

Ack By letter
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UNIVERSAL ARTS

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Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
Carrington Road
Edinburgh EH4 1EG

13 January 2005

Dear Sirs

In response to your desire for broad consultation, please find enclosed our input. As a non-subsidised cultural organisation we were not been formally informed of the first phase of the consultations, and your second questionnaire reach us through third parties therefore our response contains thoughts that may cover both parts of the consultation document.

One of our specific points is the routine failure to include non-subsidised companies in the information and consultation loop.

Yours faithfully

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Artistic Director
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Cultural Commission – Stakeholders Consultation

Rights, Entitlement and Responsibilities

*First of all we **all** have to agree on what we mean by culture. In the language of policymakers culture means something from popular entertainment to “high” art. It is also generally treated as an add-on to citizens’ lives. However **Culture** is more than our politicians and civil servants want to believe.*

Etymologically, **Culture** derives from cultivation, development, knowledge, cogitation, edification etc. In other words it contains all the elements essential for the growth of society.

Culture is an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour that is both a result of, and vital to, the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.

Culture is the total of a nation’s or community’s intellectual experience that plays a crucial role in individual and group development.

Culture is a fundamental part of national identity. The progress of any nation depends first and foremost on the intellectual development of its members that, in turn, provides the basis for economic growth. The intellectual development of a nation depends on a broad and stable increase of cultural provision and progressive development of cultural delivery. Individuals can only develop through regular exposure to, and stimulation from, **Culture**. How can a nation train a teacher, a doctor, a builder, an army officer or an engineer without developing their intellectual abilities? It is proven that a broader mind fosters greater professional ability. Without the active intellectual development of members of society, any population is in danger of being manipulated into political submission, making a mockery of democracy. A country, nation or region without healthy provision for cultural sustainability and development is on a regressive path. Providing the on-going cultural development of a nation is a fundamental duty of government. Scotland should follow examples of the new European Union member states such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia who, in their constitutions, placed culture as a fundamental and core element in the development of their countries. With this legislation they enshrined proper provision for culture in their laws. Scotland should adopt a similar notion in order to prevent any future governments from treating culture as an add-on to an individual’s life, rather than the fundamental right of all citizens, central to all areas of life including education, arts, social and economic development.

Culture has a number of interwoven sectors also connected to other parts of social life. The most important are Education and Arts as, from a development point of view, association with the arts fosters creativity and discipline. Next are Heritage and Physical Education and Sport. The first two

cannot be separated. However we note the increasing separation of, and divisions between, the sectors of culture. In most governmental and public bodies Education has become completely disconnected not only from arts but also omitted as an element of Culture. That is reflected in names of the cabinet ministers' portfolios such as Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport. It seems that in the minds of our politicians and civil servants, culture is reduced to referring merely to the arts or worse to "an entertainment industry". This clearly demonstrates the complete misunderstanding and confusion surrounding the meaning of Culture, its complexity and importance. This gross mistake is leading to a decline not only in arts but also in sport and tourism. Moreover taking away the natural link between Culture and Education strangles the latter by its narrow definition as training in functional abilities. This extremely short-sighted view unfortunately dominates our political life.

The work that the commission is doing will be totally pointless and meaningless unless policymakers change their comprehension of culture. The only solution is to forcefully educate our politicians and to make sure that the civil servants responsible for Culture are chosen from high quality stock. The notion that Culture as an "add on" has to be changed to the view that Culture is the most important part of development of our country. Culture should also be seen as an industry that, if well used, can create jobs. Work places in heavy industry cost probably 10 times more than the foundation of the same number of jobs connected with Culture. Moreover those jobs can be created instantly and would almost certainly outlast jobs created to build a submarine.

Cultural Leadership

The vacuum existing at the moment is the result of the treatment of Culture as an "add on". Dynamic leadership can only be created with a total change in the pattern of thinking regarding the importance of Culture. There are two aspects of cultural leadership. Firstly intellectual and inspirational, and secondly managerial and policy implementation.

Inspiration should come directly from cultural practitioners and artists in the form of a voluntary national cultural assembly with membership drawn from representatives of all cultural organisations, including not-for-profit and commercial. It should be divided into cultural sectors and have a democratically elected executive. Each sector should elect its own executive and form a lobbying group. The organisation must be open to scrutiny and become the real forum for discussion between Scottish cultural practitioners. As the representative of all Scottish cultural stakeholders it should become an advisory body to the Managerial leadership.

Managerial leadership and policy implementation should be in the hands of the Scottish Executive through a properly established **MINISTRY OF CULTURE**, elevated to its rightful status, with departments reflecting all cultural sectors. The pitiful, existing portfolio of Sport, Tourism and something called culture should be consigned to the history books. Physical Education, Sport and Tourism should become departments on the same level as Performing Arts, Music or Heritage. Alternatively, they could be left as separate ministry structures, however working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Culture.

