



UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

Centre for Cultural Policy Research

**The effectiveness of the Scottish Arts Council's
links and partnerships with other agencies**

A report to the Scottish Executive

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Contents

1. Executive summary	3
2. Introduction	8
3. Preamble	11
4. Facts, information and opinion	12
4.1 The cultural community.....	12
4.1.1 Content analysis.....	12
4.1.2 General conclusions.....	12
4.1.3 Themes.....	14
4.2 Local authorities.....	17
4.2.1 Analysis of local authority survey responses.....	17
4.2.2 Summary of key points from local authority interviews.....	22
4.3 Other partners, agencies and commentators.....	27
4.3.1 New Scotland.....	28
4.3.2 International links.....	29
4.3.3 Private sector.....	30
4.3.4 Social justice.....	30
4.3.5 Image and the press.....	31
4.3.6 Bureaucracy.....	32
4.3.7 Leadership and role.....	32
4.3.8 Knowledge.....	32
4.4 The Public.....	33
4.4.1 Findings.....	33
5. Themes, commentary and analysis	36
5.1 Arm's length.....	36
5.2 Scrutiny.....	37
5.3 Leadership.....	38
5.4 Partnerships.....	39
5.5 International working.....	40
5.6 Across Scotland.....	41
5.7 Development agency.....	42
5.8 Audience development.....	43
5.9 Bureaucracy and decision making.....	44
5.10 Communications.....	46
6. Conclusions	49
7. Recommendations	51

1. Executive summary

The effectiveness of the Scottish Arts Council's links and partnerships with other agencies

1. The Centre for Cultural Policy Research (CCPR), University of Glasgow, was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to undertake a part of the Quinquennial Review of the Scottish Arts Council (SAC). The CCPR remit was to investigate and review SAC's external links and partnerships considering the 'effectiveness of the Council's wider links and partnership working with other agencies including local authorities, social inclusion partnerships, the enterprise and tourism networks, artists and the cultural community more widely'.
2. To fulfil this remit the CCPR research team, Christine Hamilton and Adrienne Scullion, worked in partnership with the Scottish Local Government Information Unit (SLGIU), Glasgow; The Audience Business, Edinburgh; and, Professor Luiz Moutinho, Department of Business and Management, University of Glasgow.
3. The research team consulted with the cultural community, the local authorities, other partners and agencies including parliamentarians, the enterprise networks, VisitScotland, Social Inclusion Partnerships, and the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), as well as international contacts, journalists, members of the public and the Chair and senior management of SAC.
4. The research team used a variety of methods to elicit information and commentary including face to face interviews with senior members of staff at SAC; a one day consultation with a cross-section of the cultural community; questionnaires distributed to all 32 local authorities; telephone interviews with representatives of 10 local authorities and CoSLA; face to face interviews and/or telephone interviews with key partnership agencies; telephone interviews with key Scottish Executive staff in Brussels and Washington; a face to face interview with the Chief Executive of NESTA; focus group with key Scottish journalists; a telephone survey of a sample of Scottish population; and, desk research.
5. From the cultural community there is a frustration with SAC, which they see as bureaucratic in its grant processes and inconsistent in its decision making. They are not sure if they want SAC to be a leader, but they are sure that they need it to be an advocate for the arts. There is no faith in the committee system, but the cultural community wants to engage with SAC as a partner in developing the arts.
6. We found that SAC has a long-standing and well-developed relationship with local authorities. In their view, SAC's most important role is to be advocate for the arts. There is potential to develop this relationship further through the community planning process and there is a need to clarify the respective responsibilities for local, regional and national arts development.
7. The research team found that SAC did not score as highly with the public as some national agencies in terms of public awareness and there was low awareness, particularly in the cities, about SAC's role as a lottery distributor. The public perception of SAC's remit is that it 'encourages people to go to the arts' (71%), 'encourages new artists' (71%), and

'advertises the arts' (65%).

8. The research team identified ten key themes that ran through all of our consultations –
- There is a lack of clarity in the relationship between the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Arts Council that leads to confusion about SAC's role and remit. This confusion is focused on the meaning and operation of the **arm's length principle**.
 - There is now a different kind and level of **scrutiny**, particularly in relationship to the Executive, the Parliament and the Parliamentary Committees. SAC has not yet made the best of the potential new relationships here.
 - There is both confusion and conflict about what the role of SAC should be in terms of **leadership**. SAC itself seems confused.
 - People – in local authorities, arts companies, SIPs – like working in **partnership**. SAC has a variety of different kinds of partnerships: long term and short term; new and established; good and bad. SAC needs to recognise and learn from those partnerships that work effectively, must enhance existing ones, and must continue to forge new ones. In this area there is opportunity for the Executive and the Minister to forge new relationships across a range of agencies and organisation particularly in the area of cultural tourism, strategic investment and planning.
 - SAC funds work that tours internationally and is seen by international visitors. There are some good examples of working in partnership with other agencies to develop the **international** profile of Scotland and Scottish artists. However, the Executive has to make some decisions on priorities in this area, and these must be linked to other aspects of its work. Those consulted believed that there is a real opportunity to link culture with other priorities, for example tourism and economic development, as well as to capitalise on Scotland's distinctive (and new) political identity. The information flow from SAC and the British Council in Scotland through to the Scottish Executive representation in both Brussels and Washington could be clearer.
 - SAC staff understands the geographic and cultural differences **across Scotland**. And yet SAC is described as having a centrist approach. Shetland Arts Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association and HI Arts offer examples of devolved decision making and grant funding at a grassroots level. All offer interesting models for making and supporting a diversity of work across Scotland.
 - The remit of SAC as a **development agency** is muddled: for some SAC does not have the flexibility to be a development agency and certainly there is little or no flexibility in voted funds; and yet SAC does receive lots of positive feedback from agencies involved in social inclusion, from the enterprise network and from local authorities all recognising its role in development.
 - The levels of awareness of SAC are relatively low. The general public's unprompted understanding of the role of SAC is fragmented and unclear. This may have ramifications in terms of **audience development**: SAC, for example, is not well recognised as a distributor of lottery funding. There were very low levels of awareness of this significant part of their work and given the importance of support funding to many arts activities this was somewhat surprising response. There is some good

contact with rural areas as they show a higher awareness of the remit of SAC to distribute lottery funding. However, overall, special attention should be considered for rural areas in terms of building connections with SAC.

- SAC is overly **bureaucratic**. Funding schemes and deadlines proliferate. Decision making can appear haphazard. Despite this SAC's staff is trusted and is generally judged to be the organisation's strength.
 - SAC lacks a **communications strategy** that encompasses a commitment to partnership working with the cultural community as well as other partners. In the case of the former, a private discussion where SAC does not set the agenda might be helpful. In a revamping of their communications strategy, SAC needs to sharpen up its information and PR role.
9. The conclusions we are presenting have implications not only for SAC but also for the Executive.
- In a role as advocate and funder in a 'new' Scotland we and our consultees anticipate a newly negotiated relationship with the Executive, a sharper, smarter, more focussed remit, that carries with it a refreshed and revised approach to dealing with partners throughout Scotland, and a clearer view of the international world. With such a re-articulation in place SAC can indeed deliver as an advocate for the arts. In such a role SAC can indeed act on behalf of and in partnership with the Executive in shaping the debate on Scotland's arts and culture and assuring its place at the heart of the nation.
 - There is confusion about the role and remit of SAC that affects all aspects of its work. To clarify this the arm's length principle needs to be re-visited and relationship made clearer between the Executive, SAC, the cultural community and the partners and agencies which interact with SAC. 'Ministerial interference' needs to be transformed into 'Ministerial leadership'.
 - Recognising the increased level of scrutiny that is part of today's Scotland, SAC needs to develop a better relationship with the Parliament and, in particular, the Education Culture and Sport Committee. The use of parliamentary briefings, meetings with the Committee, and high level engagement with cross party groups are all suggested as ways of improving the relationship.
 - There is a debate around the role of SAC as a leader, with some being suspicious of that word and remit. But our conclusion is that SAC is the body of expertise in the arts and should be more confident in that role. In particular, it needs to be confident about talking about art.
 - There is confusion about what is meant by a 'development agency' as opposed to a role as a funding body, although there is also the view that SAC should be both. Like its leadership role, we are not sure that SAC is itself very clear as to either meaning. SAC is not viewed as an organisation that is risk taking.
 - It is a hackneyed phrase but an important point: there is a lack of 'joined up-ness' across public bodies in Scotland. This is not a problem for SAC alone. However, we do conclude that SAC must review, re-fresh and indeed re-invent all its partnerships

and areas of joint working. A priority area is the local authorities where the relationship is overall very good but where there is scope for development in the light of community planning and in developing the support for projects in SIP areas. There may be staffing implications in this. We also believe the Executive has a role in leading a discussion between SAC and local authorities on their respective local, regional and national remits.

- Another priority for SAC is to develop partnerships with agencies involved in the other aspects of the Minister's portfolio. We believe that there are examples of good projects working effectively but, at a planning and at a strategic level, there is not even a regular process for exchanging information and ideas. We particularly point to the potential of closer links with sportscotland and VisitScotland.
- On the area of international relations, we conclude that the Executive needs to give a lead on geographical priorities that are, presumably, informed by wider considerations than just culture. The British Council is the agency which has the knowledge, expertise and resources to develop international cultural relations, but in a devolved Scotland that needs to be carefully negotiated. Foreign relations remains a reserved power. Recent examples of joint working suggest that the British Council Scotland Office is effectively negotiating these difficult areas. The key to delivering an international profile for Scottish culture is for all partners to continue to work closely together and not for the development of new structures. We also believe that a clarification of roles and better information flow could assist the Scottish Executive in its work in both Brussels and Washington.
- Part of international relations is support for the development of world-class work made in Scotland that can be exported from Scotland and for the development of venues in Scotland to receive international work. Here SAC has a leading role alongside other national institutions and the larger local authorities in particular.
- SAC is regarded by some as being 'Edinburgh-centric'; that, we conclude, is more about perception than reality. We believe that SAC should continue to work with arts development organisations and agencies across Scotland (including local authorities) to devolve some of its decision making and funding – particularly funds related to local arts development or focused on the individual artist.
- One area where SAC is not engaged (but, ironically, is perceived to be so) is in the area of audience development. Despite its recent efforts, the approach SAC takes to audience development is perceived to be, 'build it and they will come', i.e. the development of audiences is the responsibility of the organisations it funds. There is scope for looking again at this area and for SAC to take a more proactive approach.
- Overburdened with bureaucratic systems, SAC staff members at every level are seen as being overworked. We conclude that this is due to the systems and not to lack of good staff.
- The committee system does not work and acts as a barrier to cross art form development. The system should be completely recast with the standing art form committees being scrapped. We suggest that the cultural community is consulted on the priorities for funding and that the use of experts should still be considered (as with

the Creative Scotland model). Organisations in receipt of core funding should be treated in a more 'hands off' way, with 3 year funding agreements. Officers should be empowered to take decisions on smaller grants. The reasons for decisions have to be more clearly articulated. The application process should be put on line as a matter of urgency. The organisation can then re-focus on being a development agency at the heart of the life of the nation.

- If SAC is to be a leading development agency in the arts, then it needs to have a new communications strategy which not only sits in the press office, but which permeates the whole organisation. Transparency lies at the heart of good communication, and SAC needs to look at its main communication tools again to see how they can be improved. Areas of priority are the Help Desk and web site.

