



Scottish **Arts** Council

SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL

**CORE FUNDED ORGANISATIONS
4th SEMINAR**

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Report of proceedings Prepared by Carol Warner, Arts Development

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July 2005

1. Scottish Arts Council Director, Graham Berry: setting the scene, and appraising the challenges that lie ahead

The Scottish Arts Council's budget from the Scottish Executive has now been on standstill for three years.

80% of that budget (£32million) is immediately committed to core-funded organisations. There is minimal funding for new entrants, for refreshing the pool of talent, or for risk-taking,.

The Scottish Arts Council is determined that gains made in recent years should not be lost. Scrutiny of the fragile ecosystems in which artists co-exist has confirmed much that we knew: that the arts seethes with cross-fertilisation - of ideas and techniques and styles; but also that each art-form is different and requires an individual approach to sustenance.

Investment must be focussed on artists, organisations or projects that we all agree should have a long-term, sustainable future.

We have either to increase funding (the optimum scenario), or reconfigure funding (the radical scenario). In the optimum scenario, we need to demonstrate how desirable investment allows the arts to grow from strength to well-nourished strength.

Running parallel with our review is the work of the Cultural Commission. Whatever its recommendations, we believe that support for the arts will be required, and that it is in all our interests to find the most productive way forward.

To support the Scottish Arts Council's bid in the Comprehensive Spending Review we need your help in building the case and providing the arguments.

We need the sector to make its voice heard.

2. Scottish Arts Council, Head of Arts, Jim Tough: Emerging Themes

The current funding model is unsustainable. At its most simplistic we need increased investment and/or a new focus for our activity.

The message from Council to the Scottish Arts Council's officers is that they want to see a fresh approach, both what we do and how we do it, and what we fund and how we fund it.

Our ideas have inevitably been affected by the existence of the Cultural Commission.

To date we have not established a set of clear priorities, or contemplated a radical shift in direction. We have spent some time considering each art form as an ecosystem, inviting each Scottish Arts Council department to describe the relationships and the dynamics in their bit of the world, and testing this description with committees, council and colleagues. There isn't yet a sense that we should focus more or less on any particular area, theme or discipline. But what may emerge is a different way of doing things - a realignment of our effort, that not only makes us more effective, but also allows us to define our leadership role in a changing world.

What might this new world look like? It could be an arm's length national arts body.

Implicit in this view is a new relationship that leaves the detail to independent sectoral interests, with a central body acting nationally and internationally. This approach would

have the Scottish Arts Council moving from service delivery and funding to an enabling role, a role that is responsive less to the individual organisations and more to confederations of sectoral interests.

Small examples of this model exist already: the Gaelic Arts Strategic Development Group have come together with funds from the Scottish Arts Council and Bord na Gaihdlig to develop a programme that serves their sector.

There could be several benefits to be gained from such an approach:

- Devolved responsibility for funding and strategy implementation, pushing operational activity down to the point of delivery;
- Improved engagement with practitioners;
- A more coherent, distinctive and representative voice for each sector.
- Better use of Scottish Arts Council skills and national overview in areas of need such as research, professional development and international relations.

Discussion about a new kind of relationship between the Scottish Arts Council and the arts sectors has a long way to go, but it is worth trying to answer the very obvious questions that arise:

- What principles could apply to any new approach, (particularly regarding governance, accountability and costs)?
- Are all art forms ready or suited to this?
- What about arts activity that doesn't sit in an art form per se?
- How would the national companies fit into such a model?

Hopefully we can begin that conversation today.

The other emerging theme that we want to explore with you is more familiar: cultural planning that works across sectors and local authority boundaries. This is being considered by the Commission, and is certainly something that we proposed in our first submission.

Finally since we met, we have made two submissions to the Commission. We circulated the summary versions - the key points were:

- the importance of the artist, and the idea of an artist's charter
- cultural planning
- the importance of the arm's length principle.
- a higher political profile for culture through a Ministerial position with that brief.
- increased investment
- the importance of diversity and creativity.
- the need for better research, in particular with regard to audiences.
- the case for a vigorous and confident international strategy for cultural activity
- a new approach for sustaining community based cultural activity.

