

VISION STATEMENTS

The strategy is bold and ambitious. It is centred on the fundamental value of culture and its empowering and transformative potential. It is committed to long term change through greater collaboration and integration across culture, communities and policy development.

- Culture in Scotland is innovative, inclusive and open to the wider world.
- Cultural excellence – past, present and emerging – is celebrated and is fundamental to future prosperity and wellbeing.
- Culture’s empowering and transformative power is experienced by everyone.

Our comments on the vision;

“Put the actions close to the words”
Paulo Friere

We welcome the scope and ambition of the strategy. We recognise collaboration as a key to success and this reflects how we work in Dumfries and Galloway. Finding practical ways to support collaboration on the ground is important – it has to be recognised that there is a fragility in the infrastructure.

We see it as a right that everyone should be able to access rich cultural lives, on their own terms. The role of arts and creativity in both formal and informal learning has to be taken seriously in this context. The wider benefits of a culturally engaged, creative community will benefit us in many ways, not simply the economic.

In that context we think there is a need for a simple, inspirational overarching vision statement that sets the time for the strategy and that is used by government to vocally, passionately and publicly express the importance of cultural activity and acknowledge that culture is for everyone. The strategy could better highlight the fact that people gain enjoyment and pleasure from their cultural activities.

There are some aspects of the vision that need to be defined and explored. For example while innovation is vital, not everything that is culturally valid needs to be innovative. It is important that funding mechanisms can support the mainstream as well as the innovative, and we can see excellence as a term that needs to be understood in its cultural context.

AIMS

TRANSFORMING THROUGH CULTURE

Recognising that culture and creativity are central to Scotland's cultural, social and economic prosperity.

- Place culture as a central consideration across all policy areas
- Open up the potential of culture as a transformative opportunity across society
- Position culture as central to progress in health & wellbeing, economy, education, reducing inequality and realising a greener and more innovative future.

Our comments on Aims and Actions;

We value the idea that culture should be embedded in the thinking across government and public services and so expected that was already the case with the welcome recognition of culture in the National Performance Framework. So this raises some questions about how non-cultural services are held to account for ensuring they take account of this strategy? Whose job is that and how is it measured?

Specifically, on the idea of a new post in government – we can see how this can help to work across the policy and departmental agendas in government as well as signify the importance of this new strategy. But if culture is to be successfully placed as a central consideration across Government and other policy areas then we also need to challenge some deep-seated perceptions that culture and creativity is a luxury, or a nice thing to do if we can.

At the same time another layer of management and a further step away from the people that the strategy serves we would consider with caution. For example how does this impact on agencies such as Creative Scotland and the role of Cabinet Secretary?

What kind of person would best succeed in this new post; is it someone familiar with the ways of government and public life, or is it a charismatic leader that can be an advocate and champion? This role must be strategic and occupied by an individual who understands how government works. This role also needs to work closely with local leaders across Scotland to ensure words are turned into actions.

The idea of a national partnership for culture as we understand it is mainly to do with finding ways to understand and articulate the impact of culture on our lives. We welcome this in principle. It could empower the role of the new cultural leadership post. Again we would ask how existing agencies relate to this initiative – wouldn't providing leadership and a secretariat naturally fall to Creative Scotland? How we monitor and evaluate the impact of culture needs clear leadership and a clear framework, more so than ever now that there is a 'culture' performance indicator with the National Performance Framework. At the moment we have an 'ad hoc' approach that leaves our sector vulnerable and too 'easy to ignore' by key decision-makers.

We would ask that the measures are not simply economic – health, well-being, community cohesion and other areas of public life should be part of the framework. The outcomes of such research should be a consideration in funding decisions to help the case for investment in cultural activities.

We also believe that there are already some good examples of research in these areas, so a first step for such a partnership should be to take stock of what we have and to identify how those benefits can be communicated.

It may be that there are alternatives to a national partnership for example giving the lead to some of our academic institutions.

We welcome the emphasis given to building alliances and collaborative working – we are doing this already in Dumfries and Galloway. Our work on the ground would be enhanced if there was investment in our efforts, funding to incentivise new alliances, to build local sustainable capacity and be appropriate to our local needs. This can't rely simply on the good will and voluntary efforts of local interests – it needs to access professional resources. There are also good examples at a national level for example the relationship between Age Scotland and Luminate.

