

the scottish
co-operative party

Arts and Culture

Agenda 2011

Consultation Paper

The Cultural Sector is one of the largest industries in Scotland today. More people are employed in Galleries, Museums, Performing Arts Venues, Libraries and Historic properties than were employed in mining or ship building at their peak. More people visit Arts venues every week than attend football matches, and more people are members of Friends groups for cultural organisations than are members of sports supporters clubs.

Ownership of cultural organisations is diverse, but falls broadly into three categories – Local Authorities; quangos such as Historic Scotland , NGS and NMS: and independent trusts ranging in size from the National Trust for Scotland to the Dunfermline Heritage Trust and smaller. Many Local Authorities are looking at new ways to manage their leisure services, and we contend that the most effective, democratic, and accountable way to do so is to establish Leisure Services as Co-operatives. This is discussed in another Policy document.

However mutualisation is a great deal more than a solution to a funding and management problem in local authorities or government bodies. We believe that across the Cultural sector, the existing values, principles, and aspirations of the organisations which are its component parts are already those of Co-operatives, and that Co-operative governance structures would strengthen it by directly engaging with the people, sharing decision making and accountability, and opening many doors to fresh ideas. For some types of Cultural organisation – for example a touring Theatre Company -the best model may be that of an Employee Co-operative. For others, the potential for development as Consumer member Co-operatives seems limitless.

No Scottish Arts organisation, or gallery, or museum, or historic monument – whatever the ownership - is established for long before it sets up its “Friends”. The Friends pay subscriptions, receive special offers, newsletters, back stage tours, and the like. They raise funds, organise trips to other organisations and often even pay their own staff. But they have no say in the governance of the organisation they support, and may have no representation on its board. And whether the cultural facility is owned and managed by a Council, by a quango, or by a Trust, this lack of effective representation often leads to difficulties – famous examples being the change in policy in Glasgow's Museums which became known as The Elspeth King Affair, the merger of the orchestras of Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet, the effective eviction from the RSA galleries of the Scottish Artist's Societies, and most recently the proposed closure of three National Trust for Scotland properties.

We note the scope for developing Co-operatives owned corporately and co-operatively by the cultural organisations in the areas of marketing and publicity, including distribution; transportation – of performers, sets and equipment, exhibition material; education; fund-raising, insurance and investment.

A few questions for consideration

What steps should be taken to develop Co-operatives in the Arts/Culture/ Heritage sector?

Who should be involved in taking this forward?

Is there a clear division between what kind of organisation would be best developed as a Consumer Co-operative and which as an Employee Co-operative?

What are the difficulties regarding Charitable or Trust status of many Arts organisations, and how might these be overcome?

Making Submissions

The Scottish Policy Committee is extremely keen to ensure that all views expressed at branches should be included in written submissions to the Scottish Policy Forum. We would ask branches to invite the Scottish Policy Committee to the meeting which considers this paper so that views can be recorded.

Submissions should be made by **19 February 2010** at the latest to Mary Lockhart, Secretary, Scottish Policy Committee, at m.lockhart@party.coop.