Cultural policy should be created through collaboration between Inspirational and Managerial leaderships at all levels.

Unfortunately the concept of a fully formed Ministry of Culture is an alien idea to the British political scene and this has created a vacuum not only in leadership, but also in the devising of properly developed, structured and delivered Cultural provision. A real Ministry of Culture should have the stature and power of Health, Education or Justice ministries. It should have agencies in local governments at all levels. As much as it is possible the policy making and financial decisions should be devolved to local levels.

With regard to communication between the policy-makers, the funders and cultural organisations much more effort needs to be made to attract the opinions of cultural organisations. It is symptomatic that virtually every organisation we asked, despite in many cases such as our own, being well-established and active players on the Scottish cultural field for a decade or more, had not received nor seen sight of this Phase 2 Consultation document (we came across it thanks to a very random source). If policy makers are to develop a truly broad vision for Scotland they need a constructive system to hear more than the views of the few core-funded organisations.

There is a great need for Scottish culture to be properly promoted abroad and to increase the offering of international culture events to the Scottish public. The Scottish capital plays host to the biggest and most prestigious international arts festival on the globe, but the offering of international culture to the rest of the country is very poor indeed. By the same token Scottish arts are rarely seen abroad. This creates the impression that only men in kilts, pipers and whisky represent Scottish culture. However Scots have been present in Europe for centuries and were known for their abilities and skills adding to the development of many countries. We have to change this perception putting culture on the same level as other Scottish industries. The creation of a Scottish Cultural Institute could be the best way to achieve this. A Scottish Cultural Institute should have a number of overseas offices in targeted counties and work on similar bases as French, Italian or German (Goethe) cultural institutes.

Pan-Sectoral Planning

Unless there is going to be a fundamental change to the funding for all Culture, Pan-Sectorial planning will end up as a battle between sectors of culture fighting for survival. However if adequate finance will be provided the planning process should be out carried in consultation with the national cultural assembly or similar organisation as suggested above.

As the funding for, and overall quality, variety and availability of British culture has deteriorated consistently for almost a generation, the first decade or so of planning should prioritise education throughout all sectors of culture with a strong emphasis on all forms of arts. You cannot easily encourage an adult to participate in cultural events if he or she was not exposed to culture as a child. It is hard to encourage a grown-up to experience and enjoy opera if it is labelled by populist leaders as "high art for the posh". The other issue is the involvement of our politicians in cultural events apart from sporting events. How many regularly attend theatre shows, concerts and exhibitions? Leadership also requires showing by example.

Funding arrangements

All answers in this section are only meaningful if the overall amount of money spent by the government on culture is raised to a minimum of 1% of GDP. Without this minimum level of funding this Commission's survey results will be rendered completely valueless.

It is significant that public money spent in development of all other industries is called INVESTMENT, however money spent on culture is labelled SUBSIDY. This reinforces, in the minds of sceptics, that funding for culture is somehow a sneaky way of helping the middle-classes pay for their leisure. Again it proves that culture is regarded as a difficult and costly "add-on".

Working in Scottish arts is, financially, a most unrewarding career. Most theatre practitioners are overworked and underpaid. This is not just moaning about the working conditions of the average employed person, but a horrible fact of life in the arts. If every Scottish theatre practitioner, both in creative and supportive roles, complied with employment law, Scotland would be a theatre desert. And as it stands it is not a Garden of Eden. Often companies' artistic directors and administrative staff work 50 – 60 hours week and, if lucky, are paid below the national average equivalent for 35

hours. Creativity suffers and, if proper research was carried out, we would find a high incidence of nervous breakdowns and that other stress-related illnesses is higher in the arts than in most Scottish industries. This is one area that The Commission should research, including subsidised, unsubsidised and commercial sectors, and react to its findings.

The financing of culture in many countries is at a much higher level than in the UK. Taiwan for example spends 10 times the percentage of GDP on culture than the UK. Taking European regional examples Scotland should be on the same level of investment in culture as Catalonia.

In many countries culture is financed both directly by the Ministry of Culture and by providing funds to the cultural departments of local authorities on all levels. It is cost effective and could be more transparent than the British system. In Poland for example direct ministerial funding is received only by a few organisations with National status such as national theatres (Poland has two of them!), The National Museum, Gallery, Library etc. All other organisations regardless of sector are financed at local level.