EMPOWERING THROUGH CULTURE

Opening up and extending culture so that it is of and for every community and everyone

- Extend the view of culture to include the everyday and emerging, the established and more formal
- Develop opportunities for people to take part in culture throughout their lives
- Recognise each community's own local culture in generating a distinct sense of place, identity and confidence.

Our comments on Aims and Actions;

We welcome the spirit and the ambition in this aim and the actions. However we are concerned that in reality we see things happen that are moving us further away from this aspiration.

We see libraries closing and those that survive become multi-purpose venues for a range of important public services but at the expense of the availability of the space and the quality of the user's experience. Similar changes in community and youth centres we also see as a backward step. And this isn't simply about buildings – the expertise and passion of the librarian, youth worker, community learning officer, arts development officer can often be the means to engage the most excluded to rich cultural experiences. The financial challenges faced by local authorities is a key factor and government policy in this regard we think needs to be looked at. The value of culture is, up to a point, recognised and

acknowledged but often resources do not follow. At times of finding budget savings the case for culture and creativity is seemingly too easy to ignore. The strategy needs to speak and resonate with other sectors, it needs to be outward looking and not inward looking.

Words such as 'explore', 'develop' and 'promote' are all very well, but what is needed is action backed by investment. There is a resource issue. Participatory models of community involvement – how to involve communities - can be challenging. This model of involvement suits large population areas that has reservoir of administrators and volunteers, but smaller communities are fragile and can lack capacity to do community ownership well.

We have a particular concern about the urban rural dynamic in funding terms. If we want to give people equal access, there needs to be an examination of how funding is distributed across the whole country. Having national bodies (and we recognise good examples of this such as Scottish Opera) bring their work to the regions isn't the only way to do things. There is also greater potential for the support and mentorship and expertise of the larger organisations moving through to the grassroots and taking a leadership role.

SUSTAINING CULTURE

Sustaining and nurturing culture to flourish and to evolve as a diverse, positive force in society, across all of Scotland.

- Develop the conditions and skills for culture to thrive, so it is cared for, protected and produced for the enjoyment of all present and future generations
- Value, trust and support creative people – for their unique and vital contribution to society and the economy
- Encourage greater openness and diverse cultures to reflect a changing Scotland in the 21st century

Our comments on Aims and Actions;

We see this aim is about the resources – human and financial – that will underpin the vision. It will arguably be where these fine ambitions stand or fall. In terms of new funding models, by all means exploring new partnerships and new models is an important consideration, but to what end? Is it simply about using the same (or even diminishing resources) in different ways? Or is there a stated ambition to increase investment in culture and creativity? We understand the need to explore, but we need there to be a result of the exploration. Culture and creativity makes an important contribution to the policy of 'Preventative Spending' and we would wish to see this acknowledged through the allocation of resources from the public purse.

The level of expectation placed on the cultural sector is high and continues to increase as funding bodies look for ways to evidence impact and public benefit in a time of reducing resources. This places an increasing burden on cultural organisations and creative

practitioners to 'fix' a growing range of social issues. Whilst the cultural sector plays an important role here, this is not a sustainable approach or strategy in the long-term. The sector is fragile and cannot continuously absorb increased demands for less resources.

Our other concern would be who is going to make this happen? Who will be responsible for and accountable for the process? Who will take the lead? How will the idea of a Scottish Investment Bank specifically support cultural endeavor?

Turning to the human resources in this context, we are disappointed that the question of building a diverse work force comes to late in the strategy. It mustn't be an add on, but at the heart of our ambitions. Again the vocal and visible engagement of key government figures in advocating and encouraging a shift in perspective that sees culture, and a career in culture, as a possibility for everyone in Scotland would support this ambition.

Discussion of the work force and skills development raises some big questions. How do we make sure we have a workforce that's prepared for the creative freelance world? How do we embed this in education? There's a disconnect between the reduction of creative education in schools and colleges and the desire to have a strong creative economy. And again who takes the lead and is accountable for progress?

The World Economic Forum in their recent report 'The Future of Jobs' showed that creativity is believed to be the #3 most important skill by chief human resources and strategy officers from leading global organisations. This sees creativity moving from the #10 skill set in 2015 to #3 in 2020. The Scottish Government have an opportunity to make global statement by making a policy commitment to putting the 'A' into STEM and create STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths.

Finally in terms of international cultural engagement, we would agree it plays a key role in promoting Scotland on a world stage. But again, let's be mindful of the local, community to community, international links through exchange programmes that directly touch the lives of ordinary citizens.
