



Scottish **Arts** Council

Confidential
S/C05m6

Council
Minute of the Meeting Held on 13 December 2005
Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

Present:

Richard Holloway	Chairman
Joanna Baker	
Arthur Cormack	
Jennifer Hawksworth	
Jane Jeffrey	
Roy McEwan	
James McSharry	
John Mulgrew	
Rab Noakes	
Ben Twist	
Jennifer Waterton	

In Attendance

David Brew	Scottish Executive (from 11.30 am)
------------	------------------------------------

Staff in Attendance

Graham Berry	Chief Executive
Jim Tough	Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Arts
Morag Arnot	Director of Planning and Communications
Graeme Cumming	Interim Director of Finance
Pat Hymers	Executive Manager
Michelle Jordan	Senior Communications
Irene Watson	PA to Chief Executive (Minutes)

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Bob Downes and Annie Marrs.

3. Strategic Review – Corporate Scenarios

- 3.1 Director of Arts explained that, in response to Council's request at its last meeting, two further corporate scenarios had been developed. The information included in this paper gave two outlines of scenarios which he hoped would provoke discussion and give guidance to the directorate for work for the January Council meeting.
- 3.2 In response to a question about clarification of the diagrams, it was explained that these showed the hierarchy of the significance under each of the scenarios. The Director of Arts gave examples of where an organisation working in theatre being looked at under the 'Artists' scenario would have a different rating with regard to participation. It didn't mean the other aspects weren't important. He also gave as an example, developing arts practice could be seen as the responsibility of colleges and arts schools whereas we would be looking at developing artists.
- 3.3 In the scenario looking at participation examples of development agencies and voluntary organisations were given.
- 3.4 Under the Artists scenario, the first level would show artists being a resource for the nation and we would invest a lot more for individual artists; the next level would be concerned with the creation of work, leaving the distribution factor to the market. There would be more emphasis on new work and new productions and it would be up to promoter to engage audiences. The final level would be participation which would be very much more discrete and separate.
- 3.5 A Council member mentioned the Minister's statement due shortly and felt that the anticipated changes to the arts infrastructure should be taken into account when looking at the scenarios. The Chairman explained he had shared with Council in their private session what was thought to be in the Minister's statement. Council had agreed that it was important to continue the strategic review process even if the landscape may change. The Chairman assured officers that Council was committed to this process.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive reminded Council that there were organisations throughout the arts sector which were unstable and resources were spread very thinly. Currently there was no priority of our aims and objectives. He said we had to be cautious about making a compromise.
- 3.5 Comments from Council included
- instead of seeking a balance seek some combination where the two things fuse where we get greater value out of doing both rather than one or another.
 - Acknowledge the role of artistic director, producer, promoter who all mediate between artists and audience.

- Have to step out of this loop of trying to do one thing or another.
 - the artists' scenario was not the only way of supporting new work
 - Presentation and distribution for the market this is a matter for the organisation. We all believe we serve the audience by serving the artists but they do have a responsibility too.
- 3.6 Council noted that the Participation scenario provided a transformational agenda and was fundamental to what we do. It allows the power of the arts to change people's lives. On the other hand artists have to be respected for their own intrinsic values. This extreme was given to provoke discussion.
- 3.7 Council had concerns about the proposed role for local authorities as members did not feel they had a national strategic overview which was considered important.
- 3.8 An issue which could cause difficulties to resolve was the situation whereby there are organisations having good audiences but producing poor work and organisations with small audiences, but producing good work
- 3.9 There was a suggestion that we needed a different kind of graph – instead of two parallel columns there should be a “candelabra”.
- 3.10 Organisations should be well managed, produce work of quality and engage with audiences etc. Using the quality management process and framework we could see if they were failing in any of element and then take appropriate action.
- 3.11 The quality framework was a key element. Council stressed the need to be bold and confident about making a judgement. Excellence was not elite, it was democratic and everyone deserved excellence. It was considered that some of the scenarios didn't have excellence championed sufficiently; they should be more radical and there was not enough focus on centres of excellence. It comes down to funding organisations and people who are really good
- 3.12 Supporting the creative process and where this is market driven is part of the creative process. It makes economic and philosophical sense to support creative process.
- 3.13 Council's message to get across - how do we influence the arts – what does it impact and who does it change – do not be afraid of being radical.

4. Strategic Review – Briefing Pack for Council Meetings (S/C05m6p2)

- 4.1 Council noted the papers included in this pack which would be useful for the Council meeting being held in January as they gave contextual information.
- 4.2 Council were reminded that there were active cross council policies and strategies which had to be borne in mind as the process proceeded.
- 4.3 A larger paper on global trends could be made available to Council members if they wished.

