



Cultural Commission

A final response from Voluntary Arts Scotland

Having now had time to consider the recent feedback from the Cultural Commission on some of the thinking on infrastructure and processes, our response is as below.

We certainly support the need to recognise cultural activity as being on a par with health, education as important to the wellbeing of Scotland. Indeed recognition of the role the voluntary arts play is seen as the major issue for the sector, even before funding!

The wording around the rights needs to recognise that people can have the choice of how they pursue their 'rights' and not just be able to fulfil them in ways the state sees fit. Obviously exercising their choice needs to be within other legal considerations.

Referring back to our initial submission we articulated this as:

- Citizens can express themselves through active participation in the cultures of their choice in Scotland.
- Citizens can seek to exercise this expression as appropriate.
- Citizens to have access to opportunities to try different cultures and diverse ways of expression.
- Citizens should have the right level of support for their chosen activity/activities. Any support should enable people to participate according to their individual needs. There should be a level of provision of materials for arts and cultural activity in schools and communities

We see a five ways of progressing these rights:

1. Encouraging participation as this is the fundamental way people will exercise their rights.

This is participation not only in the arts and crafts but also in the policy making processes around culture. Some of the infrastructure proposals do lend themselves to this area. The main decisions need to be about how the government – national and local - supports peoples' decisions. This is where the alignment of culture with the community planning process certainly can help. This will help people see that rights also mean a responsibility on the citizen's part.

Cultural strategy should emerge from what people want to do – not defined by other institutions. The Scottish Executive and/or its agencies will then have an enabling role. Their direction should be about setting objectives. The tactics and the detailed planning will then be at the local and organisational level.

This process could also help us move away from 'sectors' and bring together the holistic map of the cultural activity of Scotland based on how people take part, rather than specific art-form. A concern would be the way the proposed 5 National Councils and 6 Culture Boards could potentially still divide along silos. There would need to be further thought as to how people access their cultural activity.

We believe that to properly measure impact you need to have good baseline information. The research undertaken into voluntary sector input and also our own umbrella body research can provide some of the data, but alone are not robust enough to form a baseline. Resources should be put into fuller research in this area if impact is to be measured seriously.

Finally there needs to be a recognition that there are different ways into participation such as through the path of innovation which often takes place outside of the current funding system. What could be termed the 'anvil of creation' is particularly evident in the voluntary sector. People perceive a need and they take action to remedy it. This is the motivation behind most cultural groups and their work even today. From rural amateur drama groups to social inclusion areas such as the Gorbals and Wester Hailes – it is local people who have taken the initiative – usually unpaid – to provide an opportunity and make things better for their community. Often the official funding schemes, policies and support come after the fact.

2. Ensure there is funding/resources to make it possible for people to pursue their interests and encourage / help others get involved.

We agree that 'Culture' should be funded for its own sake not to achieve something else though we know that there is a case at times to be made that it can assist other areas achieve their goals as well. We can achieve a stable revenue funding base for the arts through:

- Equivalent amounts of funding available for all areas of the arts – not based on historical precedent, but showing parity of esteem between the arts and crafts people practice themselves and those made for them to consume.
- Recognition that all arts & crafts activity has a value whether organised by a paid or unpaid staff member and so should have the opportunity to be funded regardless of its 'status'.
- Clear definitions e.g. what is a 'national company'?
- Three year (at least) funding agreements for core work and full cost recovery for projects.
- Proper funding for support bodies such as intermediaries as recommended by the Treasury Review of the community and voluntary sector.
- Arts funders should concentrate on being good funders and avoid trying to be "development agencies". Independent, stakeholder responsive development agencies provide healthy, cost effective support.
- And, as mentioned before, sensible levels of core funding allow stability and encourage innovation.

A small amount of core funding for materials, maybe a part-time paid worker, goes along way in the voluntary arts sector – giving much more return on investment than in some other areas. For example some of the research results in other areas of the UK indicate that turnover by voluntary arts groups in Scotland could be at least £10million with half of that amount being spent locally on materials, employing people and hiring facilities. Plus there are at least 1,500 opportunities to take part in the arts and crafts each week on average created by voluntary arts groups throughout Scotland. And that is at the current level of funding – imagine what could be done with a little more support!

Resources are not just confined to funding. There are also the suggestions from the Voluntary Sector Input study about good practice, websites and dissemination of information. Help and advice before financial problems occur would be useful. Continuing to streamline application and reporting processes – making reporting easier and covering more funders' requirements. Having relevant evaluation and monitoring methods appropriate to the level of funding and nature of activity, adjusted according to place project/partnership/practice would assist - not on comparing apples and pears e.g. international excellence v involvement of community in arts project.

