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ABERDEEN  
CITY COUNCIL

14 January 2005

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19 JAN 2005

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Dear James

### STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION: PHASE 2 PAN-SECTORAL QUESTIONS

The Aberdeen City Alliance Cultural Forum, part of the City's Community Planning Partnership, considered the attached response to the above at its meeting yesterday. The Forum requested that I write to inform you of its endorsement of the response.

In addition, it expressed the view in relation to paragraph iii and pan-sectoral planning that great care will be required in defining what is actually encompassed by the term *planning* and how the responsibilities addressed by any pan-sectoral planning regime are allocated across the spectrum from national, both within and outwith the Scottish Executive, to local, both within and outwith local authorities.

The response is to be considered by the City Council's Education & Leisure Committee at its meeting on 17 January. I will write to you again once the Committee has met.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

**Ciaran Monaghan**  
Cultural Strategy & Service Planning Manager

cc Douglas Paterson, Chief Executive

**ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL**  
**Response to Cultural Commission Stakeholder Consultation: Phase 2**

**Introduction**

Aberdeen City Council welcomes the opportunity to offer views on the issues raised by the Stakeholder Consultation: Phase 2 Pan Sectoral Questions as part of its ongoing engagement with the work of the Cultural Commission.

The City Council in December 2004 agreed a Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen and an associated work plan for its delivery over the period 2004/2008. The finalised Strategy follows a year's discussion and consultation led by an elected member Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy Task Group and the resulting thematic document embeds cultural provision within both Aberdeen's Community Planning process, led by The Aberdeen City Alliance, and the City Council's own Corporate Plan. Within this context, the Strategy also makes explicit a desire, wherever feasible and appropriate, to work jointly with partners both regional and national to augment and develop cultural activity across the North East. In examining ways to do this, we also seek to address the Scottish Executive's Efficient Government agenda.

Work is now underway here to ensure appropriate linkages are made between the Cultural Strategy and the City's developing Heritage Strategy, the Community Regeneration Strategy and the International Strategy. The Aberdeen City Alliance has a Cultural Forum that oversees work on Culture (Arts & Heritage) and an Active Aberdeen Forum that oversees work on Sport.

The Cultural Strategy is built around the five themes of Creativity, Excellence, Participation, Uniqueness and Vibrancy and delivery of the associated work plan over the period 2004/2006 is supported by an allocation of £560,500 from the City Growth Fund.

The views expressed below flow from the work undertaken in developing the Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen.

**Pan Sectoral Questions**

**i) rights, entitlements and responsibilities**

Clearly defined cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities both for the individual and the community offer an opportunity to base cultural policy and the provision of cultural activity at local, regional and national level on an agreed and shared foundation. While cultural rights should be set at and reviewed at a national level and might be enshrined in law, the delivery of the entitlements that flow from them should be locally based and set within the context of the community planning process. In this way, explicit links are made between cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities and the requirements to address other policy priorities such as social inclusion and sustainable development for the benefit of the local community.

By embedding cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities within the community planning process at a local level they become subject to the audit and reporting mechanisms set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

## **ii) cultural leadership**

If the scenario described above were to be put in place, with cultural rights set at national level and cultural entitlements and responsibilities delivered at local level, cultural leadership at both a national and local level would have as its priority the encouragement of the highest quality of cultural experience and the widest active participation in cultural activity. In addition, cultural leadership should actively advocate the importance of culture in its own right as well as its importance in delivering on other aspects of the public policy agenda.

Government at both national and local level should ensure that the conditions prevail for the cultural sector to flourish for the benefit of the public throughout Scotland and given this joint governmental responsibility the cultural sector would require to identify the most appropriate means at both national and local level by which to engage with and influence the development of policy and the delivery of activity.

Given an approach that embeds cultural policy within the community planning process, the opportunity exists to involve both Universities/Colleges and the private/commercial sectors at a local level in its development and delivery. Similarly there are opportunities to ensure the engagement of individual artists and artists' groups, both professional and non-professional in the process. Building up from the 32 local authority areas provides a strength for the development of cultural policy and the delivery of cultural activity, but clearly a range of bodies/associations would also be required to provide a national overview/voice as appropriate.

## **iii) pan-sectoral planning**

At a local level, working within the community planning process sets a context that requires pan-sectoral planning and sees cultural activity in its totality rather than solely as a number of discrete activities. Clearly there are different drivers and dynamics at play within different aspects of the cultural sector and each has arrangements in place to ensure that specific issues are addressed but again, given the scenario set out above it would be of assistance for the holistic cultural sector embedded within local community plans to be reflected at a national level in a pan-sectoral planning regime.

Such a pan-sectoral planning regime however would need to have a clearly defined role setting out its responsibilities in relation to representing and/or "governing" the cultural sector, in developing and/or influencing the development of policy, in overseeing and/or influencing the delivery of cultural activity etc. A key issue for the work of the Commission is to enable a clear division of roles and responsibilities between government, both national and

local, community planning partnerships, any pan-sectoral planning regime, individual cultural bodies and individual cultural organisations. It is only after defining this division that appropriate governance, representation and decision making can be decided upon.

