a range of policy objectives and departmental functions. Whether Literature Scotland were a non-governmental organisation in its own right, or a publicly supported lead literature organisation, it would be a distinctive recognition of the central importance of literature to Scotland's heritage, its contemporary culture and its educational attainments. A recognised lead agency for literature would address Scottish needs and opportunities in a way that is comprehensible to and compatible with governmental structures across the world.

### **Structure and Function**

Following consultation with the national literature organisations, agreement has been reached to lay out in practical terms the kind of structure and functions that an integrated literature agency would require and the benefits that would accrue.

- (a) *Governance:* Literature Scotland would be governed by an Executive Committee advised by a representative Literature Council with whom consultation on all matters of policy and strategy would be required. The Executive Committee would be appointed through public advertisement and interview, subject to ministerial approval if required. The Literature Council would be a much larger forum made up of 50% representatives from literature organisations, local authorities, education and broadcasting, and 50% writers. Some writers would represent established writers' organisations, but the majority would be elected by a constituency made up of all those eligible for public support through the register of Live Literature Scotland.
- (b) *Function:* Literature Scotland would have five main areas of activity
  - (i) Strategy, Funding and International Relations (Director's Unit)
  - (ii) Marketing, Readership and Media Relations
  - (iii) Publishing / Creative Industries and Translation
  - (iv) Literature in Education
  - (v) Writer Support and Development

Qualified and experienced staff members would work in each of these areas, facilitating consultation and advising the Executive Committee on implementation. The Director of Literature Scotland would have the key remit of strategic coordination, including the international advocacy common to all areas of the organisation's work.

- (c) *Structures:* In order to implement integrated strategies, Literature Scotland staff and working groups would liaise closely with the key national literature organisations. Analysis and consultation will enable a restructuring and integration of current organisational structures to deliver efficiency and

coherence by identifying those things that are best achieved collectively and those in which a specified external organisation should take the lead.

- (d) *Honour and Recognition:* Within Literature Scotland the Literature Council would play the lead role in honouring literary achievement and in creating literary ambassadors for Scotland.

### **Benefits**

The benefits of this reforming initiative would be

1. strategic coherence
2. access to literature in all parts of Scotland and in all sectors of society
3. better return for public investment
4. increased international profile
5. better support structures for writers in Scotland
6. improved service to education
7. attraction of greater resources from public and private sources
8. maximisation of public participation
9. a clear platform for strategic partnerships and future development.
10. creative confidence.

The Literature Forum for Scotland believes that this plan offers a comprehensive, practical and forward looking realisation of the culture objectives outlined in the First Minister's landmark St Andrew's Day speech.

### **Membership of the Literature Forum for Scotland**

The Literature Forum for Scotland was set up in 2000 to advance the cause of literature in Scotland through a fully representative forum.

The Association of Literary Magazines in Scotland

The Association for Scottish Literary Studies

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland

Edinburgh International Book Festival

The Gaelic Books Council

International PEN Scottish Centre

Moniack Mhor Ltd

National Library of Scotland

National Readership Development Officer

Scottish Book Trust

Scottish Poetry Library

Scottish Publishers Association

Scottish Society of Playwrights

Scottish Storytelling Centre and Forum

The Society of Authors in Scotland

University of Glasgow: The Edwin Morgan Creative Writing Centre

Writers Guild of Great Britain

Representative for Scottish booksellers