IT developments are certainly a way that will help the cultural sector manage their organisations and information flow better, but there needs to be a provision for helping groups get the right resources, training and support to take advantage of such solutions. www.workwithus.org is a good example of how IT services can be packaged for a market – in this case – the voluntary sector through consultation with the sector. There are also developments the Voluntary Arts Network are working at that will make it easier for the sector to collaborate.

3. Developing links between community and schools – using experience and time resource of community members and groups to enhance students cultural learning and passing on traditions.

Another issue of great importance to the voluntary arts sector is the provision of accessible venues (both physically and geographically). Some local authorities recognise the difference in the ability to pay between community and commercial organisations and charge accordingly. Others charge the full rate even to community / voluntary groups, resulting in venues being underutilised by the local population to put on events for each other or if they do, they sometimes face considerable risk to meet the financial costs. There are also examples of those facilities set aside for community based use being marginalised when it comes to necessary upgrades such as to meet the Disability Discrimination Act regulations. An accompanying issue has also been who meets the costs of insurance when groups are using venues. Community schools have been one of the ways that both the preceding issue and also the lack of venues in an area have been tackled. Utilising school facilities throughout the week and weekend is a significant avenue to community and intergenerational integration. Good practice examples exist in Boyne and Banchory, Deeside.

Young people need to be let to do what they want to do at the same time, making sure that they also have access to new opportunities that may not be readily available otherwise. It is important that 'the arts' do not get 'rammed down' their throats at school. Then cultural activities become associated with school and when it becomes time to 'grow up' they leave them behind. It is very necessary that the 'parents/guardians as first teachers' is seen in this light too. We can't neglect the older generations in encouraging their cultural activity or them into an interest based on the arts and crafts. If children see their parents and other adults engaged and enjoying cultural activities they are more likely to see how it can be a lifelong interest and not just for childhood.

4. Process

The Scottish Parliament, the main body responsible to the people of Scotland, should have the responsibility of cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities through an

annual report from the Scottish Executive – effectively providing overall cultural leadership.

As to how the Scottish Executive implements the support of cultural rights and their attendant policies - that is not so easy! Besides them needing to take account of agreements such as the Voluntary Sector Compact, the arms length principle is a big consideration. The major strength of 'arms length' is the potential if correctly constructed to independently put the case for culture. The concern is about taking the responsibility too far away from government makes it easier for those in power to marginalise such a body, or dare I say it cut it off, reduce funding, or expect to raise large amounts of its own funding as is evidenced by past performance.

We think the separation of the development from funding aspects could work well as it will restore some of the trust that is needed in both areas of operation. The division of policy and funding must not be allowed to go separate ways as this could lead to even more duplication of effort to report to targets and paperwork in general. Whatever the shape the body or bodies take they must have ability to make things happen; set minimum standards and objectives; continue to encourage and increase 'transparency'; be vehicles for employing continuous dialogue/consultation and employ sound monitoring and evaluation techniques with review and appeal processes. Also even if there are to be completely new bodies we must make sure we do not lose the best of previous learning and knowledge of value.

There will still also be the need to develop relationships with other cultural agencies/ organisations operating in the UK and further afield. The bodies will need to talk to each other, engage in joint long term planning while also recognising that there may be different strategies required.

There also needs to be examination of other bodies that touch on the cultural sphere such as the consideration of only one economic development agency which also has a remit to support the Third Sector and arts development activities instead of the two - Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise. VisitScotland could have more responsibility to promote the cultures of Scotland (not just events) to the international market in partnership with other bodies, to recognise that promotion happens on so many different levels - from high profile cultural exchanges to informal grassroots exchange. All are vital as they present the different facets of Scotland's cultures and people.

We are not convinced that there is a need for separate regional structures for cultural planning as Scotland is not a large country and connected enough, though we see encouraging local authorities to work together is as a positive step. Again the link to community planning should mean better resources for local authority arts officers who could interact with Voluntary Arts Scotland and voluntary sector in general as they would like to.

5. The role in advocacy

Our concern is that advocacy for 'culture' will be difficult to delegate to a single body – each group/persons issues are individual and everyone needs to take responsibility. Would a single body be able to represent a diversity of views? One option with regards to the proposals is that the national bod(ies) could provide a forum for these views to be aired to see if there is any consensus or areas of agreement.

