



DG Unlimited
C/o Municipal Chambers,
Buccleuch Street,
Dumfries DG1 2AD

First Minister, and
Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

18 September 2018

Dear First Minister and Cabinet Secretary,

Firstly, we want to thank the Scottish Government for the opportunity to offer our views on the draft Culture Strategy for Scotland. It is reassuring to see our passion for, and commitment to the importance of our cultural lives, mirrored in a national policy and embedded in the National Performance Framework.

DG Unlimited held a public consultation event at Kirkcudbright Art Galleries on Tuesday 4 September and in addition to a formal response on behalf of the group to the consultation, we wanted to offer some general thoughts on the draft strategy.

With this being the third cultural strategy since 1999 we are naturally cautious whether this iteration will become a pivotal point for change that our sector, and country, needs and desires. However, we believe the draft strategy shows potential, and there are some welcome hints of ambition that if realised could make a real difference to the people and communities of Scotland. In particular, the intention for the strategy to be a point of change in creating *'a shift in how society and government view and value culture'* is a very welcome statement, but we are cognisant of the complexities surrounding this.

We agree with the broad and inclusive idea of culture that the consultation adopts, but note that the arts, as a distinct form of culture, and artists, as cultural practitioners, are sometimes lost from the discussion.

We believe the strategy should also be a vehicle to challenge deep-seated perceptions that the arts are merely an add-on, a luxury. If we're to achieve 'an equal seat at the table' then we need to demonstrate the value of what we do, to those who don't understand its value. We want the strategy to help us move to the position where the 'case' has been made.

The draft strategy contains some actions that perhaps allude to creating the necessary framework to achieving this 'shift in view'. For example, we were intrigued by the cultural leadership post and the potential for this to work across all policy areas within government. The proposed 'national partnership for culture' would perhaps assist this role in evidencing the benefits of culture and its significant contribution to a 'preventative spend' approach to public spending, that over the longer term prevents, rather than deals with negative social outcomes.

We recognise that broadly speaking the three ambitions and the corresponding aims and actions speak to everyone with an interest or involvement in culture in Scotland. However, the tone and language of the strategy is not palatable for the whole intended audience. We would welcome a version of the strategy that was an easier read, shorter and much more focused. Simple, straightforward, less repetitive and clear in its language that is a bit less prone to the language of management and business speak. The strategy is also perhaps a little bit too inward looking, and if its ambition of being a central consideration across other policy areas is to be realised, then it will need to be more outward looking and resonate with other sectors.

There is very little in the aims and ambitions that we would disagree with; the concern we have is to understand how the words translate into action. The use of words such as explore, develop, recognise seem to take precedent. But we would welcome the final version putting the actions closer to the words. For example, rather than 'Exploring new

funding models' it would give us greater confidence if there were a commitment to 'Increasing investment in culture through new funding models'.

Being clear about who was expected to deliver on specific actions would also make the strategy more transparent. Who, for example would lead and support the national partnership for culture? What are the roles and responsibilities of the existing national bodies such as Creative Scotland in leading supporting and implementing the strategy?

Many of the ideas and ambitions outlined in the strategy are already evident in what we have strived to achieve in Dumfries and Galloway. We have worked hard to build partnerships and work collaboratively, with some success. We already understand how the connections between culture and policy areas such as social care, offers an opportunity to improve and enhance the quality of life. We share Scottish Government's ambitions for that kind of approach. But it is fragile. It inevitably needs more than a strategy; it requires investment. The return on that investment will be substantial economically, socially and for our well-being as a community.

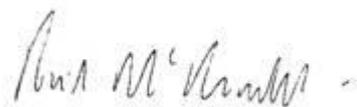
Finally, we think there is the need for a bolder overarching vision statement that is inspirational, is easy to communicate and that sets the tone for the rest of the strategy. As an example we were taken by this excerpt from a Louis MacNeice poem, 'Autumn Journal'.

What is it we want really?
For what end and how?
If it is something feasible, obtainable,
Let us dream it now,
And pray for a possible land
Not of sleep walkers, not of angry puppets,
But where both heart and mind can understand
The movements of our fellows;
Where life is a choice of instruments and none
Is debarred his natural music...

A land where 'none is debarred his (her) natural music' would be a fine vision for a national cultural strategy. Perhaps a job for the Makar to offer such a visionary statement?

We applaud the Scottish Government's ambition in developing this strategy and are ready to continue to play our part in bringing it to life.

Yours Sincerely



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Consultation event attendees:

Aidan Nicol, Youth Arts Coordinator, Catstrand
Alan Cameron, Education Adviser (Europe), Soundtrap
Alice Stilgoe, Crawick Multiverse
Bea Last, Artist/mentor
Cate Ross, Development Officer, DG Unlimited
Catherine Lacey, Chair, Lockerbie Old School group
Cathy Agnew, Project Director, Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust
David McDonald, Arts Development Director, DG Unlimited
Evelyn Mackintosh, Artist
Ian Barr, Principal Officer, Events, Dumfries and Galloway Council
Jim Tough, Event Facilitator
Julian Watson, Artist
Ken Gouge, Chair of the Board of Trustees, DG Arts Festival
Loraine Baxter, Artist
Mark Alexander, Theatre Director, Theatre Royal, Dumfries
Maureen Smyth, Admin/Comms Co-ordinator, DG Unlimited
Rebecca Coggins, Principal Officer, Arts and Museums, Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sara Lockwood, Dancer
Senga Greenwood, Developing The Young Workforce
Simon Davidson, Creative Director, Catstrand
Stephen Lacey, Vice-chair, DG Unlimited
Val Horton, Barholm Arts and Crafts