3. Questions and Comments

The morning concluded with comments and questions on the following:

How should the Scottish Arts Council identify demand; why can't the Scottish Arts Council lobby for resources? The burden of reporting for small/voluntary organisations; Small resources can liberate potential.

1. Existing organisations are operating below capacity.
2. Arts funds ring-fenced to non-arts agendas.
3. The politics of investment vs subsidy
4. What is the basis of government refusal to increase funding?
5. The Minister for Tourism Culture & Sport and her support for the Arts.

4. Afternoon workshops: Exploring Emerging Themes

The delegates broke into eight groups for the afternoon workshops. The membership of each group is listed at Appendix B.

What follows is a summary of the discussions and conclusions. A verbatim report is available. A significant amount of discussion focused on the following topics:

No. of occurrences	Topic
35	Practicalities of devolution
17	Difficulty of dealing with Local Authorities
13	Concern at the possibility of devolution to Local Authorities
13	The role of Scottish Arts Council
10	The importance of a national overview
7	Advocacy
8	The constitution of devolved authorities

The groups were invited to consider two broad topics:

1. New relationships and the role of the Scottish Arts Council

- to what extent does the idea of moving towards a more devolved approach make sense in the changing circumstances of Scotland?
- which approach is the most likely to suit specific sectors, acknowledging that each sector is different?
- How could this approach accommodate non-art-form-specific activity?
- What are the key roles and functions that should be retained at a national level?

2. Working and planning across local authority boundaries

- What would be the benefits of an approach that saw local authorities planning their cultural activities across their existing boundaries?
- How could CFOs be involved in this type of process?
- How might work be affected (if at all) by a city/region approach?

3. The group discussions also threw up various **ideas for stimulating public debate about support for the arts**. The following is a summary. A verbatim record of these ideas is set out in full at **Appendix C**.

- Arts should have a place and role in every ministerial department.
- CFOs - generate high impact headlines.

- CFOs - act collectively.
- CFOs - encourage their Board members to be more active, and to respond to negative press.
- CFO Boards - mobilise in support of the arts in general, not just their own organisations.
- Consider a professionally organised PR campaign.
- Consult the London based National Campaign for the Arts.
- SAC - be the lobby body.
- SAC - co-ordinate the commissioning of feature articles on projects or issues
- A 'Wristband' for the arts should be considered.
- A Bob Geldof, or other high profile champion(s) for the arts should be engaged.
- A campaign which should be positive and celebratory. The Edinburgh International Festival should be used as a platform to give the debate profile.
- A 'culture' section on news programmes.
- A National Arts Day, along the lines of Doors Open Day.
- Celebrate the international impact of Scottish arts.
- Richard Holloway make a St Andrew's Day speech on the intrinsic value of the arts.
- Media to be wooed, and the agenda seized.

5. Plenary Session

Various topics were raised in the plenary session:

1. that it was too early to give full response to the idea of devolution, but that there appears to be an appetite for change.
2. that delegates were worried about the impact of devolution on the constitution of the arts sector overall. Some devolution could be appropriate, but it may not work in all areas.
3. that Sector devolution is a good idea, (eg Gaelic Arts Strategic Development Group or the Literature Forum), but it needs clear reporting structures and funding criteria.
4. that Local Authorities have too many political considerations to be involved in the devolution of arts funding. Devolution to LAs was strongly rejected by delegates.
5. that Rights should be a driver to make LAs deliver.
6. that cross-border collaborations are difficult because LAs lack consistency of approach. Nevertheless some collaboration does happen.
7. that the Arm's-length Principle is correct.
8. that CFOs should be coaxed to adopt a single voice. (SAC might convene a user group.)

9. that SAC should raise public debate by distilling messages and collecting evidence to support publicity. CFO Boards should support this as 'advocates'
10. that a People's Culture Show might be promoted.
11. that part of any campaign should focus on the newest generation of artists.
12. that any erosion of SAC's role was likely to lead to a narrowing of provision.
13. that new structures would lead to increased cost and complexity.