We also need to build on what has been currently created by the relevant parts of the cultural sector. This includes the existing umbrella bodies and Voluntary Arts Scotland itself, and how the predominantly amateur sector has chosen them as the way to come together across the different arts and crafts forms to advocate for how they choose to access cultural activity and fulfil their creative potential.

There are an estimated 2 million people in Scotland who participate in the arts and crafts, with 9,400 organisations (18.8% of the voluntary sector in general) and 263,400 volunteers in the sector. Voluntary Arts Scotland was created to support these people's and groups' efforts to provide cultural activity in their communities.

The proposed structures have the great potential of being dominated by those cultural organisations with paid staff. A positive move to make sure that this would not happen would be resource Voluntary Arts Scotland to sit at the table for the purpose it was created by the voluntary cultural sector.

A precedent is the partnership funding that key intermediaries in the voluntary sector receive in Wales to enable them to participate in such policy and strategic work with the Assembly. Our sister organisation, Voluntary Arts Wales is seen as one such key intermediary and has been successful in being a main proponent of getting culture seen as a cross cutting agenda item. Such enabling of Voluntary Arts Scotland would be a valuable asset for the case of the cultural sector as whole. Indeed there are many times when we have been the only body with a cultural background at important policy events.

The major reason that Voluntary Arts Scotland has not promoted itself as much as the sector would like to see, is that with its current funding it would have no hope of meeting the demand that would come, not to mention what is already there. Many of the items mentioned in the Voluntary Sector Input survey findings are actually already being offered by Voluntary Arts Scotland or there is the capability to so – just not the capacity! This capacity also includes appropriate support for the different umbrella bodies.

Voluntary grassroots and national cultural organisations already made their decision 10 years ago how they wanted to have development and representation delivered for their sector. And many of them continue to support their decision through the election process for the Voluntary Arts Scotland committee. So we are not making these comments 'because of course we would' but we would be letting down the voluntary cultural sector if we did not.

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Scottish Civic Forum

Role of Civic Society

Points from Workshop at their AGM with regards to the Cultural Commission

- How can people know what they want?
- Marketing and Promotion - raising profiles
- Resources are needed
- Have examples of culture to build idea
- People do need help and encouragement
- Differences and connections with Europe!
- Do we want government telling us what our culture is and how we express it? eg. Scottish Opera, maybe input but youth culture = less 'interference'
- If no government money will private money dictating agenda?
- Traditional arts are celebrated and respected but also recognised as dynamic
- Cross collaboration
- Funding – kick-start with government involvement
- Culture – community planning, promotion of well being
- People need a chance and space to learn no matter age or ability
- Can be different centres, not just schools and using Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs)
- Artist / Writer in Residence schemes expand – in schools, communities, workplaces, businesses – encouraging creativity
- people doing it ourselves - everyone needs a way to express themselves
- Need to look holistically
- Culture not just about special times but population expressing culture all the time, eg. through how they respond to consultations etc.
- Not just economic, service analysis – also cultural analysis
- Making culture statements plus Cultural reflection / dimension
- Cultural impact (also known as environmental impact)
- Opening statements [of consultation] shouldn't be lost
- Provide money to local authorities for new cultural projects – links between local groups and local authorities – access to other funding
- Community Councils
- Hong Kong – idea of vertical village with all facilities on communal bottom floors including cultural. Often they would have community orchestra – which visiting international orchestras and similar groups as part of their funding would be required to go and give a workshop to – think of idea in e.g. Slateford Green housing and community space
- Funding for accessibility – teaching BSL to residents – common space with common communication
- National Treasures idea – from Japan? Selected people (usually older generation) paid an allowance/wage and their role is to go and teach younger generations their art and craft form – to inspire and link the different age groups.

Ian

From: Fiona Campbell [fiona@vascotland.org.uk]
Sent: 30 May 2005 16:35
To: Ian
Subject: Further information for the Cultural Commission[Scanned]

Hello Ian

Hope there may still be time to submit these responses. The first is from Voluntary Arts Scotland particularly in light of the the information we got in Stirling. It has been delayed as we are having to leave our office about 4 weeks earlier than we had been led to expect so we have had to spend time arranging our accommodation instead of proper work!!

Our contact details will be staying the same, though we physically will be moving this Thursday and Friday.

The second is notes I have just got from the Scottish Civic Forum AGM workshop (someone else was typing them up). I wasn't too sure how much detail the Cultural Commission report was going to go into, but I thought it was still worth sending in for a couple of ideas that are mentioned in them.

Regards
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"Promoting participation in the arts and crafts"

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