A CULTURE STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND

**Report summarising feedback gathered during the Engagement Phase
In support of developing A Culture Strategy for Scotland
March 2018**

Summary Report

Background

1. The Scottish Government committed to developing A Culture Strategy for Scotland in the Programme for Government 2016-17 and underlined this commitment in its Programme for Government 2017-18.

2. The strategy will show how important culture is to the future of individuals, communities across Scotland and Scotland as a whole - with a central ambition of enabling everyone to have an equal opportunity to take part in and contribute to culture in Scotland.

3. A series of 'Culture Conversations' were held between June and December 2017 to stimulate debate and discussion about: what matters most to people about culture in Scotland; what is working well; and what needs to change to ensure that culture continues to flourish for the benefit of all in society. The launch event was hosted by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP, at Glasgow Women's Library on 26 June 2017.

4. The Scottish Government subsequently hosted a series of 9 Scotland-wide public events during the Engagement Phase which attracted nearly four hundred contributors in total (in Dundee; Inverness; Paisley; Dumfries; Galashiels; Aberdeen; Skye; Edinburgh; Dunfermline) and more than 50 events were also held by partners and stakeholders. Written submissions were also made by organisations and individuals, and more than thirty contributions were received via the online interactive ideas forum.

5. We would like to thank everyone who contributed views during the Engagement Phase

Engagement Report

6. The following report is a summary of the Main Report. The main report provides an overview of the feedback received throughout the Engagement Phase drawn from what people said at events as well as written submissions received. In the reports the main themes and ideas which emerged during the Engagement Phase are presented. The feedback gathered will inform the development of a draft strategy which will issue for public consultation later in 2018.

7. The content of the report draws on the views and opinions expressed by contributors about the value of culture and their ideas about what needs to be done to support the future of culture in Scotland. The aim has been to present these views accurately and objectively.

8. The report is structured by theme as follows:

Section 1: Overview - Scope, purpose & aims of A Culture Strategy for Scotland
Section 2: Theme - Access and participation
Section 3: Theme - Valuing the artist and creativity
Section 4: Theme - Young people, education and skills
Section 5: Theme – Funding culture
Section 6: Theme - International working
Section 7: Theme – Leadership and joined up working
Section 8: Theme - Evidence, impact and benefits of culture
Section 9: Conclusion and Next Steps

Section 1: Overview: Scope, purpose and aims of a Culture Strategy for Scotland

1. This section sets out contributors' views on what the strategy should cover, what the strategy should do, who it should be for and what the priorities for action should be.

2. In terms of what the strategy should achieve, many emphasised the need for an ambitious, bold and dynamic strategy that would bring about a paradigm shift in how culture is valued across society and government. Most argued it should take a long term view, provide a route map to achieving positive change, focus on diversity, and offer a unifying approach that would be meaningful to everyone with an interest in it. Contributors also wanted to celebrate Scotland's rich, diverse cultures and heritages, identifying what we already have that works well and building on Scotland's creativity and innovation, but draw from what other countries' are doing that works well.

3. Contributors frequently highlighted the importance of culture at an individual, community and societal level. There was discussion about the merits of an "all inclusive" view of culture or whether to focus on a prioritised set of activities. Most contributors supported the broadest and most inclusive notion of culture that should hold the everyday, informal, grassroots and emerging forms of culture in equal value with the more formal, established forms. In general, contributors were keen that their particular area or cultural interest would be represented in the strategy.

4. Contributors suggested a wide range of aims for the strategy, that included:

   • Recognising the intrinsic value of culture
   • Creating the conditions for culture to thrive
   • Viewing diversity and difference as strengths
   • Establishing greater parity between art-forms and cultural activities
   • Recognising and maximising the value and benefits of culture to society (in many different ways)
   • Being clear about the government's role at a strategic level that allows people to set their own priorities

Section 2: Access and Participation

1. This section covers contributors' views on the issue of inequality in terms of access to and participation in culture and cultural activity, and the different status of different types of culture. This theme permeated the engagement activities. The community experience of cultural engagement, and how that might be supported in the future to achieve greater equity and diversity in cultural participation, is also discussed.

2. Contributors perceived there to be a lack of diversity amongst those employed/involved in culture across the cultural sectors, at all levels (amongst

employees, as well as amongst senior decisions makers, Boards and in representative bodies) and this was considered to have resulted in a corresponding lack of diversity in cultural output (programming, artistic productions etc.). It was noted by many contributors that the workforce seems to be from higher socio-economic groups and some felt that this is because of the need to have personal sources of financial support during training and to subsidise an insecure and sometimes poorly paid career.

