

# **A Culture Strategy for Scotland**

**Analysis of responses to the public  
consultation:**

**Key Themes Report**



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## The consultation

This report summarises key themes to emerge from the analysis of responses to the consultation on a draft, “A Culture Strategy for Scotland”.

The consultation on the draft strategy opened on 27 June and closed on 19 September 2018. The consultation paper is available on the Scottish Government’s website at: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-scotland-draft-consultation/>.

In total, 216 responses were available for analysis. Individual respondents were the largest single group. The largest group of organisational respondents were the culture organisations, groups or companies<sup>1</sup>. Respondents came from across Scotland, from Shetland in the north to Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders in the south, and from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in the west to Fife in the east.

Comments from respondents were often extensive and detailed and the level of interest in, and commitment to, creating the best culture strategy for Scotland was clear. Some noted that they saw the current draft of the strategy as representing a good start to the process of developing the final strategy and that they would be keen to be involved in the development work going forward.

The themes raised by individuals and organisations were often very similar and there were no clear patterns among themes raised by different types of organisations.

## The vision, ambitions and actions

The vision statements are that:

- 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.

The ambitions are:

- Ambition 1 - Transforming through culture: Recognising that culture and creativity are central to Scotland’s cultural, social and economic prosperity.
- Ambition 2 - Empowering through culture: Opening up and extending

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<sup>1</sup> Note that a list of organisation typologies was developed by the analytical team with assistance from the Scottish Government, and organisations were assigned to the most appropriate typology. In many cases organisations could fall into more than typology so the analytical team selected the one that they felt was the most appropriate.

culture so that it is of and for every community and everyone.

- Ambition 3 - Sustaining and nurturing culture to flourish and to evolve as a diverse, positive force in society, across all of Scotland.

There was strong support across the vision and three ambitions set out in the draft strategy. This ranged from 90% of those answering the question supporting Ambition 3 (sustaining and nurturing culture), through to 89% of those answering the question on supporting the vision and 87% supporting ambitions 1 and 2 (focused on transforming and empowering).

The overall levels of support tended to be higher among organisations, albeit there was always a clear majority of individual respondents supporting the vision and each of the ambitions.

Those who supported the vision and ambitions often went on to make broad statements of support, including that the approach is ambitious, positive and inclusive. Further comments often included suggestions about how the draft strategy could be amended or further developed, with specific issues raised by those who supported the vision and ambitions often being very similar to those who did not support the vision and ambitions.

The main issues raised by respondents are set out in turn below, with the analysis drawing on comments made across all questions asked.

### **Recognition of the power of culture**

In terms of reach and potential, a number of respondents noted that they were pleased to see culture taking its place in the National Performance Framework with a new dedicated National Outcome for culture. It was suggested that this is a key recognition that culture is not about 'additional benefit' but is essential to our lives and wellbeing.

The transformative potential of culture was often highlighted, including in terms of the positive impact on individuals, communities and places. There was particular reference to the potential of culture to improve health and wellbeing with some respondents noting the important role that their own organisation or sector already plays, including that a number of third sector organisations are using cultural approaches to support people's health and wellbeing.

### **Importance of excellence**

Some respondents welcomed the reference in the vision to cultural excellence but, while acknowledging the importance of inclusion, argued that the draft strategy could do more to recognise and support cultural excellence, or to strike a balance between 'inclusive culture' and 'quality culture'.

However, many more respondents were of the view that excellence implies there is a standard against which cultural activity can be judged, and that this could be seen as elitist and leading to exclusion.

### **‘Top-down or bottom-up’**

There was a view expressed by some respondents that the draft strategy feels quite high-level and top-down in places. This was seen as running counter to other aspects of the draft strategy and its ambition to empower individuals and communities in a new way.

Under Ambition 2, (Empowering through culture), it was felt by some that ‘opening up and extending culture’ could imply that communities do not already engage in cultural activities and that the approach could appear limiting, rather than providing the basis for a more inclusive approach to culture as intended.

Respondents often agreed with the emphasis placed on communities and place. Some suggested that grassroots culture could be valued more and welcomed the draft strategy indicating that local culture is just as important as national culture. The importance of encouraging communities to take ownership of their cultural assets was highlighted, as was the need for more emphasis on listening to what communities want, without making assumptions.

