



Royal Mail Group

CULTURAL COMMISSION – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION: PHASE 2 PAN-SECTORAL QUESTIONS

Introduction

1. Royal Mail Group is the holding group – for its three businesses – Royal Mail, Post Office Limited and Parcelforce Worldwide. Royal Mail is involved in every community across the whole of Scotland, either by delivering mail, providing post office services or delivering express parcels through Parcelforce Worldwide.

Royal Mail Group has a Scottish operation employing 14,500 people across the country. Royal Mail delivers the Universal Service Obligation to 2.5 million Scottish addresses and Post Office Limited runs 1770 post offices in Scotland. The Group also has an external relations operation, which is involved in all aspects of external relations work in the country.

2. Royal Mail Group has welcomed the establishment of the Cultural Commission. Royal Mail Group believes that a vibrant cultural life is central to the wellbeing of Scots and Scotland. In general, we welcome the Commission's move to look at so-called 'pan-sectoral' questions; the need to tie the arts agenda into wider public policy goals and to be able to deliver Scotland-wide outcomes is apparent. The contribution of arts and culture to ensuring Scotland's competitiveness requires the development of a coherent and unified vision and associated objectives.
3. The following comments do not attempt to cover all the points raised. Rather, we have taken the list of questions raised by the Commission and addressed those of particular relevance to our organisation.

Questions on Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities

"1. How should cultural rights and accompanying entitlements and responsibilities be used to develop both cultural policy and appropriate standards for the provision/delivery of culture in Scotland?"

"2. Should cultural rights be enshrined in law?"

"4. Who should have guardianship over cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities and how should they exercise their authority, particularly in relation to non-conformance?"

“5. Who should have responsibility for the review and potential amendment of cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities and how should this process be conducted?”

4. In the submission, some organisations expressed strong reservations about using the notion of ‘cultural rights’ as a substantive starting point. It is our view that talking about ‘cultural rights’ has rhetorical value to the degree that it establishes a platform on which to base practical decisions and programmes of action. This would be especially true if the interpretation of cultural rights were to be indexed to broader policy outcomes expressed in terms of citizens’ well-being and Scottish competitiveness. Cultural rights and entitlements are a part of outlining a vision of cultural policy and administration but ought not to be viewed as ends in themselves.
5. Royal Mail Group is concerned that the scepticism about ‘cultural rights’ becoming an overblown concept is not reflected in the second phase of the consultation process or, for that matter, the Commission’s Interim Report. We would be very disappointed to see the enshrining of what is at best a rhetorical catalyst in legislation. It is hard – perhaps impossible – to see how an individual who felt they had been denied their cultural right could take action against a transgressor. For this reason, Royal Mail argues previously that the focus of the Commission’s work should be the identification of those experiences, which would most benefit individuals and communities and consider how they could best be delivered.
6. Similarly, we would rather decisions were taken according to criteria related to the delivery of these key experiences than separate consideration was given to the policing of ‘cultural rights’. The question as to who should set these basic standards of cultural provision, and how, is dealt with in the section on cultural leadership below. Where certain outcomes are expected of public sector bodies these can be factored into existing and future auditing and monitoring procedures; establishing clear objectives for publicly funded work would mean that funding decisions could be used to determine outcomes.

“3. 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?”

7. Yes. There should be continuity between the high-level rhetoric and the on-the-ground language which is used in grant applications and for deciding which projects and organisations are funded. This should not prejudice the fact that much funding for bodies involved in the arts comes from ‘other’ sources (e.g. under criminal justice or health spend) and any move to incorporate other priorities more closely should take account of this.
8. The link between cultural policy and national and regional competitiveness should not be forgotten. From the work of Prof. Richard Florida’s work on ‘creative communities’ to the hard figures associated with particular developments such as Eden Court Theatre’s contribution to the economic success of Inverness, the need to recognise the links between culture and economic development should be made apparent.

Questions about Cultural Leadership

“6. A number of stakeholders have bemoaned the lack of cultural leadership in Scotland but what sort of cultural leadership is actually required?”

7. What role should the Scottish Executive play in cultural leadership, how should it interface with the cultural sector and what influence should it have, if any, over cultural policies and priorities?”

9. The value of an organisation at arm's length from Government, which is able to take a strategic role in cultural provision at both a national and a regional level, and across sectors, is crucial. Such an organisation would be able to gather together the expertise and exercise the independence which would allow it to offer informed advice on the setting of standards for, and delivery of, cultural provision. This organisation would obviously need to engage with a wide cross-section of the artistic and cultural scene and Scottish society in setting any minimum standards.
10. As part of this engagement any body with lead responsibility would clearly have to make arrangements for taking account of sectoral and regional diversity across Scotland. RM's view is that the regional perspective should be reflected from within the one body with overall strategic responsibility; any model which reflected regional or sectoral interests in a way that led to duplication or hindered effective planning across Scotland would be undesirable.
11. Although it is important that this organisation is constructed in such a way as to provide expert and robust advice about cultural policy, its role is such that it must, of course, remain accountable to Scottish Ministers. In particular, the Cabinet Minister responsible for Culture must remain responsible – and accountable for – cultural policy. We also believe that it is important for the public and Scots in general to be able to associate Culture with a leader who would be seen as leading from the front, who is supported by an team and organisation that is able to harness the support of Scotland in culture policy and interest in this topic at all levels.

“12. What role should the private and commercial sectors play in the cultural leadership of Scotland?”

12. One of Royal Mail Group's key corporate social objectives is to be an active and significant supporter of artistic and cultural life and events in Scotland, which are linked to key objectives such as literacy. However, across the business community as a whole, there is sometimes a feeling that arts bodies do not always take sufficient account of a business' desired outcomes in sponsoring an event. Many larger sponsors are of the view that the media coverage of the arts, especially on television, is woefully thin and provides little incentive to sponsorship and, by extension, support for cultural life in Scotland.
13. Arts and cultural bodies cannot force businesses to invest in the arts but they can become better at understanding and increasing the benefits that support for, and engagement with, culture can bring to sponsors. It is to be hoped that further action on this issue would encourage more businesses to invest in, and benefit

from, the artistic and cultural lives of their communities.

- 14 We also believe that business should be given a place at the table in this debate and within some part of the organisation that leads culture. Most businesses would welcome this although it needs to be shared across the spectrum of business, not only with the donators of large cash sums. This would also help to encourage others who do not liaise with the arts of culture to become involved. An idea may be to have business champions for the arts and culture who could champion these themes. Businesses also look for other ways in which they can develop staff and increase motivation. Arts and cultural organisations should look to linking with this business expertise as this may help to elevate the problem expressed in point 12 and 13 above.

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Royal Mail Group Scotland
January 2005

Handwritten notes: "New", "30/1/05", "65"

Ian

From: brenda.saetta@royalmail.com
Sent: 17 January 2005 16:27
To: info
Subject: ROYAL MAIL RESPONSE - CULTURAL COMMISSION[Scanned]



cultural consultation
jan 05.d...

Dear Sir / Madam

Please see attached Royal Mail Group submission from Julie Morrison, Head of External Relations.

Any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Julie direct on 0131 550 8276.

Thanks

(See attached file: cultural consultation jan 05.doc)

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