6. Cultural Commission - update

Graham Berry, Scottish Arts Council Director, presented an update on the work of the Cultural Commission, and the following discussion points were raised:

1. The Culture Commission's report was now due for publication on 8 June.
2. Changes to the Scottish Arts Council's Royal Charter could be made by the Privy Council - Legislation would take longer (beyond 2008).
3. The place of the artist and creativity may have been lost in the Culture Commission's work.
4. The Commission's work did not appear to include the improvement of cross-sectoral working relationships.
5. There was agreement on the importance of an arm's-length arrangement.
6. It was important to establish a proper balance between rights and standards, on the one hand, and structures on the other.
7. Richard Holloway should act as champion for the arts with politicians.
8. The arts sector should aspire to the kind of strongly organised position enjoyed by organisations like COSLA.
9. Adequate arts provision should be made an obligation for Local Authorities.

7. Concluding comments by Richard Holloway

We are convinced that creativity only thrives when it is at arm's-length from government.

The arm's-length principle is necessary to avoid inappropriate influences on decision-making. It acts as a check against unhealthy concentrations of power. It allows decisions to be challenged. It protects freedom of expression. It strengthens advocacy, expert advice and public scrutiny. And it is complimentary to existing democratic structures.

We believe that adherence to the arm's-length principle does not diminish our commitment and ability to respond to wider public policy, or to contribute to the improvement of Scottish public life.

Action: On the basis of the comments raised, the CFOs present agreed to produce a joint statement on the arm's length principle and send to James Boyle, Cultural Commission, and the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Appendix A – Agenda

CFO Day 4 17 May Grosvenor Hotel, Edinburgh

- 11am Arrival – Tea/Coffee
- 11.30am **Welcome and Setting the Scene** Graham Berry, Director
- Appraisal of the challenges ahead
- Emerging Themes** Jim Tough, Head of Arts
- 20:20 Arts Vision – a progress report and emerging themes
 - New relationships and the role of the Scottish Arts Council
 - New planning approaches and partnerships
 - Developing our Quality Framework
- 12.15pm **Questions and Comments**
- 12.45pm Lunch/Networking
- 1.30pm **Exploring Emerging Themes** (in small groups)
- Working and planning across local authority boundaries (reference to Cultural Commission submissions)
 - New relationships and the role of the Scottish Arts Council
- 2.30pm **Plenary from Groups**
- 3.00pm **Cultural Commission update** - Graham Berry, Director
- 3.30pm **Concluding Comments** - Richard Holloway, Chair, Scottish Arts Council
- 4pm **Tea/Coffee & Close of Day**



Group 1

Jane Jeffrey
Ruth Ogston
Gill Robertson
Kath Mainland
Richard Shaw
Nikki Axford
Amanda Chinn
Ian Ritchie
Steve Slater
Stephen Wrentmore

SAC

Aly Barr
Tamsin Mendelsohn

Group 2

Robert Livingston
Andy Arnold
Graham McKenzie
Adrian Trickey
Cynthis Rogerson
Malcolm MacLean
Gwen Enstam
Malcolm Dickson
Philip Howard
Gordon Maclean

SAC

Gillian Shaw
Anita Clark

Group 3

David Cook
Sarah Chester
Anna Stapleton
Fred Emden
Vicky Featherstone
Anne Knowles
Robyn Marsack
Guy Hollands
Janet Ward

SAC

Susan Hay
Amanda Catto

Group 4

Alexandra Stampler
Cathy Hirschmann
Sarah Munro
Karen Shaw
Ian Mills
Simon Hart
Liz Small
Zoe Fothergill

SAC

David Taylor
Iain Munro

Group 5

Heather Duncan
Duncan Jones
Diana Sykes
Ben Spencer
Richard Chester
Julian de Ste Croix
Joanna Bremner
Kate Bowen
Lara Bowen

SAC

Angela Hogg
Caroline Docherty

Carol Warner
Michelle Jordan

Group 6

Marc Lambert
Ben Walmsley
Jenny Wilson
Alastair McDonald
Cezanne Charles
Michael Hance
Carolyn Lappin
Stephanie Wright
Katrina Brown
Mark Thomson