10. From this we make six recommendations.

1. Scottish Executive and SAC must review of the arm's length principle with a view to establishing a new concordat relevant for the 'new' Scotland.
2. The different parts of the Minister's portfolio should be 'joined up'.
3. The Scottish Executive must take the lead in developing an understanding between SAC, local authorities and other agencies on local, regional, national and international remits and responsibilities.
4. SAC must develop a shared agenda with the cultural sector.
5. SAC must streamline grant giving and decision making.
6. SAC must develop a corporate communications strategy which permeates the organisation and which acknowledges the range of partnerships and different 'publics'.

2. Introduction

The Centre for Cultural Policy Research (CCPR), University of Glasgow, was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to undertake a part of the Quinquennial Review of the Scottish Arts Council (SAC). The CCPR remit was to investigate and review SAC's external links and partnerships. The brief asked for information and analysis of

The effectiveness of the Council's wider links and partnership working with other agencies including local authorities, social inclusion partnerships, the enterprise and tourism networks, artists and the cultural community more widely.

– Brief: Specification for consultancy; schedule 2, paragraph 2.1

The brief identified the following range of key aspects that the Executive wanted to be examined:

The interface between SAC and key partners, including the local authorities, CoSLA, Scottish Screen, the enterprise bodies, and VisitScotland.

Liaison between SAC and key stakeholders including the national companies, core funded bodies, applicants for funding and others it must liaise with as a national arts development agency.

SAC's practice in consultation, networking and the sharing of good practice.

The potential for high level fora and showcase debates, including an international dimension and international contacts providing scope for engagement at Ministerial level.

Other options for the SAC to create and foster strategic alliances befitting its role as a national development agency.

– Brief: Specification for consultancy; schedule 2, paragraph 2.2

The brief made a further qualification:

In all cases the consultants will examine how effective, efficient and customer- focused the existing interface is, and identify any scope for improvement, or proposals for developing the potential of these relationships. The Executive hopes, following the review, to provide a clear statement of its expectations informed by these findings.

– Brief: Specification for consultancy; schedule 2, paragraph 3

In discussion with the Executive, CCPR was also asked to include market research in the review – querying, in particular, the opinion of the population of Scotland on the SAC – and to extend the consultation to include sponsors from the private sector.

To meet the scope of the brief, undertake research and develop final conclusions, Christine Hamilton and Adrienne Scullion of CCPR worked in collaboration with:

- o the Scottish Local Government Information Unit (SLGIU), Glasgow;
- o The Audience Business, Edinburgh; and,
- o Professor Luiz Moutinho, Department of Business and Management, University of

Glasgow.

The research team gathered information using a range of methods including –

- face to face interviews with senior members of staff at SAC
- a one day consultation with a cross-section of the cultural community
- questionnaires distributed to all 32 local authorities
- telephone interviews with representatives of 10 local authorities and CoSLA
- face to face interviews and/or telephone interviews with key partnership agencies
- telephone interviews with key Scottish Executive staff in Brussels and Washington
- face to face interview with the Chief Executive of NESTA
- focus group with key Scottish journalists
- a telephone survey of a sample of the Scottish population
- desk research.

Full details of the methodologies used, and a list of those consulted, are included in appendices 1 and 3.

After this **Introduction** there follows a brief **Preamble**. The main body of the report is then divided into the following four sections:

- **Facts, information and opinion**
- **Themes, commentary and analysis**
- **Conclusions**, and
- **Recommendations**.

Facts, information and opinion

This major chapter is sub-divided into sections relating to each of the main groups with whom we consulted –

- *the cultural community*
- *the local authorities*
- *other partners and agencies*, and
- *the public*.

In each sub-division we offer a note on the facts, information, ideas and opinion collected from these groups and individuals adding, where appropriate, further research carried out with the **National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA)**, **international contacts** and **journalists**. Where quantitative research was undertaken we provide some statistical information.

Themes, commentary and analysis

Thereafter, we identify and comment on the evidence collated. We identify ten themes that run through the results detailed in the previous chapter and begin to explain the context and evidence from which we make suggestions for change, development and improvement.

Conclusions

In this section we draw some conclusions from the research exercise and our analysis of the themes identified.

Recommendations

The report concludes with a section of recommendations. These mainly centre on changing the ways that SAC might work, lessening bureaucracy and identifying potential new alliances and ways of developing partnerships within the new Scotland. We were not asked to cost any recommendations but we do highlight those recommendations that may have financial implications.

3. Preamble

Until its recent re-branding the SAC's slogan of 'Arts at the heart of the nation' offered a compelling vision. It implied the centrality of culture within our society and made the demanding assumption that cultural institutions work in critical and reflective partnership with all aspects of our modern democracy.

The post-devolution context recasts this vision and demands that our public institutions and, perhaps most especially, our cultural institutions seek new solutions; solutions that are, as it were, 'specific to Scotland'. This should not imply a blinkered or narrow perspective but does insist that the roles and responsibilities of our public bodies are reviewed and revisited within this new frame.

As we anticipated in the tender for this project, the first post-devolution quinquennial review of SAC offers particular opportunities and responsibilities. We see that individuals and institutions in post-devolution Scotland demand new ways of working and new ways to meet that challenge. Across a range of agencies and individuals there is a clear desire to forge new kinds of partnerships both within and outwith Scotland, partnerships that will build on the powerful belief that in Scotland arts provision and practice is indeed at the very centre of our community.

Our starting point has been a belief that in all its processes and protocols SAC can offer a model for how that vision can be achieved. We, therefore, offer analysis commentary and recommendations for a 'new' Scottish Arts Council for our new Scotland.

A note: some of the areas discussed in our research and consultancy process have implications for aspects of the quinquennial review not specified in the brief for this project, but which we recognise are to be covered by other aspects of the Scottish Executive's review. Where we were faced with commentary and ideas that informed how links and partnerships were working or might work better we have included them in this report, despite the danger of overlap with other aspects of the review. (For example, despite the fact that there is a parallel consultancy on the appropriateness of the Council's structures, we include commentary and recommendations on the operation of the SAC committee structure.) Nevertheless, we have not had sight of the research or the conclusions in these other areas of the quinquennial review. Our comments are offered in that light.

4. Facts, information and opinion

4.1 The cultural community

In order to identify the major issues from the cultural community, we invited a cross section to participate in a consultation day in Glasgow. Participants were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and geographical areas. Luiz Moutinho led the day and used a range of focus group techniques to engage with participants. Techniques used included –

- semantic differentials
- group discussion
- sentence completion
- cartoon tests
- balloon tests
- morphological analysis.

A full list of participants and a note of methods – along with the resources and stimuli prepared by the research team and used during the consultation day – is given in appendices 1 and 3.

The day's proceedings were audio recorded and then transcribed. The key issues were noted on the day and subsequently confirmed from the transcript. CCPR then undertook a content analysis of this material providing quantitative results that are given below.

4.1.1 Content analysis

The content analysis is aimed at providing a quantitative complement to the information provided through observation of what took place on the consultation day. This analysis quantifies by percentage the distribution of themes, opinions and modes of interaction. For a full description of the methods and the data captured, see appendix 2.3.

The main objectives of the analysis are to –

1. analyse the frequency of recurrence for the key issues (identify which issues/themes were predominant in the discussion)
2. analyse attitudes towards each theme (opinions, levels of certainty)
3. analyse how themes emerged (distinguish between spontaneous commentary and induced commentary)
4. analyse narratives and linkages between themes and interventions (levels of agreement and disagreement)

4.1.2 General conclusions

Predominant issues throughout the session were –

- the role of the SAC either as a 'development agency, a funding council or both' (18% of all identified issues)
- levels of communication between SAC and the cultural community (13%)
- SAC's leadership role (9%)
- the relationship between SAC and the Scottish Executive (8%)
- the definition of SAC's role in general (8%)

References to the potential role of the SAC as an artform developer are also of particular note because, while they were not as frequent as some of the issues mentioned above (only 8% of cases), they were the subject of very lengthy commentary. This was also true of discussions about a possible 'devolution model' for SAC, which, although only emerged in 5.5% of all cases, were often part of long interventions.

The attitudes of participants were put into categories: negative, positive or neutral depending on the way in which they referred to the key issues. Overall, participants took negative or critical approach on 55% of occasions, neutral on 33% and positive on 12%. The issue provoking most negative opinions was the notion of 'consistency' within SAC or, rather, its lack of 'consistency' (75% of negative opinions). Other issues with a high percentage of negative commentary were the excessive 'bureaucracy' and demands for 'accountability' within SAC, the limited dedication of SAC to support 'artform development' and the lack of a clear 'definition of SAC's role' (66.67%).

On the positive side, 50% of the debate about the 'leadership role' of SAC supported the idea that the Council takes the lead. Indeed, levels of agreement and disagreement over this theme were strongly affected by the different interpretations that participants had of the notion of 'leadership'. The idea of SAC working towards a 'devolution model' that allows local organisations – in rural areas in particular – to adopt more responsibilities was also positively viewed in a high percentage (43%) of cases. Other issues accumulating a notable level of positive comment were aspects of the interaction or communication between SAC and the arts community (19%), and the notions of 'education and social justice' as being key in SAC's agenda (supported in 17.6% of cases). However, in both these cases the negative view still prevailed overall.

In order to distinguish the spontaneous emergence of issues from issues explicitly suggested by the session moderator or the techniques in use to engage participants, the content analysis has quantified the range of issues that emerged as a result of 'direct inducement' in contrast to 'non-induced' issues.

Commentary about the agenda of SAC ('education and social justice') was spontaneous in 83% of all cases. Other issues emerging out of the initiative of participants in a high percentage were –

- the need for SAC to develop new forms of support for individual art forms (62%)
- the relationship of SAC with the Scottish Executive (61%)
- the possibility of a devolution model (57%)
- the 'definition of SAC's role' (55%)

This indicates that participants had a clear concern about these issues and did not need the direction of the moderator to comment on them. On the other hand, commentary about 'decision-making' procedures and their 'consistency' in particular, were induced in 62% and 75% of cases respectively.

Finally, we looked at levels of agreement. Themes that attracted 100% agreement were the discussions on the process of 'decision making' within SAC, interest in developing a 'devolution model', and opinions on the 'education and social justice' agenda of SAC. Another theme attracting a high level of agreement was the 'definition of SAC's role' (71%).

It should be noted that the analysis of agreement and disagreement levels has been carried out by looking at the way that *consecutive* interventions were linked. That is to say, even if there were different opinions about SAC's current agenda during the course of the day, the analysis has not captured that there was a disagreement because there was not a direct confrontation between participants over this issue at the time when it emerged. Rather, different opinions were exposed at different times, and the group showed an agreement on each occasion.

The subject attracting higher levels of disagreement and controversy was the role of SAC to develop, or otherwise, new models of 'art form development'. There was an 87% level of disagreement on this issue, mostly due to differing approaches by traditional artists, contemporary artists and representatives of flagship institutions. Other areas showing noticeable levels of disagreement were the 'relationships of SAC with the Scottish Executive' (69%) and the state of 'communication' with the arts community (67%). Finally, discussions on the 'leadership role of SAC' were split in two clear factions with 50% on each side.

Based on the content analysis, and on a review of what was said, the key themes that emerge from the cultural community are outlined below.

