



CPG ON CULTURE: MINUTES

18 MARCH 2014, 5.30PM-8PM

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, COMMITTEE ROOM 3

INTRINSIC RIGHT OR EXPENDABLE LUXURY: THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN SECURING CULTURAL FUNDING.

Introduction

The following MSPs were noted to be in attendance:

- Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
- Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)
- Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
- Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)
- George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)
- Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)
- Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP)

Apologies received from:

- Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con)

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved with confirmation from Stuart Wilson

Electric Theatre performance

The Group watched a performance exert from *Blood Orange* by Electric Theatre which is now available to view on the Group's website.

Kilmarnock Creative Place Award presentation

Councillor Eoghann MacColl delivered a presentation to the Group. He highlighted the importance of looking internationally for examples of best practice in cultural policy. He stressed that art can and should be used as a way to heal communities and bring them back together with a positive vision.

Morna Young – reading from 'Lost at Sea'

The Group heard a reading from Morna Young's play 'Lost at Sea'

Panel Discussion

The discussion featured:

- Cllr Douglas Ross, Moray Council
- Cllr Eoghann MacColl, East Ayrshire Council
- Graham Main, Artistic Director, Big Burns Supper
- Morna Young, playwright/actress/musician/singer/writer
- Clive Gillman, Director, Dundee Contemporary Arts

Cllr Douglas Ross

- Stressed to the Group that no one in Moray Council disagrees with the value of arts funding but noted they were required to make huge savings in a short amount of time.
- Cllr Ross noted that the arts budget had been placed bottom in a public consultation asking people to rank council services in order of priority.

- He stressed that Moray has not forgotten the arts following the decision and were working to refurbish cultural infrastructure in the area.

Eoghann MacColl

- Cllr MacColl highlighted a different experience in East Ayrshire Council who have viewed culture as intrinsic to the area and in the education of the children.
- He noted that East Ayrshire had gone down the route of culture trusts with good partnerships locally.
- Cllr MacColl stressed importance must be placed having the capital infrastructure but also about how you deliver cultural provision.

Graham Main

- He drew attention to the passionate artistic community in Dumfries and Galloway who believe in the transformative impact that arts and culture can have on people's lives and communities.
- He noted that culture can help a region to gain confidence they may not have previously had: bringing key players and partners together to have frank discussions about the past and the situation as is and how we can work together.
- Graham highlighted the *Fresh Start for the Arts*, a revolutionary model that allows people to experience art forms they previously might not have been exposed to.
- *Blood Orange* performance resulted from a Scottish Defence League visit to Dumfries in which they campaigned to shut down a mosque. Blood Orange is a commentary on the social environment.

Morna Young

- Morna noted that she was from a traditional fishing background in Moray, where she grew up with a love of singing and performing.
- As a teenager in Moray, she took advantage of the arts fund in Moray.
- *Lost at Sea* is very personal to her and important as it allows voices who are under-represented to be heard.
- Cannot understate the benefit she feels the arts have had in her life. Works with several theatre companies and would argue strongly for their continued support.

Clive Gillman

- Clive Gillman provided an overview of the problems and challenges faced by Dundee. He noted that Dundee has more people employed in the design sector than anywhere else in Scotland, with a strong background in computer gaming.
- He drew attention to Dundee's bid for UK City of Culture 2017, which was led by community planning partnership, Dundee partnership. Despite being the smallest of the shortlisted cities, Dundee had the most developed cultural programme. Dundee was therefore deemed to be the strongest bid, but not the city that needed it most.
- He noted that there were no arts development staff within the city, a need which is facilitated through partnership working. Structure and collaboration are seen to be just as key as funding
- He recommended a future strategy for cultural funding: Find out something special that is going on; find out how things work on the ground (economic impoverishment doesn't mean cultural impoverishment); Encourage people to be makers (the sense of which has been lost in many communities); Encourage proper development from the grass roots; and understand that not everything needs to be novelty and needs to be built upon

