

19 January 2005

Your Ref:

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

Our Ref:

Dear James,

Phase 2 – Consultation Response

You will know from our previous conversations that COSLA is committed to using the unique opportunity afforded by the National Review of Culture to promote cultural opportunity for all of Scotland's people. At the same time, COSLA recognises the demanding nature of the Commission's remit and has regularly indicated its willingness to support the Commission's work in any way it can.

Unfortunately in this instance, COSLA is unable to provide a detailed response to the Commission's Phase 2 questionnaire. I understand that Stephen Fitzpatrick had indicated this to you following your attendance at the COSLA Task Group on 13 December. There are two main factors here. The first is that the COSLA Task Group is still working through its thinking in many of these areas and it would be both premature and potentially unhelpful to provide you with a COSLA 'view' at this time, given the scope for change. Secondly, COSLA cannot present a formal response without seeking endorsement through its political processes. The timescales involved for Phase 2 responses, regrettably, do not allow for that political endorsement to be achieved. However, COSLA is keen to provide the Commission with a clear sense of its direction of travel thus far. This reflects the work of the COSLA/VOCAL Task Group, the findings of which will require the political endorsement of Council Leaders.

In respect of governance of the sector, the Task Group has concentrated on identifying the key principles that should underpin the future development of cultural policy in Scotland. Foremost amongst these is a re-statement of the principle of democratic accountability both at the national and local levels. In practice, this would allow an enhancement of democratically elected Ministers, having direct responsibility for the decision-making at the national level, whilst also granting democratically elected local authorities responsibility for decision-making at the local level. This would firmly place the nature, funding, and development of cultural provision within Scotland in the hands of the people's representatives. This would address concerns regarding the fragmented nature of the governance and management within the sector at present. Current arrangements do not seem consistent with the more integrated view of culture that is now widely held and which is reflected in the National Cultural Strategy.

WHEN CALLING PLEASE ASK FOR: Claire Downs 0131 474 9264 claire@cosla.gov.uk

James Boyle - phase 2 response 170105 2
Claire Downs

In respect of cultural rights, the Task Group believes that the establishment of basic cultural rights supported by a set of entitlements, would be an important step towards achieving the Scottish Executive's objectives of widening access to cultural opportunities, and enabling people to develop their talents. Its view is that cultural rights should be based on the principles of every citizen in Scotland having the right to access an extensive range of local cultural provision and everyone having the means of accessing and understanding a wide range of cultural experiences.

James, I appreciate that this response does not contain the same detail that many of the other Phase 2 responses will give. However, I trust you will find it useful in identifying the key principles that are underpinning COSLA/VOCAL's work in this area. As I have assured you on several occasions, COSLA will be more than happy to share its detailed thinking with the Commission, once that thinking has been completed and has been politically endorsed by Leaders.

I know that you will receive the contents of this letter in the same spirit of goodwill in which it is sent towards, and in cooperation with the Commission in its vitally important work. In that spirit, which we have established between us, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss any possible concerns which you or any of your fellow Commissioners may have about COSLA's position as explained above. You may contact me either on 01721 721010 (business) or 07714 296454 (mobile)

With kind personal regards,

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Graham Garvie
COSLA Arts & Leisure Spokesperson
Chair Culture Review Task Group