4.1.3 Themes

Confusion about the definition of SAC's role

This confusion lies at the heart of all the major themes emerging from the consultation. There were opinions on SAC's current mission statement: it is 'politically correct' (and this was interpreted both positively and negatively); it lacks credibility; it is ambiguous. In general, there was an impression that there is not a clear statement of what SAC is really about – and disbelief that staff at SAC are even clear about their role. This confusion spilled over into SAC's remit. For some the remit emphasis is far too wide and needs to be reconsidered. SAC is constantly changing its objectives and mission statement (for politically expedient reasons) and this is confusing. For example, it was asserted that, in the past, SAC was very elitist; now there is an emphasis on social issues but the elitism still prevails. Some believed that SAC should be more strategic, think more in international terms, and should be more ambitious. Some felt SAC should rethink its priorities in general: is it about social inclusion etc.?; is it about supporting the arts world regardless of social agendas?

Confusion about the relationship between the Executive and SAC

Members of the cultural community certainly understood that the relationship between government and SAC has changed (and should change) as a result of devolution. However, they agreed that it is not clear what that relationship now is. There was a strong view that the 'arm's length principle' no longer exists. That creates a concern that some organisations – and the suspicion was that it is the national companies – are, therefore, 'protected', that their funding is 'ring fenced'. Having said this, there is no concern from the cultural community about direct overt political interference in the content of the work – for example, there is no concern that politicians would intervene to ban plays or exhibitions because of their content. The involvement of the arts in the political process is seen as being an essential part of the social landscape. Such engagement is arguably even part of the role of the artist.

Confusion about SAC's leadership role

For some, the idea of 'leader' implied 'dictator'. However, for most the desire is for SAC to become more of a 'leader' in the sense of being the key advocate for the arts to the Executive and more widely to the Parliament, to other agencies (particularly local authorities) and to the

public. Having said this, it is of course the case that the potential for SAC to be an advocate to the Executive is clouded by the confusions identified above.

Development agency or funding council?

These confusions have other ramifications. The role of SAC is confused both internally and externally. There is a tension between its role as a funding council and as a development agency. Some would like SAC to be simply a banker (albeit one in which money is taken out, not saved); and, certainly, there is a strong view that SAC should give the money and let the artists get on with it. For others, the role of SAC is that of a development agency: in this nurturing, giving advice and information was crucial. Linked to *this* notion of leadership, there was a view that SAC has a strategic role to look across Scotland and across art forms.

Decision making

The cultural community expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction with SAC's decision-making processes. The committee system is discredited, with many admitting that they do not want to serve on committees and panels: on the one hand it meant being mean to friends and colleagues; on the other it meant taking the flak for decisions, both large and small, contentious and mundane. There was a half-serious suggestion that serving on committees should be obligatory (like jury service). Finally, there was a view that committees did not have any power anyway and that their role was mainly to ratify officer decisions.

Consistency

The cultural community expressed a concern that decisions lacked consistency, that there were differences across art forms (perhaps different criteria), and differences between lottery and voted funds. There was a view that successfully securing money was about second-guessing staff who were themselves second-guessing committees. Overall there was a lack of trust and a perception that goal posts kept shifting.

Bureaucracy and accountability

There was a consistent feeling that SAC is bureaucratic and over complicated, in particular as regards issues of accountability. But, when making this point, our group expressed bemusements at the huge range of funds and funding rounds operated by SAC. The established (or 'core funded') organisations expressed frustration with lack of flexibility to change direction or approach part way through the year. Time and time again we heard the view expressed that SAC spends too much time administering small grants. This was linked to the feeling that officers were overworked – and in the case of junior officers (particularly at art form officer level) underpaid. This overwork led to a situation where officers did not get out enough to see work. There was a lot of sympathy expressed for officers caught in this situation.

The devolution model

There was a call for SAC to devolve some of its responsibility to a more grass-roots level. This was linked to over-work and the wastefulness of administering small grants from Edinburgh. While this idea was initially articulated by those from rural areas – where good structures and networks already exist – it was a view that quickly gained support across the range of consultees.

Artform development

One of the leading roles SAC might be expected to have is in the area of artform development. However, the 'silos' of art forms was criticised by those who work across different media as well

as those working in areas such as cultural diversity. The same criticism was made by those engaged in the cutting edge of art where both the development and the delivery of new forms are changing rapidly (for example, in the contexts of music and new media). There is a sense that the artform committee structure is out of step with the types of cross-media and interdisciplinary work that artists want to make (and that artists do make) in Scotland. There is, perhaps, a tension here between SAC's role as an organisation which supports the development of new work ('creating our future', as it were), and one which promotes our heritage ('minding our past').

Education and social justice

To some the education and social justice agenda is part of what they do: and there is a view in the cultural community that these culture makers should be encouraged and supported in this role. For some individual artists, they have never considered such issues until applying for a SAC grant: some seize the opportunity positively; others fulfil the requirement as just another tick-box. For some the development of an outreach programme is seen as doing 'additional' work on no more money to satisfy a politically correct agenda. The consensus was that everyone wanted to be accessible to all but that those who are skilled and focused on this area should be asked to take the lead.

Communication

There was an overwhelming view that there was a need for better communication and more trust and honesty in the relationship between the arts community and SAC. There is a view that the artists and culture makers are expected to be 'grateful' for the money and a strong view was expressed by our consultees that the situation should be more of a partnership rather than 'client' relationship. Our consultees do want SAC to have a leadership role – but one that builds a common agenda with the cultural community. Change in logo is fine, but a change in tone with the cultural community would be better.

Other points

Listing these issues one after the other suggests a negative impression of the relationship between SAC and the cultural community and it is certainly the case that our consultation suggested that this is not a misleading picture. However, several other points should be emphasised.

- During our consultation no one called for the dissolution of SAC or its amalgamation with other bodies. In fact, unprompted, there was a call for ensuring SAC continued and this was not disputed.¹
- There is a great deal of sympathy for the difficult job SAC officers have and comments on the pressure on staff reflected this.
- The tone of the day was one of frustration not anger. There was recognition that the cultural community had a responsibility too.
- There were many there that said they had developed good relationships with individual officers and had developed an effective 'modus operandi'. However, that did not prevent them expressing concern over SAC's processes as a whole.

¹ Nevertheless, and despite the fact that during our consultations we did not hear this case being made, we know, at least anecdotally, that there are those within the cultural community who have argued for the abolition of SAC and its replacement with a Ministry of Culture.

- There was a well-articulated desire to have a more honest dialogue on these issues and a proposal that a similar event be held with SAC in the room as well.

4.2 Local authorities

SAC's relationship with local authorities has evolved over several years within clear parameters. As a result it is much more developed than other relationships. For example, SAC and local authorities jointly fund third party projects and posts including theatres and festivals, arts posts and education posts. In addition, there are funding partnerships that involve other agencies: for example, SIP funding. However, SAC's relationship with local authorities goes beyond funding into areas of joint strategy work, and giving information and advice.

4.2.1 Analysis of local authority survey responses

This analysis is based on 31 responses from local authorities, a response rate of 97%. Not every local authority answered every question and, therefore, percentages may not be as a proportion of 31. However, it should be noted that most respondents answered most questions. The number of responses to each question is indicated by ($n = x$).

GENERAL ISSUES

1a. How is the Council's contact with SAC generally conducted?

In general, routine contact between local authorities and SAC is conducted through a single council department. In a quarter of cases (26%) this routine contact involves a single individual within the department although, in just under a half of councils (45%), routine contact involves more than one council officer within the department. In 9 councils (29%), there is routine contact between SAC and officers in more than one council department. ($N = 31$)

1b. What should SAC's relationship be with local authorities?

When asked what SAC's relationship with local authorities should be, the single most important role identified by local authorities was as an advocate for the arts (87%). However, a number of other roles were also thought to be important by local authorities: a joint funder of non-council arts services (84%); an information provider (84%); an advice provider (81%); a funder of councils' arts services (77%); developing national arts strategy (77%); and, commissioner of research (74%). The only other suggestion made by a local authority was that SAC should act as a national arts development agency, with the emphasis on *development*. ($N = 31$)

1c. How would you describe the development of the Council's relationship with SAC over the 5 years 1997-2002?

There was an emphatic view amongst local authorities that their relationship with SAC had improved over the past 5 years. 90% reported an improvement, while only three councils said that there had been no change – one of which stressed that this was because their relationship with SAC had always been very positive. No councils reported deterioration in the relationship. ($N = 29$)

The most important factor to which local authorities attributed this improvement was better working/staff relationships between SAC and their council. A number of authorities highlighted the creation of arts development officer roles within their council as being of particular significance.

Another perceived improvement was in the development of common strategies/priorities, with SAC being credited for providing improved support for local strategies and initiatives. Councils also noted improved funding arrangements, with improvements in lottery allocations referred to by a number of authorities. A couple of authorities referred to structural changes within the organisation of SAC as a factor in the improved relationship.

COUNCIL'S ARTS/CULTURAL STRATEGY

2a. If the Council has developed a cultural/arts strategy or policy for funding the arts, was this developed in a manner consistent with the Scottish Executive's national arts strategy?

Just over half of councils (57%) that had developed a cultural/arts strategy indicated that this had been developed in a manner consistent with the Scottish Executive's national arts strategy. The remaining 43% indicated that there was no conscious attempt to ensure consistency between their local arts strategy and the national strategy. It should be noted, however, that in a number of cases this is explained by local strategies pre-dating the national strategy.

A number of councils indicated that, while they had no local arts strategy in place, these were in the process of being developed. (*N* = 23)

2b. Did SAC play any part in the *development* of the Council's strategy?

Four out of five councils (80%) indicated that SAC had been involved in the development of the Council's strategy. (*N* = 25)

SAC's biggest involvement was in commenting and providing advice and support for strategies during the draft stage. A few councils also indicated that SAC had been directly involved in developing the strategy, serving on steering groups, working groups and the like. A couple of councils indicated that SAC had provided some form of financial support to assist them in the development of their strategy.

2c. DO SAC play any part in supporting the *implementation* of the Council's strategy?

Three quarters of councils (75%) indicated that SAC had supported them in the process of implementing their cultural/arts strategy. (*N* = 24)

Financial assistance was the most common form of support highlighted by local authorities, with lottery monies and grants identified as key factors in helping to develop new projects and initiatives arising out of local strategies. Another important feature of SAC's support was the advice offered to local authorities on how to develop new initiatives and projects. A small number of authorities also mentioned SAC's support in helping them to establish contacts/networks with other agencies – local authorities, voluntary organisations – which helped them in their efforts to implement their strategies' aims.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

3a. Does the Council have an ongoing partnership/relationship with SAC?

A large majority of councils (83%) indicated that they do have an ongoing partnership/relationship with SAC. (*N* = 30)

Councils referred to a number of formal structures through which they have an ongoing relationship with SAC, among them SAC's Local Authority Partnership scheme, the cluster group meetings established by SAC and various SAC working groups on specific arts/cultural matters. A number of councils also referred to regular meetings, both annual and more frequent (e.g. quarterly), where SAC and council staff come together, both at senior and more junior levels. A number of councils described funding partnerships with SAC (some again referring to the partnership funding scheme). A few councils highlighted more informal contacts that they believed amounted to a partnership, through which SAC provides support and advice.

3b. Has SAC consulted the Council on strategies, policies or initiatives it has developed that have implications for local authorities (e.g. new partnership funding schemes)?

Almost all councils (93%) indicated that SAC had consulted them on strategies, policies or initiatives it has developed that have implications for local authorities. Only two councils indicated that no such consultation had occurred. (*N* = 29)

3c. Which of the following describes SAC's approach to partnership working with the Council?