### **Importance of an inclusive approach**

The draft strategy’s focus on inclusion, including support for accessible and community-based culture, was welcomed, as was the emphasis on marginalised communities and social justice. Many acknowledged the complex nature of multiple cultural identities and defining communities.

Respondents suggested a range of groups of people who could be given greater coverage in the draft strategy, including people from black and minority ethnic communities and British Sign Language users and deaf people. In these cases, the focus was on creating more opportunities for those working or wishing to work in the culture sectors, as well as increasing opportunities for minority groups to engage in culture more generally. Some respondents noted their agreement with increasing opportunities that broaden the backgrounds of those working and volunteering in the culture sectors, particularly where deprivation can be a barrier to accessing cultural opportunities, whether real or perceived. This support was carried through to a desire to ensure that marginalised groups are incorporated into decision-making structures that impact on programming and production with a view to also diversifying audiences.

Other people that respondents wished to see given greater consideration in the draft strategy included those with learning disabilities, including profound or multiple disabilities. Members of the Gypsy Traveller community were also mentioned as requiring more attention in the draft strategy. Some respondents also highlighted the need for parity across rural and urban provision, beyond the central belt, and the need for tailored approaches to supporting culture locally.

## **Key role of education and career pathways**

Some of those who commented noted the importance of ensuring children and young people have access to culture and that the education sector will have a key role to play, particularly for children and young people from marginalised communities.

A number of other comments focused on the delivery of, or access to, culture through schools. These included that foundations enabling a lifetime of appreciation of, participation in, and understanding of, the inherent value of culture will be built at pre-school, primary and secondary school stages.

To ensure that such foundations are put in place, it was suggested that stronger links need to be made to the Curriculum for Excellence and to priority programmes in education. Many highlighted the importance of clear career pathways and signposting for young people to encourage broad take up of careers in the culture sector. It was also suggested that the draft strategy's vision statements should include a reference to learning more broadly to include both formal and informal education settings. Access to free instrumental music tuition was raised specifically by a number of respondents.

## **Importance of a skilled workforce and volunteers**

Respondents highlighted the importance of supporting both those working and those volunteering in culture to build their skills and experience.

There was general support for focus in the draft strategy on skills development and for the recognition of the significant role that freelancers play. Many respondents were in favour of providing support to the many people working in the cultural sector who are self-employed and who often suffer many of the disadvantages of self-employment and few of the benefits.

There was also support for the focus on digital skills, with further comments including that it will be essential that the cultural workforce has the appropriate leadership skills, training, and attitudes to meet the rapidly changing demands of emerging technologies. Some respondents also called for specific reference to the broad range of skills needed to investigate, record, conserve and present Scotland's cultural heritage for future generations.

Many respondents recognised the vital contribution volunteers make across the culture sector with a high number of organisations depending on volunteers to make their organisations viable. However, it was reported that volunteering in some areas is in decline and that this reduction - and the potential consequences should it continue - needs to be acknowledged if the sustainability of the sector is to be maintained.

## **Role of cultural organisations or their work**

In terms of elements of the draft strategy which respondents particularly liked, there was reference to the empowering and transformative ambitions, with some respondents noting these, or the draft strategy more widely, to be very much in line with the ethos behind the work of their own organisations.

Some respondents offered to be exemplars or ambassadors for the draft strategy's ambitions through their own best practice or by providing case studies for the final strategy. Others saw scope to assist in promoting the draft strategy internationally and attracting international cultural input and expertise to Scotland.

Many respondents gave examples of their own or others' practice which they thought was notable. There was considerable diversity and range in the nature of the examples given, which included local projects or organisations, local and national festivals, wider Scottish-based initiatives, as well as examples of national and international co-operation and collaboration. Many suggested the final strategy could take more of an assets based approach to culture, celebrating more of what Scotland already has and does well culturally.

## **Impact and potential of joint-working**

Practice examples and other comments often focused on the vital role that partnership working will play in the delivery of a culture strategy for Scotland. There was support for the development of a national partnership,<sup>2</sup> which it was felt could help achieve consensus on national priorities across cultural organisations.

It was suggested that developing alliances should begin with cultural organisations working at community level. It was frequently noted that there is already a lot of joined-up thinking and working across the sector and suggested that existing alliances, often working slightly below the radar, should be sought out and strengthened before 'the wheel is reinvented'.

The support and partnership of Scotland's local authorities was seen as key to helping facilitate the building of effective networks, partnerships and sharing of best practice.

