

Federation of Scottish Theatre

Submission to the Cultural Commission

May 2005

The Federation of Scottish Theatre believes that there are three key rights and entitlements for Scottish citizens in relation to theatre that should be considered by the Cultural Commission

1. The right of every individual in Scotland to access quality theatre on a regular basis.
2. The right of every individual to have the opportunity to participate in and engage directly with theatre
3. The cultural right of the artist/theatre practitioner to have access to an adequately resourced infrastructure and the ecology to develop his or her skills.

The Federation of Scottish Theatre believes that these three areas of activity, the right to see, the right to do and the right to create, are best served by an arms length funding policy administered by an independent body. Currently this is administered by the Scottish Arts Council and other NDPB bodies.

Effective delivery of cultural rights and entitlements across the nation will only be possible with space for artists, performers and participants, both young and old, to have time and opportunity to research and develop their craft. All other areas of business and industry devote substantial resources to R&D and the FST believes that the performing and creative industries are no different.

The Cultural Commission has identified a number of options as potential delivery mechanisms for funding for the arts and culture in Scotland.

- **Option 1 CULTURE SCOTLAND** as a governing body
THE FUND as a funding mechanism

The Federation of Scottish Theatre, as a membership organisation with representation from across the whole spectrum of the theatre industry, recommends that this is the preferred option for its sector and believes that it is also the preferred option for the wider cultural community. Creativity is an integral part of cultural activity and this structure would allow both existing organisations, performers and artists to grow as well as supporting the inception and development of fledgling companies, groups and ideas.

With clear definition between advocacy and funding structures, there would be clarity of purpose for both elements of Culture Scotland and an organisation that represented all aspects of cultural activity from the smallest theatre company to the national institutions would have strong lobbying voice.

We support and acknowledge the major part that local authorities play in directly delivering cultural activity and therefore support the raised profile of culture in the proposal and the recommendation to make culture a mandatory element of Community Planning.

We would draw the Culture Commission's attention to the issue of support for theatre by local authorities and highlight in particular the issue of touring work. For touring, there are difficulties faced by companies, both in theatre and other art forms, when working across the regions of Scotland, both in application for funds and diverging regional cultural strategies within current practice of local authorities. Local authorities have widely ranging attitudes to the priority placed on arts and culture, with disparity between councils in which department the arts fit and practice. Unless this is standardised, we would suggest that further difficulties may arise, particularly for touring and the effective delivery of the proposed right for every individual across Scotland to access quality arts on a regular basis.

We support the role of the proposed National Councils within Culture Scotland to propose policy, undertake advocacy, standard setting and recommending grants, as we believe that the experienced practitioners who will sit on these councils are better placed to advise on strategy and judge artistic quality than those from out with the various sectors.

We support the holistic inclusion of the full range of work being considered together from individual artists to small companies, to the national institutions and the national companies within this structure. We believe that an overreaching grasp of cultural policy can only be achieved with the inclusion of the panoply of organisations.

We are also in favour of a funding body, not directly linked to the Executive, with the power to lobby the Executive for increased funds and engage in fundraising.

- **Option 2 Executive Agency/ Extended Department
Centre for Cultural Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CCIE)**

The FST would not recommend that this option be a priority.

We believe that arts and culture should be apolitical and that by linking governance and funding directly to the Scottish Executive, the political processes and climate would influence, either directly through legislation, or indirectly through inference, the work undertaken by artists and practitioners across all cultural activity. We believe this option would lead to changes of government directly influencing artistic and creative activity.

The FST has a fundamental belief in the right of the artist to an independent voice and believes that this option might not deliver this right and as a consequence diminish the quality of Scottish culture.

Although we appreciate that a closer relationship to government may raise awareness within Holyrood of the impact and importance of culture across many portfolios, we do not believe that this option would deliver a long-lasting respect and passion for the importance of culture amongst politicians; many would argue there would be a danger in this model of the arts becoming a hostage of shifting political priorities caused by demands on budgets and reshuffles or restructures both within "the Executive" and within local Government. Political interest *is best* engaged by a bottom up campaign highlighting the effect that the arts and culture has on their constituents' quality of life rather than a forced belief.

We believe passionately in freedom of speech for the artist and freedom for the audience to engage with culture that either represents their views or challenges their beliefs, within the bounds of taste, decency and the law. We do not believe that the proud traditions of Scottish culture would have had the opportunity to flourish had our predecessors been bound by the constraints and vagaries of party politics at a local and national level. We believe that young people growing and learning within a cultural context must have their freedoms preserved.

Conclusion

The Federation of Scottish Theatre believes that from the two options presented as possible routes forward by the Cultural Commission, Option 1 is the preferred route. We would draw the Cultural Commission's attention to Option 3 outlined in the presentation as a more preferable option for ongoing consideration. We believe that the wealth of experience and knowledge contained within the groups that would constitute the Cultural Partnership should not be disregarded lightly and that the arms length principle of assessment, funding and development undertaken by this proposed partnership would well serve the performing and creative communities of Scotland.

The Cultural Commission should be aware of the fragile infrastructure that currently exists within cultural management and the potential danger of dilution of the knowledge, skills and talent operating within the existing infrastructure, should this infrastructure be eliminated. This intellectual capital is priceless and a clean sweep of the infrastructure does not offer a solid foundation to build a secure future; we would support evolution, not revolution.

The creation of customer facing work must always be given priority in order to deliver the cultural rights and entitlements signalled by the First Minister and we would highlight the likelihood of paralysis of both creativity and decision making in the anticipation of change to funding procedures and structures.

We believe that ultimately, a vibrant and dynamic cultural landscape for Scotland is not a result of systems and procedures, but rather of vision and leadership.

Ian

From: Eddie Jackson [Eddie@borderlinetheatre.co.uk]
Sent: 31 May 2005 17:42
To: jamesboyle@culturalcommission.org.uk; James Boyle (E-mail 2)
Cc: info
Subject: FAO James Boyle :Federation of Scottish Theatre's submission to Cultural Commission [Scanned]



Cultcommison
ubmission31May 0..

James
I attach the Federation's response to the options you recently outlined as potential delivery mechanisms for funding for the arts and culture in Scotland. I trust you and yours are well.

All good wishes

Eddie Jackson
Chair
Federation of Scottish Theatre
Suite 8
Waterside House
46 Shore
Leith
EDINBURGH

<<Cultcommison submission31May 05.doc>>