When asked to describe SAC's approach to partnership working with the council, most local authorities (68%) indicated that SAC adopted an open approach. Fewer councils agreed that SAC had an understanding of the council's role (55%), although this still represented a majority. Only a minority of councils perceived SAC to be easy to work with (39%); as proactive (39%); or, as responsive to the council's needs (36%). SAC was most harshly judged on its flexibility however, with only 23% of councils describing its approach to partnership working as flexible. (*N* = 31)

Councils described a mixture of good and bad experiences of partnership working with SAC, although the positive comments outweighed negative comments quite significantly.

One of the most commonly referred to positives was SAC's financial support for councils. Partnership working to find solutions to financial problems was highlighted, as was support in the form of funding advice and the development of arts projects and services. More than one council welcomed the SAC's support for the development of social inclusion projects. A small number of councils also indicated that increased levels of contact between them and SAC had led to an increased understanding and awareness of councils' situations (for example, financial constraints) and of local issues within SAC. One example of SAC's responsiveness was its support for Dumfries and Galloway Council during the foot and mouth outbreak, with the Council expressing its gratitude to SAC for what it perceived to be a helpful and timeous response.

Although the majority view was that SAC is usually responsive and committed to working

with local authorities, there were a number of criticisms made regarding its approach to partnership working. One council described SAC's approach as highly inflexible and unresponsive to its needs as an outlying rural authority. Another council indicated that SAC's funding schemes are too rigid and prescriptive to allow any dynamic new projects to be devised between the council and SAC. A similar comment was that SAC seems to work well when issues fit within a clearly defined 'SAC box', outwith which, problems occur. The respondent indicated that since the arts world is dynamic, SAC needs to be as well. Another said that in terms of capital projects for the visual arts, the new application guidelines had caused problems. A couple of authorities while welcoming SAC's advice and support, implied that SAC could be more proactive in becoming involved in/understanding arts development at the local level.

3d. Has SAC had any involvement in the community planning process for the Council area?

The survey found that SAC had very little involvement in the community planning process. Only 4 councils (13%) indicated that SAC had had some involvement. (*N* = 30)

Any involvement has been fairly minimal, with a couple of councils indicating that community planning had been discussed with SAC officers as part of cluster group meetings.

3e. Does SAC adequately involve the Council when deciding on the distribution of capital funding in the local area?

Most councils (62%) were satisfied that SAC had adequately involved them when deciding on the distribution of capital funding in their local area, although over a third considered their approach to consultation inadequate. (*N* = 29)

This mixture of positive and negative perceptions was reflected in the comments made in response to this question. One authority described 'an increasing awareness of the need to involve the Council and on the Council's part an increasing awareness of the need to be clear in its priorities in relation to capital development'. Another commented that 'you are consulted if lottery funds are in question, but never involved in the decision-making process. The process needs to be more open'.

3f. Does SAC adequately involve the Council when deciding on the distribution of revenue funding for local arts projects and services?

Just over half of councils (54%) felt that SAC adequately involves them when deciding on the distribution of revenue funding for local arts projects and services. (*N* = 28)

There was a lack of consistency in local authorities' responses to this question. While one said that consultation was customary, another described it as cursory. One council said that the consultation that takes place depends on the SAC department involved. More than one council also indicated that they would welcome greater involvement in these decisions. One council expressed disappointment that the social inclusion funding scheme introduced by SAC was restricted to SIP areas and did not take into account the wider occurrence of social exclusion in other areas of Scotland.

CUSTOMER FOCUS

4a. In its role as a 'customer', how does the Council assess SAC's performance in terms of the following:

Councils were invited to assess SAC's performance on a number of criteria from the perspective of a 'customer'. (N = 29)

SAC scored relatively well on its communication with councils, which was defined as returning calls, responding to emails and other correspondence etc. 24% rated SAC as very good in this respect, 62% as good, 10% as average, and only 3% (one council) as poor.

Its perceived performance in terms of project management (e.g. meeting deadlines, managing specific pieces of work) was slightly less positive, with only two councils (7%) rating it as very good, 76% as good, and 17% as average. However, no councils rated SAC as poor or very poor in this respect.

SAC rated better in terms of delivering information. 24% described its performance as very good, 59% as good, and the remaining 17% as average.

4b. How would the Council describe the following characteristics of the information it receives from SAC (e.g. guidelines, publications etc.)?

Councils were also invited to assess the information they receive from SAC. (N = 29)

SAC's information rated well in terms of quality, with 24% of councils describing it as very good, 62% as good, and 14% as average.

SAC's information scored less well in terms of quantity, with 10% describing it as very good, 59% as good, 24% as average, and 7% as poor.

In terms of usefulness, 17% of councils considered the information to be very good, 59% as good, and 24% as average.

On none of the criteria on which councils were invited to provide views for 4a and 4b, was SAC's service assessed as very poor.

COUNCIL'S OVERALL VIEW OF SAC

5a. In general terms, how influential has SAC been in supporting the Council's attempts to develop and enhance the arts and cultural life of the area?

Councils were asked for their impressions of SAC's general contribution to the development of arts and cultural life in their area. Again councils' responses were generally positive, with 27% assessing SAC's impact as very influential and 70% as influential. Only one council (3%) described SAC as having had no such influence in its local area. (N = 30)

5b. If SAC has been 'influential' or 'very influential', which of the following contributed to

this influence?

Where SAC was considered to have been influential, councils were asked to identify what had most contributed to this influence. The overwhelming majority (84%) referred to SAC's funding role, whilst a smaller majority referred to its support of arts activities (55%). Only a minority of councils identified SAC's support for the development of arts strategy/policy (48%) or SAC's advocacy role in supporting the arts (32%) as contributing to its influence. (N = 29)

5c. Are there any other comments the Council would like to make on the role/ remit of SAC, its relationship with the Council or its effectiveness in fulfilling its remit?

Funding continues to be a primary concern for local authorities. A number of councils reiterated their desire to see progress with joint funding and financial support from SAC. Generally councils would like to see more funding, with one also calling for a more sustainable funding system that required less effort to be expended on short term funding. Another recommended that SAC officers should have more powers to make funding decisions, arguing that committees are not the best decision-making organs for many projects/initiatives. Another said that the bidding process is unsatisfactorily bureaucratic and there is a lack of transparency in the grant awarding system.

There was a high number of councils that made generally positive comments about the partnership working that has taken place between themselves and SAC. There was a fairly consistent theme however, that scope exists for further improvement in the development of the partnership approach, with a number of councils suggesting that SAC should take an enhanced role in the development of community arts/promoting active citizenship/ supporting arts at the grass roots. One council suggested that there might be a case for increasing the partnership approach between SAC and local authorities on jointly funded arts organisations. 'A single funding agreement, managed at local level, would enhance co-ordination and reduce bureaucracy.'

One council also indicated that it thought that SAC is not adequately resourced to provide regular contact with councils and therefore has difficulty in being responsive and flexible in regard to councils' problems and priorities. Another commented that SAC is beginning to take cognisance of the local authority agenda, albeit slowly. This council added however, that there is an onus on councils themselves to find a practical way of making a meaningful input to the SAC's planning process and strategies.

Two authorities criticised SAC for having a central belt bias, with one having a perception of it as an Edinburgh-Glasgow centred organisation, the other perceiving there to be a cronyism between committee members and officers.

4.2.2 Summary of key points from local authority interviews

A further eleven telephone interviews were held with local authorities, exploring in more depth the issues raised in the questionnaires. The key themes from these interviews are outlined below.

DECISION MAKING

Dialogue – informing and consulting councils

SAC should be more open and transparent in their decision-making process. It is difficult for local authorities to challenge them on the decisions they make or the reasoning behind them, because the process is so opaque. While it is, of course, entirely legitimate that SAC should make its own decisions about how to spend its money to ensure better co-ordination of resources, more could be done to keep councils informed about the decisions that are taken and the reasoning behind them. What is needed is for councils and SAC (and arts organisations) to be clear about whom is funding what and why.

SAC does not consult enough. There is very little, if any, consultation with CoSLA or SADLS about planned initiatives and how they might be shaped. There should be significantly more dialogue around the details of how these initiatives will impact collectively on local government. This should precede initiatives, rather than follow them – where SAC is mostly interested in ‘telling and selling’ what has already been decided.

One council suggested that the awards process is a bit hit or miss, particularly with regard to consultation. This tends to be carried out on a geographical rather than a thematic basis.

The grant application and awards process is bureaucratic

Most councils agreed that, although the grant application process is bureaucratic and time consuming, it is generally manageable for local authority arts officers. However, the application process is daunting and confusing especially for smaller organisations.

There is too much red tape in applying for funding.

For councils, the key problem is that the current grant system creates problems with financial planning in local authorities, because it is not aligned with the financial planning cycle in local government. It is sometimes difficult for councils to arrange match funding during the financial year, when budgets have already long since been agreed.

The short-term nature of some funding is an issue especially if the council is expected to pick up on SAC funding after the three-year or one-year grant comes to an end.

By-passing one layer of bureaucracy

Several councils suggested that the Scottish Executive could remove one layer of bureaucracy by increasing the funding given directly to local authorities – particularly for local arts provision – instead of channelling it through SAC.

Alternatively, more funding decisions should be devolved to officers. The accountability/transparency of the committees is an issue. Committees may not be in tune with officers. Officers, involved in developing/discussing projects with councils/arts organisations, can be very supportive and recommend funding but then the committee may take a contrary view without apparent good reason.

However, one council suggested that SAC officers could have too much influence over the committee process. She does not think they get out and about enough and, therefore, often have often little understanding of regional issues. As a result their advice may mean that committee members sometimes make poorly informed decisions.

SAC'S RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

More regular meetings required

The general view is that SAC is responsive to requests from local government (through CoSLA and SADLS) for discussion and dialogue. However, they are not good at initiating these discussions themselves – only at responding to local government taking the lead. There should be regular, fixed meetings between CoSLA and SAC, on an annual or more frequent basis. There should also be regular meetings between SAC and the larger councils.

Operational level links

Most councils expressed satisfaction with the links with SAC's officers. Most local authority officers have no difficulty in identifying and establishing productive working relationships with appropriate individuals within SAC. Regular contact between council staff and SAC staff, as and when necessary, provides good understanding between the two organisations.

However, there was some criticism that despite the good relationship, SAC does not understand the time scales under which councils operate. For example, the deadlines for submissions of grant applications can be too tight.

SAC needs more staff to maintain relationships with local authorities

Several councils suggested that SAC officers at all levels are overwhelmed by pressure of work, particularly in the artform areas. Two councils complained that there is no real understanding of local authorities in the artform departments because SAC staff rarely have the opportunity to leave their office.

However, there is widespread praise for the work undertaken by Caroline Docherty. Although one council suggested that 'there are not enough strategic people around her.' SAC's resources are stretched far too thin, with Docherty the only person dealing with local government. One council suggested that SAC is just not investing in its workforce and as a result its staff resources are hugely inadequate. SAC has to invest in raising its officers' knowledge of the local government sector in Scotland.

Another council pointed out that it is also the responsibility of councils to invest in developing good relationships with SAC. Some councils' structures mean that the staff dealing with arts and cultural activities are a fragmented group spread across departments. This makes it more difficult for SAC to identify who it is in the council that should be building relationships and also presents an obstacle to clear lines of communication. It may be that SAC could be more proactive in bringing pressure to bear on councils to make their contacts/structures more clearly decipherable to SAC.

Local authority clusters

The development of local authority clusters was praised as a very good development, especially by rural authorities (in both north and south). This is a good forum for providing information (e.g. SAC funding priorities and new schemes), thinking of the specific needs of the area, sharing practical ideas etc. But more regular visits by SAC officers to the rural authorities and the Islands would be a good idea.