#### **iv) funding arrangements**

Following on from the above, and specifically in the context of the Scottish Executive's Efficient Government agenda, a means is required to be developed that ensures that public funding is put to work in the most efficient and effective way to support Scotland's cultural sector in delivering services of the highest quality for the people of Scotland. With public funding currently being allocated to different aspects of the cultural sector in Scotland in a range of ways including for example directly from the Scottish Executive and from the Scottish Executive both via third-party cultural bodies and via local authorities there is a need to identify exactly what is required in terms of advice, decision-making and evaluation. In doing this, the aim must be to remove duplication of effort while ensuring appropriate levels of accountability for the use of public money.

The Commission could usefully track through some of the current processes in place with national and local government, local community planning partnerships, cultural bodies and organisations etc. to examine exactly what each does in the allocation and use of public money expended on the provision of cultural activity in Scotland and how improvements might be made to guarantee that the highest possible percentage of that funding goes to the cultural activity itself rather than to the administration of it.

In seeking to address the Efficient Government agenda in this way the opportunity arises to identify the most appropriate, effective and efficient means at national, local and potentially regional level to decide on the allocation of public funding to cultural organisations and activity, with such decisions guided both by nationally set cultural rights and policy priorities and locally agreed cultural entitlements enshrined within community plans. Such a structure should be capable of dealing both with revenue and capital planning and allocation and with initiative-based project funding and in addition should clarify and simplify for individual cultural organisations the process required.

#### **v) standards and evaluation**

In jointly seeking to deliver the aims and objectives of a national cultural strategy through the allocation of public funding to cultural organisations and activities there is an implicit requirement to ensure that standards of outcome, output, process and governance are agreed between funders and recipients of funding. Such standards and the monitoring and evaluation of their achievement should be framed within the context of the priorities agreed and set at national and/or local level. The setting of standards appropriate to the cultural sector and its activities could possibly sit within the remit of any pan-sectoral planning regime, fed into by the individual sector representative

bodies. In using this mechanism it would be hoped that consistency in both the standards and their evaluation might be achieved.

#### **vi) operations and administration**

Again, the Efficient Government agenda offers the opportunity for the cultural sector to seek ways in which to make better use of ICT and more co-ordinated joint management and administration of operations to achieve savings that allow a greater percentage of the public funding allocated to be spent on cultural activity itself. Responsibility generally for maximising these opportunities at local and regional level lies with the public sector agencies, again a pan-sectoral planning regime may be the best forum for discussion of and advice on how specific cultural efficiencies might be generated.

In examining the best fit for the roles and responsibilities to be addressed by various bodies as mentioned in iii) and iv) above the requirement for a national level outward-looking remit to engage UK-nationally and internationally on behalf of Scotland's cultural sector and Scotland generally should be recognised and clearly allocated.

#### **vii) local authorities**

The response to the issues is given from the perspective of a local authority and hopefully indicates the ways in which a local authority can engage with the development and delivery of the national cultural strategy.

As set out at i) above, it would be appropriate for the delivery of cultural entitlements flowing from cultural rights to be addressed at a local level within the context of community planning. As leaders of the community planning process Local Authorities should be required to ensure that as part of that process a local cultural strategy is produced that sets the priorities, aims and objectives not only for their own directly delivered cultural operations but also for other cultural sector organisations and activities both professional and volunteer-led in their area. Such a local strategy should provide the foundation from which links can be made to the national cultural agenda. In addition, where appropriate it should also allow regional groupings to be developed.

#### **viii) regional bodies**

As mentioned in the Introduction above, the City Council's Cultural Strategy 2004/2008 makes explicit a desire to work in partnership with regional and/or national bodies where appropriate and feasible for the development of cultural activity across the North East. A number of fora exist regionally to allow this joint work to be progressed and consequently it is not clear what added value a formally constituted regional mechanism would bring to planning, delivery or management of cultural activities. However, given both the Cultural Commission's work and the Efficient Government agenda the opportunity could be taken to examine the option as part of the more general review of roles and responsibilities described above.

#### **ix) national**

In terms of the national cultural organisations, the designation "national" should relate to scale and scope of operation. The designation should mean that the organisation is required to address means by which its operation and activities can be accessed throughout Scotland. With regard to reporting, monitoring and evaluation the issue should be addressed as part of the clarification of roles and responsibilities suggested in iii) above.

In terms of the national cultural agencies, the development of any pan-sectoral planning regime with a defined range of responsibilities would assist in clarifying what would then be required of any remaining national cultural agencies.

#### **x) cross-cutting**

In establishing the importance of the cultural sector at a local level within the context of the community planning process the opportunity is presented to work with education, sport, tourism etc. to deliver jointly on the priorities set within the local community plan. It is to be hoped that this opportunity would also be grasped at a national level both within the Scottish Executive and through the efforts of any pan-sectoral planning regime developed to carry the work forward.

#### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that the responses given above to the 10 issues and the 62 questions set in the Phase 2 Cultural Commission Stakeholder Consultation are of assistance to the debate. Further opportunities to feed views from Aberdeen City Council into the Commission either in writing or through meetings or debate would be welcomed. In addition Aberdeen City Council would be delighted to assist the Commission in its work by piloting and/or testing locally any aspects of the scenario outlined above.

Finally, it is to be hoped that through the work of the Commission it will be possible for us to work jointly with all relevant partners to achieve the shared goal of a vibrant successful cultural sector enriching the lives of the people of Scotland.

17.1.05