



**Response to the Minister on the  
Cultural Commission Report and Recommendations  
September 2005**

**Where We Have Come From:**

The final report of the Cultural Commission “Our next major enterprise...” published in June 2005 is to be welcomed for its effort to harness the complex yet rich cultural assets that Scotland has to offer. We should all acknowledge that the cultural review process has brought improved communication and dialogue among the different elements of the cultural landscape in Scotland. An extensive amount of research has also been undertaken over the yearlong process and it is important that we build upon this work without delay.

The Cultural Commission’s report has successfully identified the main barriers to the effective delivery of culture in Scotland: - the current lack of strategic alignment and partnership working across the key cultural strategic agencies, national delivery organisations and local delivery structures. With this in mind the Scottish Museums Council fully agrees with Patricia Ferguson, our Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, who has clearly stated that the status quo is “not an option” and that the priority should be to spend money in culture “rather than on unnecessary bureaucracy”.

This response is an attempt to build upon the aforementioned research, the positive work that has been conducted by the Cultural Commission and the excellence that currently exists within our lead cultural strategic agencies, delivery organisations and structures.

Although there are some misconceptions concerning museums and galleries with relation to education, ICT, access, workforce development and collections knowledge, we would be happy to discuss these issues separately with the Minister or MSPs as appropriate.

Whatever model is decided upon by the Minister the cultural sector is united in agreement that it should have minimal bureaucratic cost and maximum investment in frontline services thereby:

- Maximising quality of output
- Having democratic accountability
- Building best practice
- Achieving maximum impact for minimal disruption
- Providing a strong leadership while at the same time enabling local diversity and artistic freedom
- Developing radical change through an evolutionary process

### **The Current Role of the Scottish Executive (SE):**

The SE has a very small division for culture with few staff and limited resources. Some extra capacity has recently been developed through the establishment of the Analytical Service Unit within the Tourism, Culture and Sport Group, which is now looking at developing the evidence base for the whole cultural portfolio. The national cultural statistics that report on the progress of the National Cultural Strategy will be the vehicle for this evidence base.

The SE funds the sector strategic agencies, largely with development, research and grant funding, which is now delivered on a three-year cycle. The national museums, galleries and libraries and other NDPB's are all funded directly by the Executive, keeping some capacity at Executive level.

The SE also allocate the 'GAE' to the local authorities who then allocate cultural spend based on local priorities. There are no guidelines or processes in place to influence how the local cultural spend is allocated, the legislation terms the local authorities' responsibility as 'adequate cultural provision'.

### **The Current Role of the Sector Strategic Agencies**

Essentially there are a number of key strategic agencies representing different sectors of the cultural community in Scotland. Some of these are purely strategic, some are membership organisations and some have either formal links to, or have subsumed various national delivery organisations. The majority of these are small, and able to act swiftly and effectively for their respective sectors, undertaking strategic development functions and some advocacy work. The largest of these agencies is the Scottish Arts Council (SAC), which supports the large range of disciplines defined as 'the arts'. SAC's functions have also been enhanced through the channelling and administration of revenue support for the large national delivery organisations and for some of the larger local delivery organisations.

It could be argued that the larger scale agency of SAC has created additional capacity for the arts, which can be seen in increased budgets and the level of funding achieved by this sector. It is also evidenced by the high profile the arts enjoy in Scotland, with much of the debate around the Cultural

Commission being focused on the future of SAC. These successes are tempered by the problems that have drawn negative media attention to the national delivery organisations that are funded through an agency. The model of indirect funding of national delivery through an agency contrasts with the model of the museums, galleries and libraries sectors, where national institutions are funded directly by the SE. Several other models also exist, such as Historic Scotland, which is a SE agency providing a development function, whilst also serving a delivery function through the properties it safeguards and operates. Scottish Museums Council (SMC) and the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) combine their function of sector strategic agency, with a membership function.

### **The Current Role of the National Delivery Organisations**

The national delivery organisations do make a strategic contribution to cultural provision in Scotland, given their sheer capacity, their concentration of resources and the quality of their services and collections. Their strategic capacity is usually channelled through a variety of nationwide partnerships both with strategic development agencies and local deliverers. The funding of these organisations is, as outlined above, confused with some funding direct from the SE and some channelled through SAC.

