

**Karen**

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**From:** donald [donald@scottishstorytellingcentre.com]  
**Sent:** 09 September 2004 10:12  
**To:** info  
**Subject:** Consultation response[Scanned]

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OF (21)  
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Dear Commission

I enclose the Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network's first-stage submission in response to your questions.

We look forward to engaging with you, not least to share our experience of working with grass roots projects in every part of Scotland. We enclose with the hard copy of this submission two copies of our most recent newsletter "Blethers", and our network recruitment leaflet.

With best wishes for your ongoing discussions.

Yours sincerely

Dr Donald Smith, Director  
Scottish Storytelling Centre <<...>>

09/09/2004

## Response to the Cultural Commission initial letter by The Scottish Storytelling Centre and Network

### ***Where we are coming from***

The Scottish Storytelling Centre is a network of individuals and organisations in all parts of Scotland committed to the practice of storytelling skills and traditions as a live contemporary oral artform. The network includes 90 professional storytellers working full-time or part-time in schools, libraries, museums, age-care centres and country parks across Scotland; approximately 300 volunteers; 11 affiliated regional organisations/associations and all of Scotland's 32 local authorities. The Network is collectively constituted as the Scottish Storytelling Forum.

The Scottish Storytelling Centre maintains/develops:

- a national resource centre sited at The Netherbow on Edinburgh's Royal Mile (currently being redeveloped)
- an annual training, mentoring and CPD programme for storytellers, volunteers, and professions which utilise storytelling skills, including teachers, librarians, social workers and arts animators – all accompanied by publications and resources
- the annual Scottish International Storytelling Festival.

Current initiatives include:

*StoryMakers* – a national project, fostering children's creativity through storytelling, and prioritising children marginalised or excluded due to economic, social and/or cultural factors

*Storylines* – a pilot project looking at young people's awareness of dynamics and interpretation in a variety of media

*Life Stories* – a regional pilot on enabling participative storytelling activities amongst elderly and frail elderly groups

*Enabling Stories* – a new pilot project exploring narrative sharing amongst people with special needs

*Literature in Learning* – a pilot project with Scottish Book Trust and the Scottish Poetry Library to support creative language development in all areas of education.

### ***Our response to your questions***

#### **Education**

- affirm creative learners across the curriculum at all age and ability levels
- enable people to understand their local culture and environment as an essential step towards understanding diversity and inter-connections on a wider scale
- give young learners access to essential artistic "grammars" – music, movement, narrative, creative language and visual form/design
- foster critical appreciation and enquiry in relation to artistic experiences and cultural knowledge.

### **Institutional Infrastructure**

- develop an integrated national citizens' plan for arts and culture provision involving central and local government
- retain key national strategies and institutions within a 'Creative Scotland' framework that allows profile to the distinctive activities rather than the management structure, e.g. literature, libraries, National Galleries and visual arts, theatre, film
- define relationships, responsibilities and accountable governance within an Act of Parliament.

### **Delivery of Service and Access**

- These should be an integrated aspect of education and of the institutional infrastructure as defined above. Each art form needs a comprehensive strategy for creation, production, distribution and appreciation.
- More marketing will not, in itself, increase access – it could be argued that the present level of marketing already equals information overload.
- There is a need for more integrated marketing to a wider Scottish public, e.g. of libraries, literature, museums or theatre.
- Scottish broadcasting and its current poor reflection of Scottish arts and culture is a critical factor.

### **Encouraging Creativity**

- There is a danger of this theme appearing patronising. Creativity is not a margarine that can be spread over things to make them better: it is a critical engagement with reality.
- In that light, the people of Scotland will be more creative when there is better health, less poverty, better education, more care for our environment, strong communities, and robust economic enterprise. We applaud the Scottish Executive's ambition for 'joined up government'.
- Nonetheless, there is a vital spark of cultural pride – in locality, community, and nation – that can help energise these other agendas. Such pride is neither chauvinistic nor, necessarily, nationalistic but devolution has not yet recovered it. Can culture take a lead?

### **Rights**

- Rights, whether of a citizen or a creative artist, can only be significant in an environment of increased opportunity. Such rights should be the end-point, or goal, of this process but not an artificial pre-determined target.
- Creative artists cannot be rigidly distinguished from cultural workers or citizens in general – new storytellers are always emerging!

## **Our Pleas; Your Priorities**

We are actively engaged, on a national basis, with the challenges facing the Commission and we ask you to:

- affirm creative and personal confidence in our children – Scottish society and a target-driven education system have not yet embraced child centred values
- support projects in local communities in an ongoing rather than a short term way
- encourage local cultural knowledge, in all its diversity, as an essential first step towards wider understanding, creative confidence and the critical tools necessary for democratic citizenship
- include older people in the mainstream of arts provision and to consider the situation of frail, elderly people in day or residential care
- integrate storytelling provision in local and national support structures as a vital underpinning of creativity, accessible and necessary to everyone.

**D. Colin Mackay**, Chair  
The Scottish Storytelling Forum

**Dr Donald Smith**, Director  
The Scottish Storytelling Centre