

24 January 2005

26 JAN 2005

James Boyle
Chair
Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
Edinburgh
EH4 1EG

Dear James

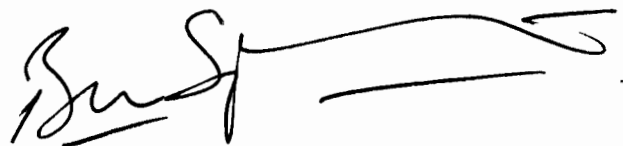
Public Consultation Phase 2

Please find enclosed VAGA's submission to the second stage consultation which I sent earlier by email.

VAGA is developing its 'Right to Art' proposals and I hope to forward these to you in due course. I hope this is appropriate.

I look forward to hearing about the next round of meetings.

Yours sincerely



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Response from the Visual Arts and Galleries Association (VAGA) to the Cultural Commission

Consultation – Phase 2

VAGA considers the visual arts to be an active partner in the cultural and creative development of Scotland, having delivered tremendous successes in enhancing the reputation of Scotland as a culturally confident and creative nation. The Cultural Commission offers an opportunity to broaden the population's access to cultural activity, to extend appreciation and awareness and to place the visual arts and visual culture more centrally within public policy, unleashing creativity and stimulating people's imagination.

The following responds to the Cultural Commission's letter dated November 2004 and attached list of pan-sectoral questions. Some particular issues were raised at a meeting between members of the visual arts sector and James Boyle in December 2004. The response does not however necessarily respond to any particular questions or follow the same format.

Some key points we would like to raise:

- **Long-term funding agreements**
Most (independent) visual arts organisations in receipt of subsidy are currently in one or three year agreements. Extending these to five, or seven, years would reduce bureaucracy and the administrative burden on organisations, improve efficiency, encourage confidence and flexibility.
- **Collection development**
The holdings of contemporary and international art are currently need developing across all sectors. Collections are a vital component in the long-term development of audiences and in the stimulation of visual literacy, applicable across a broad range of fields. Temporary exhibitions offer introductions to artists' work, or interesting thematic approaches on groups of artists. Collections offer the possibility of developing long-term relationships with artists and audiences. We need to:
 - a) improve the ability to collect internationally to offer Scottish audiences quality of experience;
 - b) develop and improve regional availability of collections. The latter implies development of both buildings (to sufficient standards to house loans from 'national' collections) and staffing (acknowledge value of curatorship and expertise in presentation and dissemination of work to public.
- **Transport**
Specifically the facilitation of schools transport to galleries and museums, allowing easier access to unique artworks in stimulating environments
- **Education and marketing activities**
Both are key tools in audience development – both in increasing numbers (quantitative) and improving experiences (qualitative). Organisations need to be better resourced to deliver in both areas. Few visual arts organisations can currently afford either full-time education or marketing staff. The expertise, understanding and importance of these activities have increased substantially over the past decade, but resources have not kept pace to allow organisations to deliver and realise the potential both areas offer for audience development.

- Nurture internationalism and opportunities for the exchange of ideas, not only for commercial exploitation, but to develop their crucial role in cultural vitality
- Create schemes and initiatives that will encourage artists to work and live in Scotland, throughout their careers, continuing to contribute to, and to develop, our cultural life as they develop.

development and use of cultural rights and entitlements

To be meaningful cultural rights and entitlements need to be consistent and reliable, stimulating and unrestrictive, in order to spark the imagination and creativity, enhancing the quality of individual lives and providing choice and opportunity for everyone. One size does not however fit all and rights need also to be responsive.

The provision of culture in Scotland needs to be delivered at international, national, regional and local levels and acknowledge the individual. Some providers will deliver at more than one and some at all four of these levels.

Culture should primarily be recognised for its intrinsic values; its ability to foster confidence and creativity, to stimulate the imagination, challenge ideas and encourage diverse perspectives and innovation. Instrumental benefits, linked to other areas of policy, flow from artistic excellence and freedom.

Cultural rights and entitlements should be developed on a national basis – a central agency should have authority over the underlying principles and strategic development, the implementation and review of cultural rights and entitlements. The framework for the implementation and delivery of cultural rights needs to be developed nationally, across the cultural sectors, to lend an agency its authority.

cultural leadership

The Scottish Executive has a central role in cultural leadership, as advocate for the value of the arts to the creation of a vibrant and creative nation, recognised at home and abroad. Policies and priorities should influence all Executive matters and support the 'ecology' of the arts, across all areas of activity, to build wide and diverse audiences.

