

Matthews B (Barry)

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From: Alison Lang [alison.lang@gms.org.uk]
Sent: 30 March 2007 10:18
To: Cultural Bill Consultation
Subject: Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig: Culture Bill response

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A (bhana) charaid chòir,

Attached is the response by Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig to the consultation on the draft Culture (Scotland) Bill.

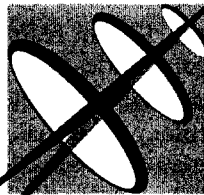
We are willing to have the name and address of Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig and the full text of our response made public through the Scottish Executive website and library and shared with other policy teams. We would also like to be informed of future consultations in this policy area.

Le spèis,

Alison Lang
Corporate Affairs Officer
Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig

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S E I R B H E I S
nam MEADHANAN
G À I D H L I G



Gaelic
Media
Service

Draft Culture (Scotland) Bill

Response by Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig (Gaelic Media Service)

1. Introduction

1.1 Gaelic Media Service

Gaelic Media Service (GMS) is a publicly funded body established by statute and regulated by Ofcom. Our remit is to fund, commission or produce Gaelic-language programmes for television, radio, on-line or new media and to engage in, or fund, the provision of training, development and audience research. In partnership with the BBC, we are establishing a new Gaelic Digital Service, to be launched in late 2007, and we aim to create a media offering that is rooted in Gaelic culture, vibrant, contemporary and appealing to viewers in Scotland – Gaelic speakers and non-Gaelic speakers alike.

1.2 Gaelic vitality

GMS aims to contribute to the long-term sustainability of Gaelic in Scotland and to a secure sense of Gaelic cultural identity and community confidence by promoting the creation of new programme content in Gaelic that reflects the views and encourages the participation of the Gaelic community.

1.3 A focus for the creative industries

GMS provides training and employment opportunities in all technical and creative aspects of the media industries. Our Seaforth House studio and the neighbouring Studio Alba form a hub for programme making activity in the Western Isles. Apart from the obvious benefits to the local economy, this presence acts as a creative impetus for a media offering that is conceived and created in Scotland.

1.4 Reserved and devolved policy areas

Although broadcasting is a reserved matter, Gaelic broadcasting will also be affected by decisions on devolved policy areas including Gaelic, culture and enterprise, at Scottish Executive level and at local authority level. GMS therefore takes a keen interest in the Draft Culture (Scotland) Bill and welcomes this opportunity to respond to the aspects of the draft bill that are relevant to our operations and aspirations.

2. Gaelic and the Draft Culture (Scotland) Bill

2.1 Specific reference to Gaelic

We note that Gaelic is not mentioned in the draft bill, although it is mentioned in the draft guidance to local authorities. We recommend that there should be an explicit reference to Gaelic on the face of the bill, and a statement that Creative Scotland's remit will include the promotion of arts and cultural activity conducted through the medium of Gaelic.

2.2 Duties on local authorities in respect of Gaelic

Although all public authorities have a duty under the Gaelic (Scotland) Act 2005 to prepare and implement Gaelic plans, explicit reference in the Culture (Scotland) Bill to arts and cultural activity conducted through the medium of Gaelic would reinforce the message to local authorities and to other bodies that access to Gaelic cultural activity should be actively offered to people living in all parts of Scotland, and would reassure people who are interested in exercising their cultural entitlements that they can ask their local authorities to include Gaelic cultural activities among those offered. We therefore recommend that explicit reference should be made to Gaelic on the face of the bill and in the guidance to local authorities.

2.3 Gaelic plans and Gaelic policies

Creative Scotland should have Gaelic plan. We note that the Scottish Arts Council is due to submit a Gaelic plan to Bòrd na Gàidhlig in 2007/08, and that although the Scottish Arts Council currently has a Gaelic policy, Scottish Screen does not. The new body that combines the functions of the two existing bodies should be required, as soon as possible after it is established, to prepare and submit a Gaelic plan to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and this plan should be complemented by a robust and regularly updated Gaelic policy covering all areas of its operation.

2.4 Gaelic as a working language

GMS wishes to stress the importance of Creative Scotland, local authorities and other bodies involved in arts and culture recognising Gaelic not just as the subject matter of arts and cultural activity but also as a medium for creating and participating in arts and cultural projects and as a working language for people working in the creative industries. (See also paragraph 4.5 below, on training.)