Perceived bias

The view from local authorities is that there is a general central belt bias in Scotland but SAC is no better or worse than other organisations.

There was generally little support for the complaints about central belt bias, although there is awareness of the tendency for centralisation of funding, institutions etc. due to the pull of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Funding tends to follow activity and a proactive approach. Councils that want to attract greater levels of support must show more initiative. Some councils acknowledged that SAC has recognised the problem of perceived central belt bias through the local authority Development Fund and other schemes and it has attempted to involve and consider the needs of rural areas.

However, it was also suggested that SAC does not have a clear idea of how to provide arts in a rural area since it has a facility-based approach that focuses support around large buildings, organisations etc. in the main centres of population.

One council suggested that there is bias in SAC's capital unit, 'which is only really concerned with Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee.'

An Islands council suggested that perhaps there should be a more structured approach to ensure that the Isles are not disadvantaged (someone with specific responsibility?) and that there should be more positive discrimination in terms of funding for the Islands.

Another council made the point that if there is a bias towards supporting cutting edge – and new arts – which is not strong in some areas, especially rural areas, then they will lose out in terms of funding.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Questioning SAC's commitment to the social inclusion agenda

SAC 'gives the impression of being well intentioned but being a bit late to the party'. There is some doubt about SAC's grasp of social exclusion and whether it really understands what role it can play in addressing these problems – the nature of the organisation is focused on supporting excellence, which by necessity creates elitism. It was suggested that this could perhaps be addressed through greater partnership/joint working with other organisations such as Communities Scotland. Arts organisations could also be more involved in some of the social inclusion partnership programmes that have been going on.

The social inclusion strategy should permeate SAC

Some councils suggested that there is tension between the social inclusion strategy and SAC's artform department and policies. There should be a closer tie-in between SAC's social inclusion strategy/policies and its artform strategies/policies. There is a need for all parts of SAC to understand the social inclusion agenda – a more joined up approach within SAC. All arts organisations should be included in this agenda.

One council suggested that a possible solution would be to provide funding for social exclusion arts activities directly to local authorities, although this introduces the danger that SAC will then be seen as increasingly elitist – i.e. providing funding for arts activities aimed only at society's elites.

Social inclusion is wider than SIPs

There was some concern expressed that funding is currently being skewed to SIP areas because SAC's approach to social inclusion (as with current social inclusion policy generally) is based on urban considerations. Some councils (e.g. Dumfries and Galloway) have no SIP

projects and therefore are excluded from funds which target SIPs even though they have areas of acute deprivation. Funding to tackle social exclusion should be targeted at areas wider than the SIPs. As well as considering areas of social exclusion for special support, social inclusion should include consideration of the exclusion of groups of people because of cultural preferences. SAC's social inclusion strategy should include support for different art forms such as rock and pop that would include young people.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

All councils interviewed would welcome a higher level of SAC involvement in the community planning process and agreed that SAC should be more proactive in involving themselves.

However, it was acknowledged that it would be very difficult for SAC to become involved in all 32 Community Plans given their resource constraints. For example, it would be impractical for SAC to have a representative on every community planning team. More thought needs to be given to how SAC should be involved in community planning.

SAC's role could be as an advocate for the arts as a consideration in community planning. It could issue guidance to councils on how the arts should be addressed in community planning; provide guidance about how to involve local arts organisations in consultation; and, encourage councils to ensure consistency is achieved between local arts strategies and community plans. Councils would welcome SAC providing examples of good practice in how the arts should be included in Community Plans – possibly a conference or road show.

LOCAL ARTS DEVELOPMENT

SAC has a role in local arts development

Some councils suggested that SAC should play a more active role in the development of arts at the local level. A national role is fine, but it would be helpful if SAC played a role in ensuring that local developments are consistent with national priorities. SAC's role in local arts development could be as a provider of funding, expertise etc.

This is not SAC's job

Other councils had the opposite view and stated that SAC's responsibility is to take the regional view rather than the micro view, which is the local authority's responsibility. They can provide funding, but that should be the limit of it.

Supporting voluntary arts

A few councils suggested that more discussion is needed about how SAC should support voluntary, amateur and local arts. Should SAC have a role in helping audience development? How should it support the Voluntary Arts Network (VAN)? The comments about small organisations having problems with SAC funding procedures are relevant here. Application forms and processes can be difficult especially for smaller and voluntary organisations.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working between SAC and councils is generally good but could be improved. The quality of partnerships depends largely on personal relationships between staff. Better co-ordination is required – possibly through Community planning. Several councils suggested that SAC needs more resources/increased capacity for contact with local authorities and to improve

clarity in lines of communication.

Councils would welcome some form of proactive support from SAC to develop partnerships and implement councils' local arts strategies. It was pointed out that SAC involvement and endorsement helps to encourage local politicians to take notice of local arts initiatives.

OTHER POINTS

Councils were, then, generally positive about their liaison and partnerships with SAC. However, there is room for improvement at both a strategic level and in other areas and aspects. Some comments drawn from these local authority consultations illustrate this point.

'It would be good occasionally to have some humility from SAC. SAC sometimes has an inflated sense of its own importance. Set in context, its budget is only around half that of his Council's education department. So while it is an important player, it is perhaps less relatively important than it seems to think.'

'What would be really useful would be if the Scottish Executive conducted a self-review of their input to the arts.'

'SAC must recognise the role and importance of local authorities, both individually and collectively through CoSLA. There needs to be a greater dialogue between the two in order that they can work together to ensure improvements in the delivery of services.'

'SAC should consult more with CoSLA/local government when putting together proposals/initiatives – and certainly before they launch them. There should be greater recognition within SAC of local government's major contribution to the arts.'

'SAC should build and keep links at a senior level with key local authorities and CoSLA. What is happening with the *National Cultural Strategy*? It needs to be taken forward. All would welcome a national strategy if there was more of a sense of ownership of it.'

4.3 Other partners, agencies and commentators

SAC has a range of different relationships with other agencies depending on the type of organisation and how far objectives can be shared. The type and nature of relationships varies from close strategic partnerships, for example, the British Council contributing to SAC's international policy and being partners in *Distilled*, to one-off projects, such as a SAC/VisitScotland joint traditional music project in the Borders.

SAC also develops links through its role as a joint funder. For example SAC jointly funds HI-Arts with Highlands and Islands Enterprise. It jointly runs a scheme for creative industries with Scottish Enterprise. In the case of local enterprise companies it tends to be engaged in special projects especially capital projects through lottery funds. Lottery funds have also been central to SAC's relationship with Scottish Screen. Responsibility for film has now passed to Scottish Screen from SAC and so the relationship is being refined to determine areas of responsibility in the screen industry- particularly in regard to new media.

In the case of SIPs, SAC's relationship exists principally through specially targeted funding

from the lottery. For Arts and Business, SAC contributes to core costs in Scotland and contracts that organisation to deliver a board development programme.

In some cases the relationship is *ad hoc* and sometimes just non-existent. Partnerships that are seriously under developed include sportscotland, the Scottish Museums Council, BBC and individual sponsors of the arts. In other cases (such as that with the Education, Culture and Sport Committee) the relationship has been difficult.

Just as the relationships vary, so do the perceptions of working with SAC. Without exception, SAC was regarded as an organisation that has a good record on 'customer care' – that is, it is good at responding to requests for information, replying to emails or letters, and returning calls. There were, however, some concerns expressed about the Help Desk.

Individual members of staff were often credited with being crucial to the development of relationships and many came in for particular praise.

SAC is seen as being good at working on specific projects – in many cases being joint funders, but earning respect not just for their money but also advice and its 'brokering role'. This was particularly true for the Highlands where the development of partnerships with local enterprise companies and local authorities was specifically mentioned as a good example of partnership working. It was felt that there was potential to do even more in this area.

There were other areas, however, which were under developed. Below we have examined where weaknesses in the partnerships that SAC has with a range of organisations leads to barriers to effective working.

4.3.1 New Scotland

There was a view that there was potential for SAC to establish closer links, perhaps involving the Chair/Director, with other areas of the Minister's portfolio – tourism and sport – particularly at a strategic level and in the planning process. The same could be said for relationships with other national cultural agencies, for example Scottish Screen and Scottish Museums Council. In the case of the latter two, we were surprised that the alliances which had been established post devolution (from the creation of *Charter for the Arts* in 1992 onwards) had not survived into the new Scotland. Joint projects still existed where appropriate, but not joint planning or advocacy.

Lack of good contact was not always blamed on SAC. There was a general view expressed that more could be done to develop links across public and private sector bodies in Scotland. For example, BBC Scotland has a budget of £140 million this year, much of which will go on the creative sector including musicians and actors, and yet they were not involved in any consultation on the Scottish National Theatre.

In some cases, structural or systemic issues emerge: broadcasting is a reserved issue and therefore not automatically considered when discussing cultural issues in Scotland. Closer to home, different agencies (with common or related objectives) are responsible to different Scottish Executive ministers, and that was expressed as a primary influence on who they prioritise as partners. The differences in responsibilities of the Minister, Scottish Executive staff and the Parliamentary Committee were commented on - by journalists in particular - as being a barrier to 'joined up thinking' and perceived as suggesting the arts did not have an important place in government and the Parliament.

SAC has a well-documented and turbulent relationship with the Parliament, particularly the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. While the response from the organisation to requests for information was not regarded as a problem, there was a strong view that SAC needed to work at a strategic level – outside the crisis – and perhaps with the Executive, to develop better understanding. The parliamentarians noted that the use of briefings and working with cross party groups was under developed.

4.3.2 International links

The place of culture as a means for promoting wider international links (whether political economic, educational or concerned with tourism) was considered an important role for Scottish artists who gain from being part of the overall promotion of Scotland. This was demonstrated in *Distilled*, the event in New York in April 2002 that sought to promote a contemporary view of Scotland to a young tourist market.

There are contradictory views about the overall success of *Distilled*. It appears that, for VisitScotland, it met the objective of promoting an alternative to tartan to a potential market. Those involved in culture seemed less convinced, partly because of the ‘trade fair’ aspect of the event and, for some, the lack of a clear cultural goal.

However, the agency which was seen to have a leadership role in this area was the British Council Scotland who were universally praised for its work on developing partnerships and delivering *Distilled*. British Council Scotland is also leading on *Scotland in Sweden*.

But if this approach is to be developed in the future then there are some issues that need to be addressed and are seen as barriers or opportunities. The Executive needs to determine its priorities in this area: what are the geographic priorities for the Executive; how are these determined and rolled out? This was an important question raised but not answered in our interviews.

The agencies (particularly the British Council, SAC, VisitScotland and the Executive) working in partnership, rather than the agencies working separately, was seen as a model which could best deliver an international profile in Scotland.

As it is, there is certainly potential for a better information flow from the cultural sector in Scotland to Scottish Executive representation in both Washington and Brussels. It is not clear who is responsible for providing intelligence in this area. The main contact is with the local (sic) British Council office, which then, it is assumed, is ‘plugged in’ to what is happening in the arts in the UK- including Scotland through the British Council Scotland in Edinburgh. Another route for Scottish Executive staff overseas is to work through their colleagues in Edinburgh, who, it is assumed, are in touch with the major cultural agencies.

SAC is responsible for how international work can be sustained ‘back home’ – that is, the development of work to take abroad and the development of venues and events which can sustain the best of international work for Scottish audiences is part of the remit of SAC. SAC’s role in developing and sustaining world-class work in Scotland is central, not just to international links, but also to cultural tourism. While this was not made explicit to us, the national and large municipal museums and galleries have a role to play in this too, and particularly the larger local authorities need to be on board on the question of venues.

