

Cultural Commission – Stakeholder Consultation: Phase 2
Pan-sectoral questions

Rights, entitlements and responsibilities

Should cultural rights be enshrined in law?

Laws in themselves can stifle and restrict and our tendency to over-legislate will eventually cripple freedom of expression, creativity and innovation in many areas.

However, there does need to be a provision to ensure that children are 'brought up' with culture as soon as they enter the education system. If culture is embedded properly from an early age, future generations will naturally use their cultural skills in all areas of their lives. If children are engaged, then, in an ideal world, legislation out-with the education system should not be necessary.

Should cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities reflect or link to other areas of social policy, such as inclusion or social justice and, if so, how?

Ref. previous question. If culture is embedded at the earliest opportunity and children are taught to use it for problem-solving, idea generation, etc, etc, then there will be an automatic shift towards the use of arts and culture in such areas as social inclusion. A whole new culture in the education system, could eventually lead to a natural tendency to draw on cultural experience in all other areas of society. However, again referring to the previous question, if linking culture to social policy means more legislation rather than proper education, this could lead to negative effects such as 'box-ticking' for the sake of it.

Cultural leadership

What role should the private and commercial sectors play in the cultural leadership of Scotland?

Cultural leadership should be a shared responsibility – all sectors (education, local government, national government, arts organisations, private enterprise, etc) should be involved. Apart from the obvious way forward of a leadership committee made up of representatives from all these areas, leadership in the commercial sector can be demonstrated by iconic companies - for example, extensive use of arts and culture as problem-solving, idea generation tools.

Companies could establish contracts with local arts organisations to deliver specific training needs. The impact of learning from the arts would mean greater retention of messages for company employees and the setting up of contracts would mean income for arts/cultural organisations.

Demonstrating leadership can only happen if the appropriate communication channels are available and the media could play a huge role here.

Funding arrangements

How can we simplify and streamline the process for both organisations seeking funding from national agencies and for organisations seeking funding from local authorities?

From a corporate point of view, the answer to this particular question seems quite simple. For years companies have been working to specific guidelines on donations and in many instances, these guidelines are made public. Any organisation approaching Diageo for funding is made aware of the criteria it must meet for a successful funding application. In the event of failure, the reasons are also disclosed to the organisation.

Guidelines/criteria should be drawn up and published along with the process through which organisations must navigate in order to apply for funds. This process also needs to be simple. Agencies and authorities should also ensure that there is a human point of contact for enquiries for organisations about to embark on a funding application.

It is imperative that these processes are simple and the outcomes transparent. All too often, cultural organisations fall at the first hurdle because they don't have the appropriate administrative person who is an expert in form-filling and wading through impossible guidelines.

How can we demonstrate prudent and effective use of public money whilst allowing funded organisations greater, and arguably more appropriate, financial autonomy?

The transparency word comes in here again. Bodies awarding funds need to be more accountable for their decisions and well-constructed guidelines are once again the key.

All too often, cultural organisations do not have the financial resource to enable them to strive effectively towards autonomy. Funding bodies could provide an advisory service to encourage organisations to maximise their potential – ie. not just rely on funding applications, but have a proactive business plan which demonstrates a positive move towards more activities that generate income.

Standards and evaluation

What standards of outcome, output, process and governance is it appropriate for a funding body to impose on a recipient of funding?

The only acceptable standards are those that have been formally agreed between the two parties at the outset. It is unreasonable to expect that the same standards can apply to all organisations and if we are to embed culture in our society, then there has to be flexibility to cater for each different cultural organisation, its aims and the benefits to our society. A one-size fits all cannot work with the diverse range of organisations in Scotland.

What sanctions should a funding body have against a funded organisation that does not meet the required standards and what rights of appeal should funded organisations have if they feel they have been incorrectly or unfairly adjudged to have not met the standards defined by their funders?

In Diageo, when we agree funding, we do so for a set period of time (usually three years). Funding is released on an annual basis at which point there is also a review. If the project has deviated from its original plan, the annual review is the time to address this. By proper face-to-face communication, difficulties can be ironed out, or the parties can take the decision to discontinue with the funding partnership. In addition to the annual review, we have open dialogue with all our partners.

If proper objectives and milestones are agreed, written down and signed at the outset and constructive dialogue takes place throughout the partnership, then the incidences of failure to meet standards are reduced and also, in the event that funding is withdrawn, the cultural organisation concerned will have a proper understanding as to the reasons why, thereby reducing the need for appeal.

In an ideal world, if this communication process is adhered to, there should be no appeals. However there does have to be an appeals process, although it should be considered that appeals could be invalid if the funder has met with silence when trying to initiate the communication process.

Operations and administration

Is there an opportunity to introduce a more co-ordinated management of cultural property, particularly given the problems experienced by many cultural organisations with listed and/or high-maintenance buildings?

If the Scottish Parliament is serious about culture, then public buildings that are listed, should be owned by the authorities. In recent years, the trend of donating high-maintenance, listed buildings to cultural organisations along with the huge expense of running them, has proved to be a drain on many an organisation and in some cases has resulted in the complete winding up of a cultural group. Too much time is spent on conforming to the legislative restrictions of listed buildings and too much money on items such as sourcing a specific paint finish, etc. These activities are a drain on the organisations concerned and take their valuable people and financial resources away from the 'day job'.

Local authorities should be given the budget to take back and maintain these buildings properly (in most cases, they are after all part of Scotland's heritage), and offer incentive rent schemes to local arts/cultural organisations.

Local authorities

What is the justification and practicality of insisting that local authorities 'ring-fence' resources for cultural provision?

I've covered this one above in two ways: financial resource should be set aside to maintain our listed buildings to take the burden off the cultural organisations occupying them. Financial and people resource is required to bolster our cultural agenda within the education system. Education should be the subject of a national standard and funds made available on a per capita basis.

Regional bodies

Is there a need for a regional aspect to cultural planning and/or the delivery of cultural services and/or the management of cultural resources?

There would need to be a guarantee that the regional body is not just another expensive layer of bureaucracy. If communication lines between national and local are open and clearly and simply defined, then I would seriously question the need for another layer.

National

What should the designation 'national' mean and what criteria should be applied when awarding a company national status?

National should purely and simply mean access to anyone in Scotland, no matter where they live.

Cross-cutting

How should the cultural sector as a whole seek and arrange suitable mutually beneficial partnership with other areas of government (education, sport, tourism, etc.)?

As already noted above, culture should be rooted in our education system, so that the cultural sector is not so much a partner with the education sector, but actually part of the sector. As mentioned in the very first question, the provision of culture in education should be the only part that is legislated.

As generations, that have had the benefit of a cultural 'up-bringing' in our educational institutions, evolve, there will be a natural tendency towards partnerships within the sports and tourism sectors as there will be a mutual understanding of what culture means to society.

Our children are our opportunity and we need to be brave about the changes required in our education system to nurture a truly cultural society.