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From: Peter McOwat [jill@mcowatp.freemove.co.uk]
Sent: 30 November 2004 11:43
To: info
Subject: Consultation[Scanned]

Dear Mr Boyle,

The great gap in Scotland's cultural heritage at present is the lack of any significant celebration or public understanding of our industrial culture.

It is not possible to understand the Scottish character and way of life without taking into account the 200 year dominance of Scotland by the engineering and shipbuilding innovations and industries.

This is an area where it is easy to engage the Scottish public because, only a few generations ago, a major part of the population depended on engineering, shipping and shipbuilding for their livelihood, and many now have family stories which give them a latent interest. An emigrant who sailed on a Clyde ship, or a neighbour of the family who worked in the steelworks, a cabinet maker who made furniture for the ocean liners etc. etc. provide an immediate personal link to the last 100 years. In addition, the stories of heroism, skulduggery, creativity and genius are fascinating at many levels. In the 19th century, Scotland's engineering was essential to Britain's world domination (for better or worse!) and this still has a major influence on where we live and how we live.

There is tremendous potential for tourism in presenting this aspect of our history since this is how we are remembered in many countries of the world and their prosperity has grown out of our developments. James Watt transformed the world and all electrical goods throughout the world have his name on them, but if a visitor asks where they may see a presentation of him and his work we can only say, "We don't do that sort of thing here. You could try Birmingham, London or Cornwall." Engineer Glover's house in Nagasaki is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Japan but he is scarcely remembered here.

In particular, shipbuilding, shipping and engineering are not celebrated. There are some interesting exhibits in the National Museums, but they are very limited and there is no sense of the excitement which they should generate. The Scottish Maritime Museum in Irvine, with the Denny test tank in Dumbarton, have artefacts of world-wide importance, but have not enough money even to stop them deteriorating. Even so, although this museum has no budget for publicity it receives a constant flow of requests for information from around the world. The Clyde Built museum at Braehead is very small but gives a hint of the possibilities of a modern presentation.

The Glasgow Transport Museum is the nearest thing to a worthwhile Scottish Engineering Museum and if the plans for a new building come to fruition, this could be a significant step forward. However, at present it is limited to "Transport" and so could not include Watt, other major Scottish pioneers, or sectors such as electronics. If it were possible to expand the proposal to cover a general Scottish technological remit, this museum could form the basis of a major facility. However, this would require extra funding, and it is my understanding that the relevant museums groups and Glasgow Corporation would be unlikely to be able to cooperate to the required extent.

For Scotland to gain the full benefit from this rich heritage it is necessary to have an exciting new

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building with modern hands-on displays and technology. Since this puts it beyond the scope of any local authority it is essential that the Scottish Executive should take responsibility for bringing together the funding. It might be considered that the expenditure of large amounts of money on what could be represented initially as a minority interest is a major challenge. However this was done very successfully in the case of the two Museums of Modern Art and this would be easier to promote since it would be much more socially inclusive and have greater tourist potential. With exciting presentation and putting the great inventions in context we would have an institution of world wide importance which would generate pride in this essential area of Scottish history.

The Museum of Country Life appears to have been put together successfully using the current organisational arrangements so presumably a "Scottish Technology Museum" (or whatever) could also be achieved without any major reorganisation.

Without this museum we are losing the opportunity to create a major tourist attraction, to enhance Scotland's international reputation, and to educate and entertain Scots about a part of their inheritance which influenced their families for over 200 years.

There is some urgency in beginning this project because artefacts are being continually destroyed, and even more important, people with important memories are dying so the information is being lost to us.

Your review gives the opportunity to recognise the great importance of this neglected area of Scotland's culture and to put it on a par with the more generally recognised themes. I hope you will be able put forward positive proposals so that the potential benefits to Scotland can be realised.

Kind Regards,

Peter McOwat.

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16/12/2004