4.3.3 Private sector

Other than through Arts and Business, there is no direct contact between SAC and the private sponsorship sector. A sponsor who supports music events made the point that they had no direct contact at all with SAC, and yet the recently announced proposed changes to the music strategy had a potential impact on their sponsorship decisions. Consultation, a briefing, an invitation to Manor Place for a chat, or even just a phone call warning a very large sponsor that there were some big changes on the way, would have been welcomed.

It was also pointed out that arts organisations are encouraged to work more closely with sponsors and yet SAC has no contact on the strategic issues. This works both ways: the large organisations in particular are, for business reasons, recognising their role in delivering the social justice agenda. They are making changes to the sponsorship strategies which could have a profound impact on larger organisations and certainly offers the potential of very interesting links for community arts. SAC needs to know this and, while Arts and Business fulfils an important role between the arts community and the sponsor; they are certainly not empowered to represent SAC.

There was some frustration expressed about how the private sector could be brought closer to what is happening in the arts and that the means for doing this was improved communication, some carefully targeted PR, and making use of Arts and Business.

4.3.4 Social justice

SAC is regarded as being 'sensitive' to complex issues such as regeneration and the whole Social Justice agenda, particularly through the Arts and Social Inclusion Scheme². Taking its role as a development agency seriously, SAC has invested a great deal of effort in both funding *and* developing a programme of work in SIPs. In this regard SAC is favourably compared with other partners and agencies with which the SIPs deal.

I found I did not have to explain about poor people to [SAC officer]. Not at all. Whereas, I find talking to other partners I do have to explain that they are not going to come out the door and join in.

-- SIP Manager

The scheme has prompted a huge range of different kinds of projects – from the development of arts strategies in SIPs to the setting up of 'taster' sessions in areas where there has been little or no activity. The intervention of the funding – and the advice and information coming with it from SAC officers – is recognised as being a catalyst for the development of arts activity via the SIP and encourages ambition in the SIP's approach. Finally, and again on the positive, the arts projects themselves were seen to encourage new partnership working in the SIPs.

However, this work does not exist in a vacuum and there are other issues that colour the relationship.

First, SAC is fighting a preconception of being elitist and a perception of being 'Edinburgh-centric' and it was acknowledged that some of this prejudice is being countered through interventions by officers.

² The Centre for Cultural Policy Research is currently completing an evaluation of this scheme for the Scottish Arts Council. Interim findings were presented by Christine Hamilton in the paper 'Creative Partnerships: an evaluation of SAC's Arts and Social Inclusion Scheme' at the 'Arts for All' Conference in Glasgow on 27 March 2002. See the CCPR web site www.culturalpolicy.arts.gla.ac.uk.

Second, the bureaucracy referred to by the cultural community was commented upon. The application and decision-making procedures for the specific SIP funds were not seen as a problem, but when application was subsequently made to other funds (particularly capital funding) a different set of rules seemed to apply. Sustainability of project is, in part, reliant on being able to access other SAC funding (voted and lottery) and there is a view that the SIP scheme is special and social inclusion does not 'permeate' the organisation – as commented on by local authorities.

Finally, on several occasions sportscotland was mentioned as an organisation that had also been involved in developing work in this area and as an organisation that had had, in some aspects, more success.

4.3.5 Image and the press

The bad press which SAC is seen to receive also exercised these partnership organisations. Not immune to bad press themselves, they were particularly concerned, and sometimes even puzzled, by the way in which SAC comes in for some very vicious and personal criticism.

On one level, this was seen as something that 'came with the territory' of any funding body and, particularly one involved with the sometimes volatile world of the arts. There were suggestions that SAC was 'too defensive' (particularly as regards complaints about particular funding decisions) and should 'tough it out'. It was also pointed out that it was very rare for there to be a criticism of SAC related to 'bad art': it was invariably about its handling of funding decisions.

Some suggested that criticism of SAC was part of the media's cynicism of the new Parliament and the so-called 'new politics of Scotland', suggesting, perhaps correctly if rather unhelpfully, that it is the media's fault.

The reaction from the journalists and commentators we spoke to was, in part, to agree with the points made above: although none would claim to have been unfair with their treatment of SAC. While they echoed the issues raised by others – bureaucracy, inconsistency in decision making, lack of clarity of purpose, etc. – they also gave a strong critique of the transparency of SAC particularly in its published material and information sources.

The *Annual Report* came in for some very scathing comments – including derisory comments on the fact that SAC no longer included detailed financial information on its core funded organisations.³ The job titles that have come about after the re-structuring were ridiculed for being obscure and telling nothing about the post holder's duties. The Help Desk was also criticised for being a 'contradiction in terms' and being unable to provide information (a copy of a Council paper was mentioned) for several days, by which time the deadline had passed.

In passing, the Help Desk also came in for criticism from other agencies that felt that enquiries were inappropriately passed to their organisation when they should have been dealt with at Manor Place.

It is possibly the case that the Help Desk is not the place for journalists to get information – but if not there, where? They were all very complimentary about the press office itself but viewed it as being over stretched.

³ Scottish Arts Council, *The Scottish Arts Council's annual report 2000-2001*. Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council (2001).

4.3.6 Bureaucracy

The external view is that SAC is an organisation that is hide-bound by committees, that it is a 'traditional old fashioned funding body'. It is further perceived as being bureaucratic and slow. There is a perception that SAC has committees spending a long time making decisions about very small sums of money. It was recognised that there is very little by way of discretionary funds, and so many were left with the view that it is all a waste of time.

The issue of the national companies was raised by many of those who worked closely with SAC. There was a view expressed that being tied into funding big organisations removes flexibility and dominates the agenda. The idea of these organisations moving to the direct responsibility of the Executive was floated.

There is a perception of SAC being an overworked organisation that does not have time to develop new partnerships. This is not an issue that is unique to SAC, but it seems to have become a key aspect of the image it projects as an organisation.

Awards for All, the small grants scheme jointly administered by the lottery funding bodies, came in for some praise for its 'fleet of foot' approach.

In addition, we were struck by the way in which NESTA organises its monitoring and evaluation. Granted this is a new organisation with a tight focus and a relatively small budget (£10 million per annum), but it does have some approaches worth considering. For example, it appoints (and pays) 'mentors' to each of its 3-year fellowships whose role it is to be the broker between the individual and the organisation. The figure is described as 'an expert witness'. Crucially the National Audit Office has accepted this as part of the monitoring regime.

NESTA has also professionalised the assessment process by using paid assessors (as is done for large lottery projects in SAC) and, for its fellowship scheme, has no open applications but uses a system of 'nominators'. In the case of its open application scheme for innovation and invention, it does all applications on line and does not admit any paper-based applications.

Perhaps most interesting of all is the fact that NESTA has 'risk taking' as one of its core values.

4.3.7 Leadership and role

We heard that SAC should have a major role in the promotion of the arts but that as an organisation it was failing in this regard. Consultees debated tensions between identities as, on the one hand, a 'development agency' and, on the other, a 'funding council'. Some recognised that there is a difference between being a dispenser of funds and being a funding body that is also a good advocate. One of our consultees argued that an arts development agency would have ideas of how the arts should be developed and an active and engaged role in getting people to do new things, that, in short, a development agency would have a creative role. It was judged that SAC does not live up to that image.

4.3.8 Knowledge

There is very little knowledge of membership of the Council: with the exception of the chair and the chair of the lottery committee; during our consultancy no spontaneous mention of Council members was made. Even amongst those who should know, the existence of the Council and its make up was unknown.

4.4 The Public

The Audience Business was commissioned by the Centre for Cultural Policy Research to undertake research to evaluate the Scottish public's opinion of the Scottish Arts Council. For a full copy of the report, see appendix 2.2.

The objectives of the research were –

- to establish the level of awareness of the Scottish Arts Council amongst the population of Scotland;
- to gain an understanding of the public's perception of the role and remit of the Scottish Arts Council; and,
- to establish the degree of contact with the SAC amongst the Scottish public.

The research was undertaken via 503 telephone interviews with a random selection of members of the public across the whole of Scotland. Telephone interviews were conducted across three types of geographical area to ensure representation of each community type –

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| ○ City – Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee etc | 278 questionnaires |
| ○ Town – Peebles, Dunfermline, Perth, Dumfries etc | 116 questionnaires |
| ○ Rural – Highlands & Islands, Borders etc | 109 questionnaires |

4.4.1 Findings

Awareness

75% of respondents had heard of SAC. Virtually all of the sample (96%) were aware of the National Trust for Scotland, 82% had heard of Historic Scotland and 80% Scottish Natural Heritage. The only organisation to have achieved a lower awareness rating than SAC was VisitScotland with 63%.

Respondents in rural areas were less likely to have heard of SAC, with 81% and 80% of those residing in cities and towns respectively having heard of the Scottish Arts Council, dropping to just 56% of those from rural areas. Although this pattern is also indicated in the awareness levels of other national organisations, SAC has the biggest differential between rural and town/city.

There is a higher level of awareness of the SAC amongst respondents of higher socio-economic grouping and also those who have a higher level of current arts attendance. 82% of AB respondents are aware of SAC compared to 65% of DEs, and only 47% of those who never attend the arts have heard of SAC, compared to 88% of those who attend four or more times in a year.

Remit

Respondents were asked what they thought comprised the job or remit of the Scottish Arts Council. This was unprompted and people could provide any response –

- 34% thought that the job of SAC involves promotion of the arts, encouraging interest in the arts, and awareness and appreciation amongst the general public
- 14% could not offer any idea of its remit, with a further 6% just saying it was 'something to

- do with the arts'
- o 13% stated that the role of SAC is to provide and allocate funding for the arts
- o 12% considered SAC to actually preserve, conserve and look after works of art
- o 8% thought it supported new or struggling artists

When asked what else SAC *should* do (and not prompted), just under half (47%) of respondents could not think of anything. Of those that did, the main points were –

- o promotion of the arts, encouraging interest etc (21%)
- o increasing access to the arts amongst communities, including schools, young people and rural geographies was highlighted by 11% of the sample⁴

Respondents were then provided with a list of six possible activities, and asked whether each one was within the remit of SAC, and if not, whether it should be –

- o 71% said that they thought the SAC 'encourages people to go to the arts'
- o 71% said that the SAC 'encourages new artists'
- o 65% that it 'advertises the arts'

Although 61% recognised that SAC deal with 'allocation of money to the arts', only 30% suggested that they also 'distribute lottery funding'. In addition, only a further 22% went on to say that SAC *should* distribute lottery funding. That is, 48% of respondents did not think that SAC actually distributed lottery funding or indeed that it should do so.

The perceived role of SAC varies according to place of residence –

- o City respondents are less likely to think that SAC distributes lottery funding (27% versus 39% in rural areas) or that SAC promotes Scottish arts outwith Scotland (36% within cities versus 52% of rural respondents).
- o Respondents in towns are less likely to think that SAC encourages more people to go to the arts (59% versus 75% in cities and 82% in rural areas), or advertises the arts (59% versus 67% in cities and 70% in rural areas)

Socio-economic grouping AB is generally more likely to agree with each of the prompted activities, in particular, that the SAC distributes lottery funding (45% of ABs agree with this statement versus 27%, 21% and 29% of C1, C2 and DEs). Frequent arts attenders also recognise that the SAC allocates funding within the arts (71% versus 50% for non-attenders). However, they do not particularly know about the distribution of lottery funding (30% for frequent and 31% for non-attenders).

