

Cultural Commission Consultation Phase I: Glasgow Caledonian University Response.

The Principal, Dr Ian Johnston has asked me to make a response to Cultural Commission's consultation exercise on behalf of Glasgow Caledonian University. We are very grateful to have this opportunity to contribute to this important and unique exercise. Other individuals and groups from Caledonian may be making their own submissions, however, here are some brief points which we would wish to stress from an institutional viewpoint.

Defining 'Culture'

We suggest that 'culture' should be given a broad and inclusive definition. For example, the role of heritage and the historic environment, especially the everyday surroundings in which we live, should not be overlooked in an assessment of what contributes to culture. Whether located at a local, group or national level, cultural heritage is an ongoing and dynamic process that reflects the people, place and the time in which it is being interpreted. It involves the transmission of history in a tangible form. As such it encompasses monuments; sites; museums and galleries; artefacts, but it is also an expression of the landscapes and buildings that make up our surroundings. However, besides the monumental remains of cultures traditionally associated with 'cultural heritage', ethnographic and industrial heritage should also be recognised as important categories. This is a particularly fragile legacy which includes rituals, festivities, activities and skills connected with material culture or the environment. The concept of 'cultural rights' should address this landscape of diversity.

Institutional Infrastructure: Building Research Capacity

We are aware that research and knowledge transfer capacity in the area requires development. For example, the size, range and diversity of the 'cultural' sector - with multiple 'publics' and institutional structures - brings its own challenges. A limited cross-sectoral evidence base, for example, is frequently compounded by the lack of an international comparative perspective for policy making. As recognised by bodies such as the UK-Historic Environment Research Group here are a number of areas in which hard data and the strategic guidance provided by applied research are particularly lacking. These include:

- Broadening Access and Inclusion - Developing a sector-wide programme of research to enhance access to the full range of cultural resources;
- Measuring the economic impacts of 'culture' - Analysing the relationship between culture and economic regeneration; identifying potential for sustainability and synergies across the sector.
- Unlocking the potential of local communities - providing a strong research base for initiatives contributing to 'community planning' and the growth of Scotland's social and cultural capital.
- Strengthening policy implementation and evaluation
Ensuring that research is applied to the policy making process and to day to day management and marketing in the sector, with regular monitoring set in place.

These issues would best be addressed by a clearly focussed and dedicated research effort in which the Scottish universities can play a vital role. Indeed, GCU have already recognised this need by substantial investment in cultural heritage as one of its strategic priority research areas over the next three years.

Maximising creative potential.

We finally believe that there is significant creative potential in Scotland with a relatively large number of graduates from creative programmes and courses in Colleges and Universities. The problem is that the creative industries where people may gain employment comprise in the main SMEs with little financial backing and a hand-to mouth existence, which makes investing in innovative approaches and ideas a big risk. Graduates with creative ideas often have to gain employment outside Scotland and often never manage to test their ideas in the market place, which is a loss of opportunity for Scotland. To encourage creativity we need to provide appropriate support for graduates who have a creative background and innovative ideas, to give them the understanding and tools which will enable them to pursue their ideas with confidence, possible even in the context of self-start businesses.

GCU, for example, has recently created a new MSc in Cultural Heritage studies which combines the development of management skills with a broader understanding of heritage contexts and policies. Similarly, in the area of product design and multimedia design we have developed post graduate study programmes which combine further development of their expertise in the field, but within the context of developing a full business plan to develop their own innovative ideas. The exercise helps to combine their creativity with the practical reality of putting ideas into practice. Even if the idea itself does not lead to commercial success, the process has significant benefit to the individual and creates the correct balance of knowledge to prepare them for future commercialisation activities. The problem is that creativity without the tools to translate ideas into reality will frustrate individuals and ultimately stifle their imagination through pursuing other avenues for employment. This is a potential loss of opportunity for Scotland.

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