SAC

Jaine Lumsden
Fiona Sturgeon

Group 7

Katie Stuart
Helen Coughtrie
Lorna Duguid
Clark Crystal
Iain Gunn
Peter Winckles
Mary McCluskey
Robert Rae
Gordon Munro

SAC

Jenny Attala
Joan Parr

Group 8

Jane Speirs
Rebecca Taverner
Colin Marr
Liz Moran
Lindsay Gordon
Roy McEwan
Kathy Hubbard
Anne Neilson
Colin Richardson-Webb

SAC

Carolyn Paterson

Appendix C – Group Workshops

Notes from afternoon workshops: Exploring Emerging Themes

The delegates broke into eight groups, and invited to consider two broad topics:

1. New relationships and the role of the Scottish Arts Council
2. Working across local authority boundaries

1. New relationships and the role of the Scottish Arts Council

- To what extent does the idea of moving towards a more devolved approach make sense in the changing circumstances of Scotland?
- Which approach is the most likely to suit specific sectors, acknowledging that each sector is different?
- How could this approach accommodate non-art-form-specific activity?
- What are the key roles and functions that should be retained at a national level?

The groups responses were broadly around the following themes:

Moving towards a devolved approach

- Recognition of the distinctions of different regions: one size does not fit all
- The ideal would be to achieve a good balance of strong local roots and flavour for artists, festivals and organisations to work within a strong national ARTS strategy.
- Careful consideration needed for what operated at national/devolved level.
- Don't want a situation with too many layers of bureaucracy x 32; how to balance the tension between fulfilling a national or local agenda
- Touring organisations can and could find it difficult to operate between different regional criteria, agendas and bureaucracies.
- Good communication would be essential between regional officers, and there is fear that this would be patchy.
- A national monitoring system would be needed; also ensuring free from political interference
- Umbrella bodies could be used to support members dealing with different regional remits – but this would need careful setting up.
- SAC should still play a central role in leading the cultural sector but there is *also* a need for some other kind of regional/ devolved process (NOT local authority) in order to streamline flow of funding.

Would devolution be beneficial?

- Some examples were given of existing devolved groupings, ie Gaelic Arts Strategy, Literature Forum, Feis movement, Highlands and Island Theatre Network, Promoters Arts Network (PAN)
- The best organisations were felt to be those with clear aims, ie professional development, audience development, showcasing
- Concern that the best 'decision makers' would be excluded from distributing funding
- A suggestion that looking cross-artform would be more dynamic than devolution by sector. Conversely, may be a barrier to individuals working across artforms
- No enthusiasm for more bureaucracy
- Devolution would suit some artforms more than others

- Would delegation of decision making, rather than devolution, be more appropriate?

Practicalities of devolution

- A need for a national overview remains; some local authorities would lack capacity to manage a fully devolved structure. There is a need for a central 'pool' of information, both in terms of artform development and in the context of national/international work
- It would be difficult to remain national and have stakeholder relationships in scenarios which involve regional and national forums. Not all National organisations are large infrastructures with relatively large human resources, and have staffing resource issues. Any alternative structure/process should acknowledge that devolved decision-making would make it difficult for different scales of national organisations.
- An issue would be ensuring projects of national and international stature are recognised regionally. It was feared that the critical discourse would be lost. How, for example, do organisations have access to an international agenda if decision-making is devolved regionally? Solutions to this included having a roving panel of experts, but this was seen as not a wise investment. An organisation with a similar remit to the SAC could retain organisations with an international element to their work
- Would artform priorities dissolve amongst a plethora of smaller organisations
- How do you protect national and international agendas if decisions are increasingly made regionally?
- Retaining a national overview would facilitate organisations or individuals to work collaboratively on discrete projects, without permanent devolution
- How would you settle disagreements with and beyond sectors
- It was felt to be interesting that CFOs don't cluster, for example, with the national libraries or museums etc. Could the community planning structure encompass broader partnerships?
- How would devolution serve those organisations that are just starting out?
- Acknowledgement that collaboration and sharing of resources and expertise e.g. Marketing, HR etc. could be beneficial to organizations
- Look at it from the viewpoint of education, marketing, audience development and cluster around these?