- o 54% thought that SAC did an average job in fulfilling their remit, with 25% considering SAC as doing an excellent job. Only 13% of rural respondents rated the SAC as excellent, compared to 30% of city dwellers, and almost one quarter (23%) did not feel able to provide a rating.

⁴ A full list of activities suggested by participants is provided in appendix 2, p. 105.

Contact

6% of respondents have had direct contact with SAC, with approximately 3% requesting information and 2% receiving funding. This direct contact with SAC was generally considered good (41% of those who have had direct contact) or average (41%).

Additional comments relating to this contact include being pleased to have received funding, that SAC had dealt promptly with information enquiries, and that they had been encouraging and helpful. Negative comments include no help for arts groups in rural areas, progress difficult to make and the need to fill in so many forms.

5. Themes, commentary and analysis

This section draws on the data detailed in the previous chapter and draws out some key themes that thread through or emerge from that research. We identify ten themes that we believe are central to understanding and improving SAC's partnerships.

Our **Conclusions** and, thereafter, our **Recommendations** respond to the ten themes identified below. These themes are not presented in order of priority but start from a wide perspective and move into some internal detail.

5.1 Arm's length

In the twentieth century direct state subsidy for the arts in Britain was generally dispersed in accordance with the 'arm's length principle'. This is the principle by which the arts are funded at 'arm's length' from government. It was the model adopted for university funding in 1919, subsequently modified for the BBC and then adopted by the Arts Council of Great Britain when it was formed in 1946.⁵

While other non-departmental bodies share this mechanism, the arm's length principle has specific justification in the case of the arts. It is regarded as the mechanism that prevents political interference in cultural expression: the twentieth-century examples of Fascism in Germany and Stalinism in USSR and ideologically driven cultural policy are often cited as good reason for this principle. For John Maynard Keynes and the Arts Council, the arm's length principle was the structural means of distancing the arts from politics and bureaucracy. This was underpinned by the twin desires of wanting to empower the arts community itself, and wanting to avoid the system of state support that had existed in Russia and Germany before 1945, where official art had been all but imposed by ideologically-driven ministries of culture.

It is, of course, the case that freedom of expression is a central tenet of democracy, and that artistic freedom, free from censorship, is a key aspect of that. However, other democracies demonstrate there are other ways of protecting artistic freedom than through a principle which worked for a very different historical moment and in a social context where culture was defined in rather more exclusive ways that our contemporary society would recognise. The arm's length principle was established at a different time, in a different political climate, and under different processes of government. Is it now devalued and outmoded?

The status of the arm's length principle was raised by several consultees and at the day's consultation with cultural community. The overwhelming view is that it does not exist any more: it is variously a 'great myth', 'ossified', while recourse to it is 'living a lie'.

Evidence to support this highly sceptical view of the arm's length principle is generally given by citing instances of where ministers are perceived to have intervened. The most frequently cited example is where ministers have intervened over additional support for national companies (principally Scottish Opera) or where ministers are seen to be taking a leading position on policy (for example, the issue of the putative national theatre).

We would suggest that concern over the arm's length principle – and about ministerial intervention – are really about the lack of clarity in the relationship of ministers and Executive to

⁵ Many commentators and historians have reflected on the arm's length principle including, for example, Redcliffe-Maud *Support for the Arts in England and Wales* (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1976), p. 25.

SAC and the cultural sector. This lack of clear vision for the arts in Scotland emerged in a lot of our consultation, particularly with the cultural community who saw the 'vision thing' as being blurred because of the confusion of roles and remit.

The complexity of the relationship with the Scottish Executive was expressed by one consultee who argued that SAC is 'accountable to the Executive for the money it spends, not for the decisions it takes.' According to another, this complexity leads to too much energy being wasted by staff and civil servants.

However, scrapping a 50 year old principle that has a mythological, if not quite defining, status in relation to arts policy in Britain is not something that should be done without serious thought, without consideration about why it was established in the first place, without a rigorous understanding of the role of culture and the arts within a modern society and, most especially, without a vision for what goes in its place.

In passing, we note that there is no groundswell of opinion that SAC should be scrapped: none of our consultees advocated doing away with SAC altogether; and many expressed a strong preference for a body which had expertise and provided leadership in the arts. In parallel there is no real support for the Executive – or any another body – to take over the role. However, it is clear that the relationship and arrangements between SAC and the Scottish Executive should be clarified – or even better redefined – in terms of a new agreement or concordat. In such a new, refreshed model the phrase 'ministerial interference' could be replaced by 'ministerial leadership'.

5.2 Scrutiny

Devolution has brought the people of Scotland closer to government. It has also brought government closer to the people of Scotland. One aspect of devolution is the increased scrutiny from the Executive, Parliament and, through them, the press and public of decision making and policy development in Scotland. As indicated earlier, SAC has faced some very bruising – and very public – experiences in front of the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Culture and Sport.

However, SAC is not the only public body that has found it difficult to adjust to the new level of examination. Indeed, we would recognise that the whole parliamentary scrutiny system is still evolving. Not least changes in ministers and ministerial portfolios, changes in First Ministers and changes in convenors and members of committees has proved a challenge not just to SAC but to the whole of Scotland.

It appears that SAC has not given enough attention and thought as to how to handle this new level of scrutiny. In passing, it may be worth highlighting that amongst parliamentarians there is an aversion to glossy documents, but a desire for appropriate information or briefings.

Once again the effort of individual officers was recognised, and the provision of information when requested was seen to be satisfactory. However, there is real need, and an expressed desire, for SAC to be more proactive in the building of relationships with the convenors and members of the parliamentary committee. SAC must forge better relations with the parliamentary committee outwith times and areas of crisis. SAC must forge better relations, not just with individual members, but collectively too. We would suggest that this should be a place where the Minister might have a role to play in leading a discussion.

It is also the case that SAC has not made full use of cross party groups. While their involvement on the Scottish Contemporary Music Industry Group and Scottish Traditional Arts Group was acknowledged and welcomed by many in the sector, SAC is not involved in the Culture and the Media Group and might also benefit from being involved in the Tourism Group. This contrasts with sportscotland who have taken a leading, one might even say championing, role in the Cross-Party Sports Group in the Scottish Parliament.

A final point. The Minister's portfolio is Tourism, Culture and Sport. The relevant Parliamentary Committee is Education, Culture and Sport. The relevant Executive Department is Education: Sport, the Arts and Culture Division. We have not been asked to make recommendations on the structures of government, but at the very least, we have to point out that there is a confusing mixture of responsibilities which sometimes gets in the way of clear lines of communication and the development of 'joined up' thinking.

5.3 Leadership

There is both confusion and conflict within the cultural community about what the role of SAC should be in terms of leadership. There is a fear that SAC leadership would be partial and prejudiced towards one kind of work or particular kinds of artists. As indicated above, SAC is not seen to have a clear role in relation to the Scottish Executive, so another fear is that it is not strong enough to make the case and that there is a lack of vision for the arts in Scotland. It is also perceived that the vision becomes even more confused when it is interpreted and re-interpreted in the organisation itself through staff and committees.

A consensus did emerge around the notion that, as one consultee, a member of the cultural community, put it:

The most effective leader is hardly ever seen. The second most effective leader is honoured and acclaimed. The worst leader is feared and despised; and once the good leader has done his work and the people say, we did it ourselves.

So, in some respects, the cultural community wants SAC not to be visible and for the work it supports to tell its own story. On the other hand, there is broad support for the idea of SAC building links with other agencies and being an informed and committed advocate to the Executive. As one consultee, a member of the cultural sector, explained:

Once the SAC learns that it has, in fact, done quite a good job on the arts sector in raising the game on marketing, evaluation and so forth, it can let go a bit more, and focus on some really powerful advocacy for the next step, which surely must be to get the £50 million up to £80 million, and to see closer working of the arts sector with the social and economic regeneration and development sectors, with health and with education so that eventually no one questions the value of the work.

In parallel, the local authority sector saw that the role SAC should have, above all others, was as an 'advocate for the arts'.

In the consultation with local authorities and other agencies, a view emerged of SAC as an organisation which, when it grasped the leadership role, worked effectively and sensitively. However, it sometimes appears to stand apart (perhaps even aloof) from some areas of Scottish public life where it does have a leadership/advocacy role: for example, with the private business sponsorship sector, where a small but focused bit of PR (perhaps in partnership with

Arts and Business) has the potential to deliver a great deal.

5.4 Partnerships

As with leadership, partnership and working genuinely in partnership is another area where SAC scores very highly in some areas, particularly with local authorities, but very badly in others.

The cultural community is united in its view that there is a need to re-visit the relationship between them and SAC and to remove the notion of 'gratitude'. They want to be part of building a national consensus around the importance of the arts. Their practical suggestion was that they sit down and negotiate a 'new deal' with SAC.

If the cultural community was open to (but vague about) what a new relationship might be, there was little equivocation from the others we interviewed. Local authority partnerships, built up over many years, are a very good example of where SAC has put in resources of grants, staff time and, at the right moment, senior level advocacy, to deliver very positive relationships. It is clear from the responses we received that SAC is a valued partner. Nevertheless, complacency is not an option: some attention needs to be given now to the community planning process and the role of the arts here. We suspect SAC already knows this.

Another aspect of relations with local authorities is the defining of roles and responsibilities. Some local authorities feel that SAC does not consult them enough about how decisions on funding are reached and assumes its leadership role without earning it. There is also a division about how far SAC should be involved in local arts development. This suggests to us that there is a work to be done to 'unpack' these roles and define where local, regional and national responsibilities lie. This is never going to be a clear-cut agreement – probably more a set of negotiated principles – but we suggest that the Scottish Executive should take the lead.

While there is a very positive message coming from partners in the international sector, there are some big gaps in partnership working. Some, but by no means all, of this is due to other organisations or agencies being in flux.

The grouping of sport, culture and tourism under one senior ministerial portfolio offers significant opportunities. Very little has, as yet, been made of this conjunction of areas and issues. Considering sport first, we saw that there are some *ad hoc* links between sportscotland and SAC but there is a greater amount of untapped potential there. Some areas of possible partnership working include: Scotland's events strategy; issues of participation; lottery capital plans, particularly in rural areas; local authority partnerships; and, dance.

The area of participation is particularly interesting as it is central to the SIP initiatives taken by both SAC and sportscotland and, of course, it is core to the Executive's social justice agenda. Delivering social inclusion objectives through participation in arts and sports activities is becoming increasingly important to SIPs. We noted that SAC and sportscotland have made joint presentations to SIP managers about how they address this area and there has been contact between the two organisations on this issue. We discovered in our research that sportscotland had approached the development of its SIP scheme by seconding someone from a SIP. For some that was seen as a more effective means of engagement than the route chosen by SAC: this despite the fact that SAC's Arts and SIPs scheme is well regarded. We cannot say which was a 'better' choice but, as both agencies were developing schemes that are about social inclusion through participation, we do suggest that there might have been

scope for a joint approach at an earlier stage.

While it may be too late to deliver joint planning on the SIP scheme, it is not too late for Scotland's events strategy. We recognise that events can be multifaceted and diverse, or focused and specialist, events can be cultural or sporting, or events can be a combination of the two.⁶ It would seem sensible that the key representatives of both sectors – representatives of both SAC and sportscotland – meet and share their priorities and identify opportunities for joint working.