3. Contributors also felt that there was unequal engagement in culture with the view that those from lower socio-economic groups, deprived areas, or from minority backgrounds, disabled people or people with health conditions and multiple or complex needs were less likely to engage. It was felt that much of the culture currently available was not always of interest to everyone, particularly those from minority groups or backgrounds. It was suggested that more could be done to tackle this by pro-active approaches to employing people from different backgrounds which could potentially lead to greater diversity in cultural and artistic output and greater visibility of role models from minority groups.

4. There were also felt to be a number of barriers to engagement and steps could be taken to tackle these (such as cost, transport, opening hours, geography and poverty). Inequality of access to funding was identified by some as another barrier. There were also felt to be geographical inequalities with resources, jobs and money concentrated in the central belt and remote, rural, and island communities missing out. Urban- rural inequalities were also discussed.

5. This section also considers the experiences of communities in accessing cultural activities and facilities, and contributors highlighted the need for a better understanding of those communities that may be perceived as not engaged as much as others. Some asked if it is the community that is "hard to reach" or the cultural establishment that is out of touch with the community and their particular issues, interests and priorities.

6. Contributors drew attention to the importance of communities' own forms of culture (including in particular the role of language, and local heritage especially in more remote communities) in generating a sense of place and identity. Museums and galleries were felt to be important here too. Volunteers and "connectors" were recognised by many as crucial in fostering community capacity locally as were third sector bodies such as heritage bodies, and civic trusts. The benefits of communities being involved in decision making and taking "ownership" of local heritage and other cultural assets, and being able to access cultural facilities and buildings more easily were identified. Contributors discussed the potential limitations of public sector approaches that import culture into communities as short-term outreach initiatives. It was suggested that local people should be involved in the design and delivery of cultural interventions in their areas. Talent retention was another issue that was perceived to impact negatively on local cultural life, and contributors were keen to find ways to ensure there were more opportunities to encourage talented people to stay in the locality, particularly in rural settings.

7. Some suggested potential solutions to help strengthen and diversify community participation in culture including participatory budgeting, involving local people in the planning and delivery of cultural activities and interventions, the use of a "cultural high street" model, opening up or extending the opening hours of local public buildings for community use, embedding local artists in communities to work in partnership with them, improved use of community asset transfers and better signposting of local cultural activities and opportunities.

Section 3: Valuing the Artist and creativity

1. The importance of valuing arts and creativity and providing support to the arts and cultural freelance workforce was widely discussed across all the public sessions in particular. Many felt that this should be a core aim of the strategy.

2. Contributors observed that the workforce faced a number of challenges particularly financial difficulties exacerbated by lack of job security, short term contracts, poorly paid work, and non-eligibility for certain welfare benefits. Many also felt that they faced inequalities of opportunity, lack of studio/practice space, health issues and lack of confidence.

3. A number of suggestions were made by contributors to suggest resolving these including Citizens' Basic Income, improvements to funding to support risk and innovation, supporting family/carer friendly working, peer-to –peer support and ensuring artists are more visible in public and civic life.

4. The importance of volunteers was also highlighted by many and it was felt that there should be better recognition of their role and value for the sector. Grassroots activity was also highlighted as playing a key role in developing communities.

Section 4: Young people, education and skills

1. Education was raised at nearly every event, as being a key arena where the future of culture in Scotland could be supported, the benefits of culture could be extended, and the challenges of unequal engagement in culture could be tackled.

2. Many contributors highlighted the need for the voices of young people, in whose hands the future of culture sits, to be heard in the strategy.

3. Culture and creativity were generally viewed as important resources to support wider skills and learning, and with the potential to impact positively on mental health and build confidence.

4. It was agreed that the formal educational system was a useful means of accessing young people in order to: promote the value of cultural and creative learning from the early years onwards; embed creative and digital skills development; support learning through local culture and heritage resources; support language learning; and foster interest in artistic/creative careers.

5. Some contributors felt that STEM subjects tend to be prioritised over arts subjects in schools, and pressed for arts and music specialist teachers to be retained.   Better signposting of arts and cultural careers and specialist apprenticeships were also suggested. The need to support other transferrable skills, for example, business and administration that support arts and cultural careers was also highlighted by some contributors.

Section 5: Funding Culture

1. Protecting, increasing and rethinking public funding and other forms of investment in culture to ensure they are equitable and sustainable, and the need for on-going investment in people and the culture infrastructure were themes raised frequently throughout the engagement phase.

2. There was discussion around what the priorities for public sector expenditure should be, especially in the context of potential future budget reductions, and how to diversify the funding base.

3. In general the view was that public funding was essential but that there was a need to review current funding mechanisms to allow greater sustainability, flexibility, risk taking and innovation, to invest more strategically and to support artists and individuals, including those who are less well established. It was also felt that a review would help to tackle some of the inequalities around who is able to access funding discussed earlier.