The role of the Scottish Arts Council

- There is a need for SAC to play a strong role in managing larger organisations and monitoring accountability
- Should SAC devolve its reporting and monitoring/measuring functions?
- There was a suggestion that staff within Scottish Arts Council must be encouraged to operate as experts and feel confident in leading discussions in the sector from a position of knowledge and expertise.
- Important that Scottish Arts Council response be informed by feedback from the sector, however there is always the possibility that nothing may change if the recommendations of the report are not acted upon.
- Is the art form model still relevant? Do audiences recognise art form boundaries?
- SACs first responsibility is to artists and arts organisations, where no one else can or does have knowledge
- Strategic national body must be government facing and probably less concerned with at the coal face, hands on delivery. However, CFOs didn't necessarily want to take on operational issues.
- Could SAC work 18 months in advance with clusters of LA's with input of promoters?

A national overview

- Need for a champion to manage relationships between sectors, between artists and local authorities
- A body which has an overview can 'even out' the disparity between the skills/support between different local authorities
- The current arrangement with the Arts Council provides continuity of policy and avoids swings of policy when LA administrations change.
- Lack of continuity between different LAs' approaches is also a problematic feature of artist engaging with LA arts provision/funding. A current example of this is the wide range of approaches to the role and expertise found in Cultural Coordinators.

2 Working across local authority boundaries

- What would be the benefits of an approach that saw local authorities planning their cultural activities across their existing boundaries?
- How could CFOs be involved in this type of process?
- How might work be affected (if at all) by a city/region approach?

The groups expressed concerns about wholesale devolution of funding to local authorities. The concerns were mainly around:

- Capacity within authorities
- A need for a 'statutory' imperative for LA support for culture
- Shifting priorities with authorities hamper planning
- A perception of poor provision currently
- Support for companies working 'nationally' or internationally
- Wide variations in approach, needs, priorities and expertise in different authorities
- Insufficient confidence in LA support for 'risk'
- No consistency between LA approach ie admin, education, funding all resting within differing departments

Other comments included

- **regional groupings** – seeing this as a way of escaping the confines of each LA funding work exclusively on their own patch and acquiring more power in terms of working strategically, lobbying etc.
- There needs to be recognition of the differences between rural and urban LAs. There is a sense in that the rural LAs and peripheral urban LAs feel, and are treated, as inferior by city LAs
- There was a strong feeling that **communication** needs to be improved. Many of the agendas which LAs and politicians impose on the arts: eg. Participation, engagement, inclusion are already implicit in current work and the sector needs to engage with them using the appropriate language to demonstrate that these agendas are delivered, as well as others more important to artists.
- Although there was distress at the culture of prescriptive targets it was felt that this was often more of a communication problem than an inability to deliver.
- There was a suggestion that many local politicians are most comfortable with 70s style community arts language and range of activities and need to have what is currently being done described in ways they can relate to – the arts sector needs to use some of the community arts language in describing activities.
- People in rural areas are prepared to travel and so LA boundaries can be irrelevant to the public.
- The establishment of Cultural Rights could be the lever for developing better partnerships. The LA may be given the responsibility for ensuring access to culture for its citizens, but it may use facilities in a neighbouring LA to deliver these

rights. eg Angus Council could work with Dundee Rep and Dundee City to provide Drama both at the Rep and within Angus, through outreach. It does not mean that Angus has to build its own Rep. In other words: “use the nearest available exit, bearing in mind that it might be behind you”.

- LAs would need to be more relaxed about promoting events that are happening in nearby authority areas, but that could be of benefit to their own citizens. There might be a need for arts organisations to collect more data about which authority their audiences come from.
- There is a need for service level agreements – not LA’s dictating specific venues which organisations have to tour to.
- Importance of SAC’s role represents independent and expert view. SAC’s role.