- 4.4 There was some discussion on the impact of Scottish Executive policies on the work of the Scottish Arts Council and it was noted that whilst we did receive funding to undertake some of their policies, we did not necessarily have the resources in house to deal with them. This was an issue to raise with government when asked to undertake work on their policies.
- 4.5 Director of Planning and Communications explained that our work was based on our corporate plan and we promoted and advocated on many things, which was challenging. However, there were issues necessary for the Council to recognise, eg, health and safety and disability rights and acknowledging these leaves less money for the arts, but we had to promote good practice ourselves.
- 4.6 Employing a dedicated a staff member to make cross connections as well as looking at other government portfolios like education and health was considered to be worth investigating. Council noted there often was money in Scottish Executive budgets and European budgets which could be accessed, both for the Scottish Arts Council and our organisations

5. Strategic Review – Large Scale Performing Arts Companies (S/C05m6p3)

- 5.1 Roy McEwan and Jane Jeffrey declared an interest in this item. The Chairman confirmed with members that all were happy for Roy and Jane to remain in the meeting for discussions.
- 5.2 The Chairman had concluded that it would be useful for Council to discuss a response to the hypothetical notion that the national companies would be funded separately by government.
- 5.3 Council made the following comments on this possibility
- The need to keep an eye on strategic management and coherence and that there was a review process fit for purpose which enabled fairness and transparency in the system. It was considered that this would be lost if not funded with other parts of the same sector.
 - Acknowledgement that national companies should be managed differently, but this could be undertaken within the Scottish Arts Council by creating a different management structure for them.
 - There were grave concerns about the National Theatre of Scotland (NToS) and its relationship to theatre companies – it was noted that the NToS had been set up to relate to the sector.
 - A strategic overview would be lost if these companies were not kept within their sector.
 - Lack of consultation between various sections, eg different artforms and theatre venues.
 - Would one bureaucracy lead to another – there had to be some control
- 5.4 It was acknowledged that it was difficult to know what impact there would be without seeing more detail about how the new proposals would be constructed.

- 5.5 The term “national company” was challenged as it was not clear what would be considered as a national company and why they would receive different treatment. National companies had to be national – would they get more money to allow them to do things at the expense of other companies who were working nationally. The philosophy of what is national needs to be established - it goes beyond four or five organisations.
- 5.6 The Chairman invited the Scottish Executive representative, David Brew, to comment. Mr Brew said he could not give a steer to a hypothetical question, but the perception of Ministers was that they were accountable for the large organisations and they have to answer questions in parliament rather than at arms length through an NDPB. He did not agree that the management of these organisations within the Executive would be less transparent.
- 5.7 The Chief Executive commented on the regular interference from the Executive and lack of clarity given to the Scottish Arts Council which resulted in current difficulties for some organisations like the Opera.
- 5.8 Mr Brew said that inevitably the funding demands went back to the Executive and suggested there could be value added from a more direct relationship. The Chairman said that if access had not been allowed to these channels the Scottish Arts Council would have had more control.
- 5.9 Council members commented that the Strategic Review was looking at the sustainability for all the arts organisations. The arts council has a responsibility to build good partnerships with arts organisations, artists and communities, making sure they get an equal amount of attention. They considered that for many years the arts council had acted responsibly and made difficult decisions.
- 5.10 The Chairman stressed that the Council was fully supportive of the Arts Council staff with the strategic review process.
- 5.11 A member raised some potential complications if the proposals went ahead. He considered that the arts council protected the rest of the arts community and were best placed to do this. He also drew attention to the fact that cutting financial ties left this group of companies out of possible further funding, eg project and lottery funding.
- 5.12 Council felt it was important that it was made clear
- where the money would come from to fund these proposals,
 - what the Scottish Arts Council responsibilities would be
 - if research had been undertaken in other countries to strengthen the argument
 - what would the impact be for the rest of the arts sector
 - what the vision for the arts, philosophically, artistically, strategically and politically would be
 - How local communities would benefit from changes
- 5.13 There was some discussion about the scale, knowledge and expertise that would be required and acknowledgement that civil servants had more direct contact with

Ministers, but there was a counter-argument that they did not have the understanding and experience of managing the arts sector.

- 5.14 The Chairman drew attention to the possibility of staff from the arts council being transferred and how this would affect the remainder of the organisation and the resultant morale of staff.
- 5.15 In response to a question on whether the announcement would mention further consultation, Mr Brew suggested that it would be an announcement indicating the aims and what structures should be put in place. A substantial amount of discussion would be required to and firm up different aspects of the propositions.
- 5.16 The Deputy Director asked for confirmation that Council wished the strategic review process to continue and this was emphatically agreed, noting that some of the decisions made would impact on the national companies. Council asked that it was made clear to the Committees, meeting a few days hence, that there were questions in the air
- 5.17 Council said the work done to date was substantial and credible. Staff had been thorough and consistent and should be congratulated.