4. Contributors recognised that competition for funding was increasing but that available funding was not. Culture budgets were felt to be particularly vulnerable to cuts. Volunteers were commended, but some felt that their services were sometimes used because of a lack of funding.

5. New funding options were suggested by some such as commercial/business partnerships, better joining up across industries and sectors, private funding, linking small organisations to larger ones, philanthropy, and use of fiscal levers such as taxation.

6. Contributors raised the importance of continued investment in infrastructure especially at local level including digital infrastructure as well as physical spaces. There was felt to be a need for more affordable or free studio space whilst others felt that music venues were increasingly vulnerable to losing their licenses due to noise abatement notices being served. Changes to planning and licensing legislation were suggested as ways to help to tackle this issue. Contributors suggested that better use could be made of existing venues, by opening them up to the wider community, and that derelict buildings should be brought back into use.   Strategic, integrated and long term planning approaches were also suggested.

Section 6: International working

1. Culture was widely felt to be critical in how Scotland is perceived internationally and seen as central to Scotland's international diplomacy. Contributors noted that many in the sector work internationally, Scotland is viewed internationally as a centre for excellence and international ambitions for Scotland's culture are high.

2. There was a lot of discussion about how best to represent culture overseas in a way that retains authenticity and presents the full range of cultures and heritages that Scotland has to offer, including the grassroots and the contemporary. The diversity of Scotland's culture and being open to new and different cultures were regarded as important aspects of Scotland's international image.

3. The built and natural environment, vibrant culture and heritage and creative industries were widely acknowledged as attracting investment to Scotland and making Scotland a desirable destination to visit, live, work and do business.

4. The impact of Brexit was a concern for many given the importance of international working and the view that international cultural collaborations are mutually beneficial.

5. It was thought that more could be done to promote Scotland abroad as a year round cultural destination and it was suggested that international links could be promoted via the diaspora.

Section 7: Leadership and joined up working

1. This theme reflects discussion about the nature of working relationships within the sector, between local and national government, across government areas and between public, private and third sectors.

2. Overall, contributors expressed the hope that the strategy would support a more joined up approach to culture policy and provision. The perceived benefits of joining up included raising the profile of culture, aligning synergies, avoiding duplication, sharing information and knowledge, and improved communication.

3. Within the sector it was acknowledged that whilst there were many good examples of partnership working, the sector was sometimes fragmented. Competition for work and funding was viewed as an obstacle to cooperation.

4. Contributors called for the Scottish Government to take a more joined up approach and to put culture at the heart of government. Contributors also felt that there was scope for strategic policy partnerships with many policy areas including but not limited to: education, health, economy, tourism and social policy. It was remarked by many that culture should feature in the National Performance Framework and this would help to raise its profile across government and the public sector.

5. In terms of local government, there was some discussion over how much decision making about culture provision should be devolved to the local level, or

whether there should be ring-fencing of local culture budgets. Some argued for a "rights based approach" whereby individuals have a right to a "minimum cultural entitlement".

6. More networking opportunities and partnership working were generally favoured and it was felt that their success relied on effective leadership locally and nationally.

Section 8: Evidence, impact and benefits

1. It was widely believed that the intrinsic value of culture was paramount but there was also a strong desire for the impacts and benefits of culture to be better articulated and promoted to help to advocate for the sector and raise its profile.

2. Contributors noted that culture could have a positive impact (or make a contribution to) outcomes in a wide range of areas including communities; health and well-being; inclusive economic growth; education; international relations; improved mental health; and society overall. It was also mentioned that culture could have a positive impact on housing and local regeneration; poverty and justice; and the environment were also mentioned as being positively impacted by culture.

3. Many noted the difficulties in measuring culture in purely economic or quantitative terms that are often needed to justify spend and make the case for cultural interventions. There can be particular challenges problems in attributing impacts back to cultural interventions and activities. Some felt that good evidence already existed but just needed to be better articulated to convince policy makers in other areas of the benefits of cultural intervention.

4. Contributors made a number of suggestions including the use of a needs based approach; the use of Social Return on Investment tools to articulate cultural benefits in economic terms; and a more joined up approach to evidence based communication and advocacy. Others stressed that a renewed focus on measurement should not be at the expense of artistic freedom of expression.

Conclusion

1. This Summary Report has outlined the key points that were raised throughout the engagement phase held in support of the development of A Culture Strategy for Scotland which ran from June to December 2017. These are set out in greater detail in the Main Report. Both reports set out the main themes discussed and covers the challenges faced, what is working well and ideas for the future.

2. All views and opinions received to date about priorities for the future support of culture in Scotland will be taken into consideration when drafting the public consultation on A Culture Strategy for Scotland which will issue later in 2018.