

**UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW**

**CULTURAL COMMISSION**

**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION: PHASE 2**

**PAN-SECTORAL QUESTIONS**

**January 2005**

## Stakeholder response

As we indicated in our response to the Phase 1 consultation, the University of Glasgow is a significant stakeholder in the Cultural Commission's area of concern in both specific and general ways.

Specifically:

- The University's museums and galleries are major public cultural resources, on a scale and range comparable to the major civic and national collections and with a range of holdings which includes both the arts and humanities and the natural sciences. The Gilmorehill Centre for Theatre, Film and Television, and its public face, 'G12', is a significant venue for local and touring theatre (with particular strengths in theatre for children and young people), and our music concert programme plays an increasingly important role in supporting live performance, particularly performance of new music, in the West of Scotland.
- Particular teaching programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Theatre, Film & Television Studies, Music, History of Art and Creative Writing aim to provide graduates with the skills, knowledge, creativity and critical understanding which will enable them to play a future leadership role in the arts and culture of Scotland.
- University research has an under-utilised capacity to inform public cultural policy on the basis of long-term and longitudinal understanding rather than short-term and 'snap-shot' consultancy. In particular, we would identify the work of, and the collaboration between, the Centre for Cultural Policy Research, the Scottish Centre for Research in Social Justice, and the MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit.

Generally:

- We believe that this University, along with the rest of the Higher Education sector in Scotland, plays an important role in producing graduates who will not only be culturally entitled citizens but who will be both entitled and informed. Such graduates play, and will continue to play, a significant, though not of course exclusive, role in shaping the demand which will drive Scottish culture.

As a stake-holding institution we wish to play as active a part as possible in the consultation process on which the Cultural Commission is embarked, and we commend the openness of this process. At the same time, we find that the present phase of consultation addresses a very wide, detailed and complex set of operational questions to which, as an institution, we can make only a limited and general response. We would hope that the Commission might be better informed on operational detail by those bodies whose primary role is as cultural agencies, and by its own research into comparative international models. While we recognise the particular demands of cultural provision in a devolved Scotland, we would hope particularly that the Commission would draw lessons from robust research into the successes and failures of other countries. Our own response will be selective and general, addressing some of the general headings under which the questionnaire is organised rather than attempting to answer all sixty-two of the questions posed.

## Preliminary observations

Before addressing these headings, we would make the following two preliminary 'interpretational' observations:

1. We note that the underlying logic of the question seems to point towards a 'command economy' approach to cultural strategy. The weight of the questions seems to be directed towards the operational issues of *how* culture is to be supported through the command structures of governance, regulation, legislation and finance, and seems to set aside questions of *why* culture

should be thus supported, *what demand* justifies such public intervention, and *where* this demand places culture in relation to other pressing national and local priorities. While this apparent logic may be accidental or may imply that the case for culture as a public good no longer needs to be made, we feel that if legislation, particularly fiscal legislation, is to be introduced, the Commission will have to make a very strong case for the demands, both social and economic, which a national cultural strategy can be expected to meet. It is only through a demand-led strategy – both responding to demand and stimulating it - that culture can secure a sustainable place in national priorities which will withstand the shifting priorities of political rhetoric.

2. We are concerned that the questions seem to focus on large companies and sectors, and that only one question (Q.13) - albeit a significant one - addresses the role of individual creative artists and of small creative companies and ensembles. While this again may relate to a particular phase in the Commission's thinking, it seems to reinforce a command-led strategy driven by national companies. National companies are clearly a key component in a national cultural strategy and there are indeed serious questions to be raised about how they operate and how they are to be supported. However, while such companies may provide the bedrock of excellence which sustains a national culture, the creative buzz which stimulates engagement and demand is very often provided by the coming together in unexpected ways of individual artists or groups of artists: we are thinking of the coming together of Gray, Kelman, Leonard, Kennedy, Galloway and Lochhead in the West of Scotland which has had such an impact on Scottish creative writing; or succeeding generations of Glasgow School of Art graduates (Wisniewski, Campbell, Douglas Gordon, Claire Barclay, Christine Borland); or the bands which have recently placed Glasgow on a footing with New York in popular music; or the filmmakers (Peter Mullan, Lynne Ramsay, and most recently Andrea Gibb and Eleanor Yuille – three of whom are Glasgow University graduates) who are receiving increasing critical attention. We believe that, in a small country, a cultural strategy must understand the conditions which make possible such apparently unpredictable 'flowerings' of a creative critical mass, and must have at its core strategies which seek to encourage, sustain and retain the creative artists and creative groups who raise the profile and produce a sense of public engagement with a national or a local culture.