### **The Current Status of Local Delivery**

Scotland's local authorities became single unitary authorities in 1996, a change which, for many authorities, meant culture slipped down the political agenda. The capacity for local delivery has been depleted as local political priorities have sometimes prevented a more strategic approach to cultural delivery. The impact of the 2002 Community Planning legislation and infrastructure is just starting to emerge and some local authorities are adopting an area-based approach to delivery of services, which has the potential to enable a strategic approach to cultural planning and delivery.

### **The User**

The reality for the user of cultural services in Scotland is a somewhat disjointed and potentially confusing experience. There are cultural black spots in local delivery and areas with a duplication of services. The user does not differentiate between the different providers, but there is an expectation that cultural services should be readily available and accessible to a consistently high standard.

## **An Evolving Agency – the SMC Example**

SMC was founded in 1964, and began as a small membership organisation for the non-national museum sector. It has since developed a strategic role, channelling SE development funding in the form of grant aid and providing advice for government policy. There is a close working relationship between SMC (representing the non-national museums) and the National Museums and the National Galleries, who are partners in the delivery of a suite of four development strategies through which SMC directs the majority of its work:

- National ICT Strategy
- Learning and Access Strategy
- Workforce Development Strategy
- Collections Development Strategy

SMC is beginning to focus on functions and issues that crosscut all parts of the cultural sector, such as developing a standards framework for this diverse sector. This will assist in addressing the development of an evidence base for the sector to demonstrate the delivery of cultural entitlements in Scotland. The development of performance measures for the sector will also help the SE to demonstrate how culture delivers on other areas such as health, well being, young people and education. SMC is beginning to advocate the impact of museums and galleries on the Scottish tourism sector, with a recent conference, *Realising the Potential* and a report, *Realising the True Impact*, both of which are helping to form new partnerships with VisitScotland, Highland and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise.

SMC delivers the above functions as a strategic agency from the base of a membership organisation. The membership elect the board through a democratic process, and have voted to support SMC's increasingly strategic role at the cost of direct delivery of support services to the membership base. The membership model offers an open process of 'involving all' and appears to be working well for this sector.

## **Evolution of Structures**

In parallel with the aspiration to make cultural entitlements available, therefore upholding the cultural rights of Scottish citizens, a more evidence-based approach to delivering culture in Scotland is starting to emerge. This evidence base will provide an audit trail of how public money is being used to deliver entitlements. There is an emerging understanding of the 'added value' that cultural provision can give to communities and of the social, environmental and economic outcomes and impacts it delivers. For example, it is now readily accepted that in the area of regeneration a cultural planning framework can help to build a dialogue with the community where regeneration funds are to be directed. Without that dialogue, regeneration funds would not provide sustainable development, as the community who live in the regenerated environment would not have shaped the vision being imposed.

## **Evolution of Structures Continued**

The SE has already recognised the power of this evidence base through its investment in an Analytical Unit for Culture, Tourism and Sport. They are beginning to start work in this area, providing a strategic lead by commissioning a National Participation Survey. The work is in its early stages and there is still much to develop. The various sector strategic agencies and the national delivery organisations are contributing to the emerging evidence base through national cultural statistics, reporting on the achievement of targets through a National Cultural Strategy. The sector strategic agencies are vital to the process as they are the appropriate mechanism for evidence to be collected to a grass root level. They have detailed knowledge of their sectors and usually have long term working relationships, with extensive networks in place. This work is laying the foundation for a network of national standards across the various cultural themes, which will ensure that any entitlements that are delivered are available to a high and equitable standard throughout Scotland.

## **Where Do We Go From Here?**

The following section is summarised in two diagrams as a separate appendix.

### **At the Scottish Executive Level**

There is now a need for clear leadership from the government to put the cultural infrastructure in place, building on the developments outlined above. What has emerged from the process and debate of the Cultural Commission is the need for a stronger Department of Culture, Tourism and Sport with more capacity to take the strategic lead and to aggregate the evidence base collected by the sector strategic agencies and the national delivery organisations. This would present a single strong voice for culture at government level responding to the shift to evidence based policy making. In addition, it would bring some uniformity of practice if the funding of the arts-based delivery organisations were also moved to Executive level, and the addition of the archives into this Department would reflect similar structures already in existence around the UK.