Working across borders

- There are particular challenges for those organisations which are on the perimeter of several Local Authority areas. These authorities have expected services to be delivered to them, without contributing financially, because of SAC funding being seen as fulfilling a national remit. This used to, in some ways, be dealt with by the old COSLA recommendation of a levy to deliver services.
- An example provided was the Active Schools Managers Scheme through Sports Scotland – like Cultural Co-ordinators – but more directive and uniform. (Cultural Co-ordinators are not in every Local Authority Area and some have different remits and work in different ways.
- It was felt that there was a risk with devolution in creating yet more boundaries. .
- Depending on experience of working with ‘clusters’, ‘pods’ or ‘hubs’ regardless whether these be geographic or sectoral, views ranged from “disaster” to “terrific idea”.
- On the upside, it could ensure local people getting involved in cultural planning. The two things were not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive.

3. Making the Case for the Arts

- CFO’s should be able to be a powerful voice, acting collectively. A more allied CFO body could provide a powerful mechanism – but its strength could dissipate if there are competing funding decisions
- SAC time would have been better spent organising a day **after** the Cultural Commission announcement when there would have been more clarity and direction to the discussions rather than just presupposing.

Achieving a positive public debate in 6 months

- Individual organisations are too stretched to go beyond their own work – they currently create positive relationships with audiences and communities through the work they do.
- Need for debate at high levels – advocate for a cross-cutting group in which arts should have a place and role in every ministerial department to avoid ‘divide and rule’ systems.
- Evidence of general benefits of arts and culture needs to be distilled into high impact ‘headlines’ for an effective message to the general public and Scottish Executive.
- Information needs to be made available for policy making – **ACTION:** SAC/ skilled advocate to ask CFO’s for ‘headlines’ and turn into a language suitable for public and politicians.
- In thinking about how delegates could help to stimulate a public debate there was a consensus that the Scottish Arts Council should lead on this with CFOs contributing as appropriate.

- One idea was for SAC to co-ordinate from each CFO a great story about how their work has really impacted on people's lives. These could be collated and published / distributed with media partners ie a Sunday supplement.
- The group thought that SAC press department could be more proactive, commenting that there are many good news stories all the time but that these don't seem to get picked up / promoted by SAC.
- SAC could also identify key people to write articles about their experiences of the arts –commissioning features on projects or issues.
- CFOs could also actively encourage Board members to be more active and to be more responsive to negative press and another suggestion was to engage audiences in the debate
- Outcomes should be quality art, not social value
- What is the message? CFOs should avoid a plea for their own organisations as this is easily dismissed. What is role for the London-based National Campaign for the Arts?
- Group thought that SAC should be the lobby body.
- What about the audiences and the Boards. Boards are articulate and locally influential people who could be mobilised in support of the arts rather than their own organisations
- What about a wrist band for the arts? We need a Bob Geldof, or other high profile champion(s) for the arts. (Richard Holloway thought to be a good champion).
- Any campaign must not be moaning, or Executive bashing, but be positive and **celebratory**. The EIF should be used as a platform to give the debate profile.
- There should be a section on news programmes for culture news, after the regular sports news. Dedicated arts programmes are good, but demand too much time and attention. Short updates would be better. Cf arts news on Austrian TV
- What about a National Arts Day, along the lines of Doors Open Day?
- In short- a clear celebratory message supported by champions, with backing from the public, possibly managed by a commercial PR firm.
- The media cannot deal with nuance or complexity. We should actively woo the media.
- The possibility of signing a cultural charter. It was agreed that the CC report coming just before the summer recess could be bad timing. It was vital the issue was not dropped - request the Minister for Culture to lead a national debate?
- There is a need to start from young children/teachers to get message out
- This has started already, youth music.
- Positive press on children and young people.
- JK Rowling good story example.

Some views on the future

How do we convince people and politicians that the arts matter and are valuable? Don't take away your biggest voice. Richard Holloway should make a St Andrews Day speech on the intrinsic value of the arts.

How to focus/get the message across about the importance of the arts?

- The groups agreed on the importance of Advocacy and Interpretation with an appropriate body like SAC having a national overview and taking the lead in relating to politicians and key partners at a national and international level – using appropriate language and able to negotiate at the highest level.
- They believed that for artists to achieve Power and Participation they would need to be represented on the Council or governing body of the national organisation and be part of decision making.

End of workshop notes CW June 2005