3. Local cultural entitlements and cultural planning

3.1 A specific entitlement to Gaelic television

GMS sees merit in the proposal that local authorities should make people aware of their cultural entitlements. We recommend that access to Gaelic television be specified as a cultural entitlement for all persons in Scotland, and we are willing to engage with local authorities to provide them with information on Gaelic broadcasting. It should be noted that GMS seeks to engage more widely than with the Gaelic “community of interest”, as the Gaelic Digital Service will be available to people throughout Scotland. Our target is to make the Gaelic Digital Service available to 98.5% of people in Scotland (the coverage required of a public service broadcaster) by 2012.

3.2 The impact of cultural activity on Gaelic

The draft bill and guidance document identify a number of ways in which cultural activity can help to develop wider policy objectives. Gaelic broadcasting was described in the Draft National Plan for Gaelic (2006) as follows:

“Acting as both mirror and projector, Gaelic broadcasting plays several critical roles in Gaelic community and cultural life. Among other things, it acts to bind a dispersed community, to expose speakers to a wider range of dialect, domain and register, to promulgate corpus developments, to advertise and broadcast cultural and other activities, to provide a platform for political expression and to enable Gaelic literate people to pursue relevant careers. These and other benefits must be maintained in the digital age, and the advantages exploited to the full.”¹

¹ Draft National Plan for Gaelic (2006)

http://www.bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk/Cochomhairle/NPGE_smaller.pdf

GMS believes that the guidance should require local authorities, when engaging in community planning, to take account of the impact that broadcasting and other cultural activity could have in supporting the Scottish Executive's objectives for Gaelic as well as for other policy objectives.

4. Creative Scotland

4.1 A single body

GMS agrees that there could be merit in having a single body responsible for supporting and developing talent and excellence in the arts and culture and in the creative and screen industries. We note that Creative Scotland will have an economic development role for the creative industries, including film, television and radio and that it will work with industry to improve the routes through which talented artists, filmmakers and other practitioners and businesses can develop further.

4.2 Enterprise remit

We note concerns among some in the screen industry about Creative Scotland's proposed economic development role. We see no reason, in principle, why Creative Scotland should not have such a role, but we believe that it must be made absolutely clear where this responsibility rests and what role, if any, is envisaged for Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise or the local enterprise companies if Creative Scotland is to handle economic development matters for the screen industries.

4.3 Broadcasting: a reserved matter

As noted above (paragraph 1.4), broadcasting is a reserved matter and regulation of the media takes place at UK level. However, it is through the broadcast media that most people access arts such as film, television and music, as well as getting information about other cultural events. It is therefore vital that Creative Scotland take an interest in the programme content that is broadcast in Scotland, in how it is produced and whether it meets the needs of viewers in Scotland.

4.4 Content forum

We recommend that there should be a content forum that is appropriate to Scotland and to the aspirations of Scottish film and programme makers and the expectations of Scottish audiences. Creative Scotland could provide a home for such a forum, ensuring that those working in the screen industries in Scotland can develop a unique, high-quality offering that draws on Scottish-based talent and creative potential.

4.5 Training

GMS is aware of the need to provide appropriate training for people working in Gaelic television, of the importance of improving creative and technical skills throughout the sector, and of the challenges involved in ensuring that Gaelic is the working language of Gaelic television production. We note that Creative Scotland will work to improve the routes through which those working in the creative industries can develop, and we stress the need for Creative Scotland and other bodies involved in training to take cognisance of the specific training requirements for broadcasting, including Gaelic broadcasting.

5. Conclusions

- GMS broadly supports the aims of the Draft Culture (Scotland) Bill.
- We emphasise our concern that Gaelic is not mentioned on the face of the bill and recommend that specific reference be made to Gaelic in subsequent drafts.
- We recommend that access to Gaelic television should be a specific cultural entitlement for all persons in Scotland.

- We also recommend that consideration be given to the establishment of a content forum for Scotland and to the possibility of Creative Scotland hosting this forum.
- We seek clarification of the role of Creative Scotland in enterprise matters, and we seek assurance that the concerns of the screen industries will be addressed and a satisfactory arrangement made for this important function.
- GMS is willing to engage with the Scottish Executive, Creative Scotland, local authorities and other bodies in the development of policies that are relevant to our remit and operations, and we are keen to be involved in future consultations.

30 March 2007

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