There are a number of existing structures that would remain. The presence of sport in the culture portfolio is more reflective of the perception of popular culture and is in line with local authority based service delivery. Tourism has strong links with culture and much of the visitor experience in Scotland is reliant on the Scottish cultural product, meaning these two areas help to strengthen the culture portfolio. The continued direct Executive funding of the national delivery organisations does help to add capacity at the Executive level and also is reflective of the strategic capacity that resides in these national delivery organisations.

An enhanced Department of Culture, Tourism and Sport would provide leadership at the highest levels of government championing the cause of culture, whilst also highlighting where cultural spend occurs in other ministerial portfolios. The advice and evidence base provided by the sector strategic agencies would inform cultural policy. An enhanced Department would also prioritise and set policy over a longer timeframe, directing funding to the cultural infrastructure as needed. It would also have more opportunity to enhance the funding available for culture by championing the cause at the highest levels. The Department would enshrine cultural rights in legislation and endorse the cultural entitlements offered by the cultural sector.

### **At the Sector Strategic Agency level.**

The sector strategic agencies are delivered through a variety of governance models. Often these have evolved in response to the needs of the particular sector that they represent. The governance of these agencies is not the issue, but rather their functionality. If there was uniformity in function it would ensure that when the Department of Culture, Tourism and Sport sets forward a strategic lead then the agencies would be able to respond in similar ways, with the added value of the production of a comparable evidence base.

The sector strategic agencies would be central to the development of a standards framework, in order to ensure that any entitlements offered by the respective sectors are done so to a consistently high standard and with equality of opportunity. The agencies are in the position to advise on the setting of standards and to use the grass roots links they support and develop to inform government policy making. The standards framework would assist in the process of openness and accountability of public spending.

The sector strategic agencies would also carry out research functions with their respective sectors to assist in informing government policymaking. These research and development functions would help to drive the continuous development of a standards framework ensuring the evidence base collected is relevant to both current practice and the needs of the users.

### **At the National Delivery Organisations Level**

The direct SE funding of all national delivery organisations for the cultural sector would create new and additional capacity at the SE level. This would be used to deliver strategic leadership and enhance the voice of culture at Ministerial level.

The national delivery organisations would engage directly with the user delivering national cultural entitlements and contributing to local cultural strategies through the network of partnerships.

### **At the Local Delivery Level**

Local cultural entitlements would be delivered through partnerships developed through the process of creating local cultural strategies. This process would need to be rigorous with extensive guidelines enshrined in legislation, building on the framework of the 2002 Local Government Acts of Community Planning and Well-being. The 32 Local Authorities would take a lead role in the delivery of these cultural strategies with public sector cultural delivery funding being channelled from the SE through the LA infrastructure. Local Cultural Strategies would also be accountable through a standards framework, as well as adhering to guidelines in the process of their development, in order to ensure consistent high quality.

### **The Benefits to the Users**

- Equality of opportunity to take up cultural entitlements at both national and local level across Scotland
- Consistently high quality delivery of cultural services and experiences that meet or exceed the users' expectations
- Local cultural strategies that involve and engage people in decision-making processes
- Releases the potential for creativity and artistic freedom to flourish

## **Summary of Key Points**

- Enhanced strategic capacity at the Scottish Executive level would allow a Ministry to provide leadership for all parts of cultural delivery including agency level. A strengthened SE would have the opportunity to make the case for enhanced funding based on evidence of cultural impacts.
- The structure that funds the national delivery organisations would have enhanced strategic capacity.
- The governance of the sector strategic agencies is not the issue, but rather the parity of functions and relationships that they carry out for both the delivery organisations and the SE.
- If functions are aggregated i.e. a Culture Scotland, capacity and leadership would then sit at an agency level, not at the SE level, and strategic direction would be fragmented between the different cultural sectors.

**Joanne Orr**  
**Director, Scottish Museums Council**