Group Discussion

- Jamie McGrigor MSP stressed that it is important to look at history to see what works and what doesn't. He highlighted that the majority of culture cuts in Moray had come from salaried employees. He stated that the Highlands and Islands region supports creativity but understands that culture comes from people and genius. He noted that it was important to include cultural practice in education.
- Morna Young cautioned that the arts can be considered a hobby as opposed to a profession, whereas artists still need to support themselves and without the support from CS and companies in Moray she wouldn't have been able to write. She maintained that a level of funding is required to do this.
- Graham Main noted that artists and art forms take individual responsibility for furthering their art form, making sponsorship of the arts extremely important.
- It was noted that libraries and drama groups were an effective inroad into areas of multiple deprivation

- John Cairns stressed that arts officers create value for an area and that this should not be overlooked. Morna Young added that arts development officers had been supportive to her throughout her project.
- Ann Packard noted that some services were now being run by social enterprises. Entrepreneurial leadership in the local community can inspire others. The question is not can we afford culture, it is can we afford not to have culture. We have to decide as a society.
- Christian Allard MSP highlighted the economic contribution of festivals to local areas.
- Jean Urquhart MSP stressed that there was a need to recognise the value of the arts in all aspects of life. Art and culture can improve health and well-being. The budget should not be separate from health or education due to findings which demonstrate the rejuvenative effect of cultural participation.
- Wendy Law noted that universities and colleges as a network were important and could be a source of untapped funding potential. They need to prove linkages to the community.
- George Adam MSP stated that from a local perspective we need to talk up our towns in order to boost tourism to the area. He added that many artists only get external funding if you have a development officer looking for that funding. If you have not got art/culture, what's the point in living'. Sandy Stoddart quote.
- Clare Adamson noted that the Culture budget had been largely protected at SG level; however she acknowledged that the majority of the funding does still come from local authorities. She added that Fiona Hyslop meets regularly with COSLA to discuss the way forward and stressed the importance of supporting talent development in young people.
- Johnny Gailey stressed the importance of not overly focusing upon the economic benefits of art. He added that too much of Creative Scotland's budget goes to organisations as opposed to artists.
- Gavin McDougal highlighted the importance of ensuring that where there is public spending on the arts it is done in a way that further benefits Scottish cultural practice. E.g. how many Scottish books go into Scottish libraries? Canada is a good example of where this policy works well. Live industry Scotland (visits by writers to schools and prisons). £10m from SG to amazon to base itself in Scotland – might be self-defeating.
- Clive Gillman noted that Creative Scotland was doing a great job of supporting culture but their impact can easily become lost at local authority level. He noted a need to have a better understanding of what culture generates and the potential to make it a statutory obligation.
- Roberta Doyle stated that most artists relish their relationship with arts administrators. NTS has observed that when they work in communities without an embedded arts scene the work becomes much harder. They are set up to work in partnership and it therefore becomes a lot harder in areas where these are not in place. NTS would endorse a national approach. It is not about hospitals OR theatres.
- Bill Sweeney stated that arts development officers were required to articulate the values of their practice in terms that will be admissible to funders. He noted that this is a symptom of the depowering of local authorities. Need to look again at the question of local government and what they have power to effect.
- Clive Gillman stressed that culture is all around us, and you can't take it away by cutting a budget. The question is how we intervene in this and make it work. What value are we creating and how does it reside with our citizens.
- Morna Young summarised by noting that prisons, schools and hospitals had all witnessed positive transformation from cultural involvement. She added that it saddens her that children in Moray now are lacking the opportunity to do what she did.
- Douglas Ross stressed that Moray still ran projects such as the youth orchestra etc. and that whilst the headline figure had been reduced but there was still money going into arts in Moray. He highlighted the importance for the Group to keep up their work in supporting and promoting arts and culture and promised to take points back to colleagues in Moray council.

Any Other Business

- Jean Urquhart MSP put on record her thanks to Gary Cocker, Maggie Page and Kirstin MacLeod for ensuring the smooth running and day-to-day organisation of the Cross-Party Group on Culture.
- Jean asked that Group members cancel their place at meetings should they find themselves no longer able to attend.

Next meeting: The impact of the independence referendum (date TBC).