The arms length principle is crucial to the independent delivery of cultural activity. The cultural sector has, within its broad constituency, extensive expertise and knowledge. Specialism and expertise should be encouraged, valued and applied wherever relevant. The values and strength of the independent sector should be recognised and employed, alongside the national and local authority sectors.

Local government is focussed on the delivery of services to its residents and voters, skilled at supporting participative cultural experiences. Overarching policies are required to provide the context within which this provision exists and to offer the opportunity for access to the broadest range of cultural activities across the nation and to provide an international perspective.

A funding body should exist that can reach beyond local priorities, support new initiatives and innovation. It should be at a remove from local or national politics and therefore better able to help the sectors operate and deliver long-term (i.e. beyond five year electoral cycles).

Experts and producers in their fields – both from within Scotland and elsewhere – should play a central role in the decision-making process(es).

Scotland has a lively, vibrant and complex network of cultural organisations (including public and commercial agencies, higher education institutions and voluntary bodies) which all play a part in the cultural life of Scotland. The health of this network is crucial to the sustained success of Scotland's national culture.

Salary levels in the public sector arts are notoriously low which causes problems in terms of professional development, with many leaving the sector as they mature, taking with them years of knowledge and experience. This makes it difficult for the natural progression to leadership that occurs in other industries.

institutional infrastructure

Focus on the existing institutional infrastructure may be outmoded. Development of networks, within and across sectors, is the key to innovative art practice and greater public engagement.

National standards are required, but the delivery of cultural activity should vary as appropriate to particular circumstances. National resources should be identified and access on a national level enabled no matter where their immediate location may be.

A national pan-sectoral agency must be involved in decisions over the allocation of resources – knowledge and expertise over funding decisions is informed by the development of policy and strategy. We need to foster and value the development and application of expertise and the ability to look abroad for models and examples of good practise.

The infrastructure must acknowledge the three-way relationship between: **artists, spaces and audiences**. All three to be developed and supported, with the spaces in which artists and audiences come together to be the core of cultural experience.

All cultural output should be judged primarily on artistic merit, without the use of 'ring-fenced' funds for specific cultural activities.

A determined, energetic and consistent message led by the Scottish Parliament into the value and benefit of cultural activity will support a climate of acceptance that cultural organisations are effective and prudent spenders of public money. Longer term funding agreements (5 or 7 years?) will allow cultural organisations to become even more efficient in the expenditure of resources.

There are three, equally vital 'layers' of delivery: national, local and independent. All three require support.

balance of responsibilities for planning, delivery and evaluation at national and local level

Different activities have different outcomes, outputs and process and it is not necessarily possible to establish commonality across cultural sectors. The nature of empowerment will vary not only to meet local needs, but in the context of different cultural sectors. Each cultural sector already sets its own standards internationally, nationally, regionally and locally.

In order to be meaningful, evaluation measures need to be consistent across sectors. Monitoring and evaluation must foremost be qualitative, but it is recognised quantitative data is valuable.

Scotland is not large enough to introduce a level of regional planning, beyond the structure of local authorities already in place. The cost of regional administration is unlikely to be justified.

The term national should not apply solely to performing arts companies. All cultural activities and resources should be considered capable of achieving national status. A small-scale touring gallery is of national importance, in the same way as a small-scale touring theatre company. A network of national cultural assets should be identified and sustained.

Ideas exist for further co-operation between all cultural organisations, in terms of: insurance broking, building and facility management, personnel services, training and continuing professional development etc.

marketing

Marketing measures must be consistent across all development and funding agencies to ensure audience data is reliable and criteria are compatible (e.g. ensure age bands are agreed across all agencies).

Sophisticated marketing techniques are increasingly at our disposal, but can only be applied and followed thought if resources are allocated accordingly.

broadcasting

VAGA recognises the role to be played in audience development by cultural broadcasting. VAGA fully appreciates the importance of disseminating information and debate on a wide range of cultural activity, both inward and outward looking, to celebrate Scotland's many cultures and successes. High quality public service media are valuable in enhancing cultural access and learning.

VAGA Scotland Executive

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Fiona Bradley, Fruitmarket Gallery
Katrina Brown, Dundee Contemporary Arts
Suzanne Dunn, Edinburgh College of Art
Victoria Hollows, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow
Philip Long, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art
Jennifer Melville, Aberdeen Art Gallery
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