Views were mixed on the development of a new cultural leadership post within Scottish Government which would draw on strategic thinkers from across the culture sectors. Many respondents made a clear statement of support, including suggesting that the role will be crucial to helping deliver the changes proposed. However, a smaller number disagreed with or were not convinced about the benefits of developing a new post.

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<sup>2</sup> The action set out in the draft strategy is to develop a national partnership for culture that includes working with academic partners to develop new approaches to measuring an extended view of culture and better articulate the benefits of culture to society.

## **International ambitions and the impact of Brexit**

The importance of looking outward was recognised. It was suggested that an international focus has a vital role to play in promoting Scotland's diverse cultural assets and in enriching and constantly renewing our culture at home through meaningful contact and exchange with cultural policy and best practice from around the world.

Suggestions included that Scotland's international ambitions could be more clearly articulated in the draft strategy. It was also suggested that there is scope to strengthen the draft strategy in terms of what it says about Scotland's cultural relationship with the wider world, particularly in relation to how Scotland is viewed externally from a cultural point of view; how international flows and influences contribute to culture in Scotland; and how Scotland can learn from the experiences of other nations.

Concerns about the likely negative impact of Brexit on the cultural sector were raised, and it was suggested that international ambitions and partnership will be key if the draft strategy is to deliver on its vision of culture as 'open to the wider world'. Loss of funding opportunities was noted in particular.

## **Funding of culture**

There were frequent references during the consultation to the importance of funding, including that supporting the capacity and resilience of the sector will be key going forward and that this will require financial investment.

Both central government funding and support offered by local authorities were seen as crucial, and the need for capital funding to allow for the preservation and renovation of buildings was highlighted. It was reported that projects can be difficult to get off the ground for funding reasons and that identifying additional funding streams would be very valuable. It was also suggested that creating longer-term funding arrangements would support the cultural sector to develop and innovate.

Some respondents also suggested that new ways of funding the sector should be sought including potential to apply a more 'business-like' approach to the funding model, citing the example of many successful creative industries. Help to navigate the social investment landscape that organisations might tap into, would also be useful.

## **Definition of culture**

There was some support for the 'broad-brush', non-prescriptive approach taken to describing culture in the draft strategy, including reference to the full range of cultural activities created and experienced by communities throughout Scotland and culture's contribution to wellbeing.

However, the absence of a definition of culture was also an issue for some respondents and it was suggested that such a definition should be included. Further comments included that whilst finding an acceptable definition would be



challenging, the draft strategy and its vision, ambitions and actions would benefit from the clarity such a definition would bring.

### **Importance of heritage**

Some respondents identified sectors or areas for which they wished to see greater coverage or prominence in the draft strategy, most frequently citing cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible), including museums, libraries and archives. There was also reference to conservation and heritage science, built heritage and heritage craft and skills. References were also made to the importance of linkages between the historic environment and natural heritage and to the role of the culture sector in leading practice and behavioural change to secure a greener future.

There was a view that, if the draft strategy implies delivery will only be achieved through creative processes, those working in the cultural heritage sector will feel excluded. Some respondents wanted greater recognition of the importance of traditional arts and crafts to culture in Scotland and suggested that more could be made of its distinctiveness and international reach. Some also wanted more to be done to celebrate and promote the richness of the Gaelic, Scots and Doric languages and cultures.

### **The draft strategy itself**

Some respondents were looking to the draft strategy for more detailed actions and measures and a sense of how the vision will be delivered. An action plan, with timescales and assigned responsibility for delivery was requested. Many called for clarity on what national and local government will do, as well as the national companies and cultural organisations, and how they will work together to deliver the draft strategy. Some respondents asked for alignment of the national culture strategy, existing national and sector strategies and the National Outcome for culture.

A number of respondents raised issues about the draft strategy document itself, including that, although necessarily wide ranging, it is too long and repetitive in places. It was also seen as sometimes complex and difficult to understand. The importance of inclusive visual design within the finished document was also highlighted.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this report sets out key themes from the analysis of responses to the Scottish Government's consultation on a draft, "A Culture Strategy for Scotland". A broad range of respondents made submissions, often providing further detailed comments. Overall, there was broad support for the vision, ambitions and actions set out with many respondents saying they wanted to work with the Scottish Government in the further development of the draft strategy.



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