### **Pan-Sectoral Questions: Headings**

#### ***Rights, entitlements and responsibilities***

- We have commented on the issue of cultural rights and entitlement in our response to the Phase 1 consultation. In particular, we have stressed the importance of cultural value as a prerequisite of cultural rights. Without the values of excellence, diversity, innovation and creativity, the language of entitlement becomes empty rhetoric. We believe that the issue of cultural rights and access is important, but that it should not distract the Commission from developing strategies which seek to foster, support and sustain these embedded values.
- We have also noted the importance of considering the rights and entitlements of the creative community alongside those of the cultural consumer.
- We believe that, at least in the first instance, cultural rights should have a status equivalent to a service-level agreement, informing the various communities what level of support and access they have a right to expect. The fundamental right of the entitled citizen is a right to information on which he or she can base choice and judgement.
- While supporting the notion of cultural rights within the UNESCO definition of the term, we note the operational difficulties of aligning aspirations with realities, and of balancing the demands of a multi-cultural society with a national cultural strategy. To legislate cultural rights into existence has quite significant resource implications if it is not to dissipate current cultural funding, and a political decision would have to be taken on the source of required new funding. Equally, any legislation or service-level agreement would need to be sensitive to issues of sectarianism: is the

right to march a cultural right to community self-expression? The issue of cultural rights as a legislative entitlement has far-reaching political implications

### ***Cultural leadership***

- As we indicated in our earlier submission, we believe that consideration should be given to the creation of a standing Cultural Commission whose remit would be to develop common strategies across cultural sectors, to 'join up thinking', and to advise the Minister and the Executive.
- Such a Commission may not be concerned directly with the allocation of funding, which could be left with some version of the current agencies, but may advise the Minister on 'letters of guidance' which would inform funding allocations in line with strategic priorities.
- We believe that both tertiary and secondary education should be represented on such a Commission, along with local authorities and national companies. If it is to command the respect of the various cultural communities, it is crucial that it includes significant representation from practising artists and the creative community.
- If it is to gain respect, it is also crucial that its deliberations should be strongly informed by research commissioned from, among others, Higher Education researchers. (A somewhat risky analogy might be with the Broadcasting Standards Council, whose remit gave considerable priority to research into public attitudes and demand.)
- We do not suggest that the responsibility for cultural leadership should be owned exclusively by the Cultural Commission, but that local authority and grassroots levels should be encouraged to feed into the process of deliberation and strategic initiative.

### ***Pan-Sectoral planning***

- See above. We believe there is a continuing role for sectoral agencies, along the lines of Scottish Screen, Museums and Galleries Council, Arts Council, but these should be informed by greater coordination and pan-sectoral strategic thinking.

### ***Funding arrangements***

- Our comments under this heading are implied above.
- We recognise the need for partnership between local authorities and national agencies. While acknowledging the very important role which local authorities have to play in cultural funding and cultural initiatives, we would be concerned if too much responsibility were devolved to local authorities in a way which placed culture in competition with other priorities such as transport, law enforcement, education and health and welfare.
- On the question of the funding of companies, we believe there may be a need for fresh thinking on the funding and classification of national and other companies. We are attracted to a system, similar to that in Australia, in which companies are awarded a status – purely as examples: 'national', 'regional', 'local', 'touring', 'experimental' – and are funded appropriately on the basis of a three-year programme subject to annual financial audit. We believe it is damaging to apply a 'one shape fits all' approach to criteria and the aim must be to support excellence as well as to promote access.
- In particular we believe that recent examples demonstrate the need to balance sound financial management against ambitious artistic ambition. This requires an appropriate balance of secure medium- to long-term funding horizons and sound financial monitoring.

### ***Standards and evaluation***

- We have no particular comments under this heading other than to emphasise the need for the involvement of the artistic and creative community in the process of evaluation and judgement. We believe this role may best be conducted by a Monitoring and Evaluation sub-committee of the Cultural Commission, always providing that this body is set up in a way which commands the respect of the various communities, and bases its assessments on evidence-based research.

### ***Operations and administration***

- We have no particular comments on these operational issues.
- We welcome, however, the inclusion of Q42 which recognises the international development of a national culture. We believe it is important that Scottish culture be encouraged, in the well-worn phrase, to act locally but aspire globally.

### ***Local authorities***

- We refer back to our comments above about the need for partnership between local authorities, the Scottish Executive and national agencies – and, indeed, where appropriate, between local authorities and local universities. We also stress our concern about putting cultural support into unequal competition with other local funding priorities at a time when local authority funding is under intense pressure.

### ***Regional bodies***

- See our comments above.

### ***National***

- See our comments above.

### ***Cross-cutting***

- While we recognise the need for those who are given responsibility for cultural planning to be attentive to a broad definition of culture which includes sport and religion, and to the economic value of the alignment of culture, heritage and tourism, we are also aware of the risks of too broad a remit which loses the focus on the core values of culture.
- At the same time, we fully recognise the value of mutually beneficial partnerships such as, for example, 'events' strategies between international sporting events and supporting cultural programmes, or between major exhibitions and tourist marketing. We would hope that an overarching body, such as a standing Cultural Commission, would encourage this kind of partnership.
- Finally, we note that the market in cultural tourism is increasingly sophisticated and cannot be sustained much longer on the basis of tartanry, haggis, and the Loch Ness monster. We believe that the only strategy which can successfully promote Scottish culture within Scotland, the UK, the EU and across the world is one which supports diversity and pursues excellence at every level. This, it seems to us, should be the focus of the Cultural Commission's thinking.