The commercial cultural sector, or rather more accurately, the unsubsidised cultural sector, has been treated for the last decade as something dirty and intrinsically un-cultural. The assumption being that all commercial organisations are raking in cash for producing light entertainment glitz. While some such companies do exist (and why not?) the majority of (publicly) unsubsidised companies are struggling to survive outside the system and usually owe their continued existence due to the high incidence of voluntary work, family / friends financial support and below market-rate payments for services rendered. At best unsubsidised companies are simply ignored by the financing authorities. This is especially the case of small-scale performing arts companies. However, without first proving their abilities to the very unwilling Scottish Arts Council, a new theatre company cannot apply to receive proper subsidy. As performing arts in Scotland cannot survive on a commercial basis (apart from the huge scale B tour West End shows **produced outside of Scotland**) there has to be a mechanism to financially help the performing arts' commercial sector. Perhaps tax relief to those who sponsor or invest in the arts. The survival of unsubsidised theatre companies is further aggravated by the fact that theatres are not sufficiently funded to pay real cost fees for work which they programme. Increasingly they are dependent on programming productions which have already been subsidised so that real cost fees are not required by the company. Moreover a shortage of money forces venues to play safe in their programming resulting in a fairly repetitive menu of classics performed with an ex-TV star and sing-a-long shows. While these have their place it is also important to offer a more varied diet to encourage audiences to develop a taste for more stimulating work.

Despite individual efforts made by some people working in the Scottish Arts Council, it is one of the most disappointing and useless bodies. Its cost effectiveness is questionable and scrutiny impossible. Its policies are vague and not fully consulted. Its awards biased and often misinformed. In recent years The Scottish Arts Council has looked increasingly like a private club for a certain group of people. Shady practices include the highly questionable "Director's fund" which is outside any published fund and is monitored by ... **WHO? It is fact that projects receiving funding from this pot do not appear on the monthly published list of successful fund applicants.** This is definitely an organisation that has failed to give leadership and financial stability to Culture in Scotland and should be scrapped.

Another damaging factor is the Scottish Arts Council's reduction of core funding for theatre companies. Moving to project funding hampers the development and sustainability of an organisation. A theatre company is a creative entity, and as such its productivity depends on stability of its core artistic and administrative staff. Project funding reduces creativity and the quality of the final product as the (usually) reduced core team, including Artistic Directors, invariably end up spending much of their time fund-raising rather than creating.

Standards & Evaluation

One of the most damaging Evaluation factors is using Culture as an easy escape from the problem of social inclusion. Arts, and especially theatre, has been disadvantaged up to the point that often it has been difficult, if not impossible, to obtain finance for a project that is not strictly inside the remit of the social inclusion policy of a financing body. Arts cannot be punished for trying to be creative beyond the narrowness of the political thinking of our policymakers. The social inclusion problem has to be solved, but not by stealth. Frequently the fulfilment of social inclusion policies is camouflaged by putting quotas and restrictions on artists. This way the box marked "COMPLETED" could be ticked covering inadequacies of the policy and delivery systems. Social inclusion could only be implemented by creating an environment in which culture, and especially the arts, is a very important part of everyone's daily life and not seen as an add-on. It is my personal view that the abhorrent rise in aggression on the streets of Scottish cities is as a direct result of the loss of cultural education and sense of cultural identity with the community in which these people live. Many valuable lessons could be learned from the Nordic countries which have developed an excellent socio-cultural format. Social inclusion cannot just be a political slogan, but needs to be a vast socio-cultural educational programme which will bring culture to everybody and all to culture.

Arts cannot be evaluated by its usefulness to Social Inclusion, which in turn is often financed by redirecting funds from the arts and other cultural sectors. Social inclusion is a political and educational issue, and as such it should be financed separately.

Operations and administration

Many nations recognise the value of culture and their creative industries, support them adequately and use them to their benefit. Culture and particularly the arts could be a major potential industry for Scotland. Properly financing Scottish arts will not only create and secure jobs, but will also establish possibilities for exporting creativity and stop the drainage of raw talent from the country.

You find Scots working in creative industries in England and many parts of the world, mainly because they cannot find enough work in their own country. Drainage of Scottish talent is on the increase and we should do everything to stop it. The disbanding of the Scottish Opera chorus is just one of the current examples of this. By the time there is funding to re-instate the chorus, the majority of the more talented singers will have flown the nest.

We strongly believe in treating artistic creations as a product, able to have commercial, as well as PR, value. Many countries and nations recognise both values within their creative industries, support them adequately and use them for their own benefit. Catalonia is a good example. Sadly Scotland is not amongst them. Arts and culture could, and should, be used as a vehicle for the promotion of Scotland, her investment opportunities and commercial products. The USA has been highly successful in promoting itself this way reaping the commercial benefit for over half a century.

Scotland is the only country in Europe, which has not only obliterated its opera, but also fails to actively promote musical theatre. Public money is spent on the education of singers and musicians, (RSAMD is one of the best performing arts academies in the UK producing top performers) yet there is no work available in the country for its graduates.

Tomek Borkowy
Artistic Director

Laura Mackenzie Stuart
Managing Director

Universal Arts also voluntarily administrates Our Europe a charity that exists to provide the Scottish public with a broader choice of European cultural events to attend, and similarly to provide European nations with varied examples of Scottish arts.