There is a great deal of potential in the area of cultural tourism and SAC's relationship with VisitScotland has had some significant successes: for example, *Distilled* in New York and the traditional music project. We note with satisfaction that SAC is one of the partners mentioned in the Executive's *Tourism Framework for Action, 2002-2005*. However, given recent upheavals at a senior level in both organisations, it is, perhaps, not surprising that the relationship between the two is not as deeply embedded as might be expected or desired. We anticipate that the Ministerial Steering Group will bring these organisations closer, to share experience and develop new initiatives. Again we see an opportunity for the Minister to take a lead on issues of –

- **definition** – what is cultural tourism?
- **customer care** – how can SAC and the arts organisations focus more effectively on customers and potential customers
- **action** – moving beyond the *Tourism Framework* document into action-points and embedded, shared practice
- **lottery funding** – which aspects of lottery funding, particularly capital funding, could be better targeted?

Finally on partnerships, the links across the cultural agencies are weaker than we expected. It is possible that in the post-devolution situation, the Scottish Executive is regarded as the agency that co-ordinates policy and planning, and that the 'partnership co-ordination' role which SAC has adopted in the past is no longer relevant. We hesitate to suggest meetings for their own sake. However, we think that SAC and the other agencies should be encouraged to develop communication, at the highest level, to ensure opportunities for joint working are not missed.

5.5 International working

This report was prepared during the time of *Distilled*, the cultural event organised in New York around Tartan Day and designed to promote Scotland in a hugely important but crowded market place. The positive message that came through was that this was a very strong example of partnership working. Links fostered by the British Council in Washington and in Edinburgh were rightly praised but SAC played its role too.

The other message to be learnt from *Distilled* was that this event had a clear focus: it was a large-scale PR/selling event for Scotland and contemporary Scottish culture. It was clear to industry personnel, journalists and members of the public just what was being sold. SAC's role in such an event, and a role acknowledged by partner agencies, was and should be one of expertise, advice and funding.

⁶ There is a growing volume of research on the links between cultural and sporting events. See, for example, Beatriz García, 'Enhancing Sports marketing through cultural and arts programmes: lessons from the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festivals', *Sport Management Review* 4.2 (2001), pp. 193-220.

We were asked to look at the potential for further international working and profile. Within the frame of the current consultancy we can identify some important themes.

The Executive has to make some decisions on priorities in this area, and these must be linked to other aspects of its work. What, for example, are the Executive's priorities in terms of the countries targeted (beyond USA)? There was a view that this needs to be articulated via the Scottish International Forum. Those consulted believed that there is a real opportunity to link culture with other priorities, for example tourism and economic development, as well as to capitalise on Scotland's distinctive (and new) political identity.

This last point is important but problematic. If we were to offer any gloss or even steer on this we would suggest that there are missed opportunities in Brussels where there is some energetic and committed work happening in the Scottish Executive EU Office. However, it is not clear how this energy might link in with the wider objectives and priorities of the Executive. Brussels is particularly significant since it has the largest concentration of foreign embassies and press outside Washington. There already exists a Scottish presence in Scotland House; and there are other European regional (sic) offices based in Brussels (for example, Flanders and Catalonia) which might offer interesting links, both cultural and economic.

Distilled and *Scotland in Sweden* have both been identified as interesting examples of how culture can 'wrap around' other initiatives and create a very special impact. However, there is a health-warning here: the view expressed was that the artistic projects need to be carefully chosen to meet priorities and that it is important to work through existing structures and agencies. A key success of *Distilled* was the way in which it was a genuine partnership, both here and in the USA, which was greater than the sum of its parts.

What is SAC's role in this and, in particular, what should its role be in relation to the British Council? In Scotland the relationship is close and positive. There is some tension within British Council itself about the current approach which is perhaps part of the tension created by the effect of devolution on an organisation like the British Council that has an explicit UK remit. The point stands that it is the British Council that has the lead role in the area of international cultural development- and has the resources through its country offices to deliver this. The information flow from SAC and the British Council Scotland through to the Scottish Executive representation in both Brussels and Washington could be clearer.

A final point here: SAC's international policy has to link in with what happens back home. It is only through the development of the arts in Scotland that there is anything to export. If there is to be genuine international collaboration (as opposed to high profile PR events), then there has to be the resources to bring international work here and there have to be venues in which to locate it. SAC has to work in partnership on this with the other national institutions (for example, the National Galleries of Scotland and National Museums of Scotland) as well as the larger local authorities in particular to deliver back home. This is a point that joins up with at least one aspect of cultural tourism.

5.6 Across Scotland

The 'Edinburgh-centricity' of SAC was raised several times. This appears to be less about the geography of space and more about the geography of the mind, that is perception. SAC is perceived as 'establishment' because it is located in Edinburgh's New Town.

Having said that, SAC staff were credited with understanding the geographic and cultural differences across Scotland. (SAC was favourably compared with other NDPBs in this regard.)

It is not our remit to comment on the physical location of the office but we were struck by the number of times people mentioned the centrist approach, and how they drew comparisons with other bodies who could (and who do) carry out some of the grant giving function but from a closer perspective.

We certainly did not detect a push for a regional structure or regional offices, but rather a view that different areas of Scotland or different art form groupings might benefit from a different funding approach. The examples most often quoted as offering a distinctive and flexible model were Shetland Arts Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association and HI-Arts. To that you could add Fèisean nan Gàidheal or the Gaelic Arts Agency. Local authorities too are looking for a greater role in this area and this may be an issue for an agenda on clarifying local, regional and national roles and responsibilities.

An example of how this devolved approach already works is the Highland Producers' Fund, which is jointly supported by SAC (through its drama budget) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and is administered by HI-Arts. The fund supports touring theatre in the Highlands. One of the reasons it was established was to ensure Highland companies were supported: applications to Edinburgh were consistently rejected on the basis of competing priorities and a (perceived and presumably acknowledged) central-belt view of quality. While there may be issues in the financial directions (particularly for lottery funds) which need to be re-visited if this approach is to be expanded, we do not think that bureaucracy should get in the way of a good idea.

5.7 Development agency

There is an assumption from SAC (and, drawing on the expression used in the brief, one shared by the Scottish Executive) that SAC is a 'development agency'. This is an area where, without it being acknowledged in so many words, distinction is being drawn between voted and lottery funds.

From some partners the view is that SAC does not have the flexibility to be a development agency. As indicated above it has little or no flexibility in voted funds. Even where there is flexibility, the funding gets caught up in the bureaucracy and in a very competitive process. And yet SAC does receive lots of positive feedback from agencies involved in social inclusion, the enterprise network and local authorities all recognising its role in development. The development role, through its development department and strategic use of lottery funds, has proved to be successful.

However, when it comes to the cultural community itself there is a division, and sometimes confusion, about SAC's role. Opinions expressed to us include: 'Give us the money and let us get on with it'; 'SAC should be a banker'; and, there is 'Too much looking over the shoulder of arts organisations.' Even amongst those who believe SAC should have a strong leadership role there is uncertainty about when SAC is being developmental and when it is being unhelpful and interventionist.

'Risk taking' is not a term used to describe SAC and the cultural community was unsure about SAC's priority for developing new work. In some areas, for example visual arts, SAC has the role of 'creating our future'. The responsibility for 'minding our past' lies with museums and

galleries that are run and funded at a national or municipal level. In performing arts, however, SAC is responsible for supporting the heritage – whether that heritage is traditional music or opera. In a world where not only the creation but the delivery of music is changing rapidly, through the application of new technologies, SAC can sometimes appear to be some way behind those who are about pushing the boundaries.

The art form silos do not lend themselves to encouraging development in the art forms, and there remains a tension between traditional and new approaches to creation and distribution.

The ongoing issue about the role and place of the national companies needs to be addressed. Although we have encountered strong opinions, there is no consensus around their place within the funding infrastructure. If they are to be funded directly by the Executive, what policy framework informs the decisions that are made on level of funding? Although we did not explore this issue in great detail (and not at all with the companies themselves), we see that clarification of the arm's length principle and of the relationships and lines of communication within the new Scotland could make it less of a contentious issue for the rest of the cultural community.

5.8 Audience development

The analysis of the results from the market research has highlighted three areas that we believe are significant and warrant closer attention.

First, other than VisitScotland, the levels of awareness of SAC are lower than any of the other organisations used as examples. Rural areas show a distinctly lower level of awareness than cities or towns. Allied to this, the general public's unprompted understanding of the role of SAC is fragmented and unclear. This is clarified with prompting to the extent that there is a feeling that encouraging attendance to the arts, or promoting the arts generically, is part of SAC's main responsibilities. This impression is particularly strong in rural areas. And yet SAC does not directly promote the arts or encourage attendance. The perception that specifically promoting arts attendance and advertising the arts are a key element of the SAC's current activities could be turned to advantage and underpin a move in this direction to interact more directly with the end user, the audience.

Second, SAC is not well recognised as a distributor of lottery funding. There were very low levels of awareness of this significant part of their work and, given the importance of support funding to many arts activities, this was somewhat surprising response. This is perhaps an issue of communication.

Finally in this area, the responses from rural areas show certain distinct differences. As already mentioned, people in rural areas are less likely to be aware of SAC leading to a perception that the organisation has perhaps a more limited relevance to the lives of people in rural areas. People in rural areas are also more likely to think that the remit of SAC is to promote, encourage and advertise the arts, especially encouraging more people to go. This could perhaps be linked to touring activity in rural areas that clearly has distinct SAC support. Another finding is that people in rural areas are more likely to not be able to rate how well SAC does its job or give it a poor rating. Consequently fewer people rate it as excellent. It is clear that there is some good contact with rural areas as they show a higher awareness of the remit of SAC to distribute lottery funding. Special attention should be considered for rural areas in terms of building connections and understanding. It is our suggestion that this needs to be accomplished mostly through word of mouth and close contact as SAC needs to establish a

position of increased relevance to people in rural areas. The acknowledgement that they distribute lottery funding is certainly a very good entry point.

5.9 Bureaucracy and decision making

In the very years in which the accountability revolution has made striking advances, in which increased demands for control and performance, scrutiny and audit have been imposed, and in which the performance of professionals and institutions has been more and more controlled, we find in fact growing reports of mistrust. In my view these expressions of mistrust suggest that just possibly we are imposing the wrong sorts of accountability. The new systems of control may have aims and effects that are quite distinct from the higher standards of performance, monitoring and accountability that are their ostensible, publicly celebrated aims. We can see this by asking to whom the new audit culture makes professionals and institutions accountable, and for what it makes them accountable.

– Onora O’Neill, *Reith Lectures 2002: A Question of Trust*, ‘Lecture 3: Called to account’, BBC Radio 4, 17 April 2002

Bureaucratic, inflexible, inconsistent in decision making: again and again we came across the perception of SAC as being slow and bureaucratic. Sometimes these impressions came from those who worked closely or directly with them and sometimes this was an external perception. This even came up in the market research.

However, as Onora O’Neill illustrates, many public bodies face this issue. While accountability, financial and otherwise, is very important, it is defeating the purpose if bureaucracy prevents access to the money except by those best at filling in forms.

Tessa Jowell’s recent statement about reducing the burden for lottery funding suggests change is on the way, at least for in this area of grant making.⁷ But still, this is an area where small changes could make big differences. And it is an area where we are further tempted to suggest big changes.⁸

The Awards for All scheme is easy to use. It has proved very popular and it, perhaps, offers a model for the distribution of larger sums of money.

Not all those seeking money are looking for support for their voluntary/community organisation. Artists wanting to create theatre work, for example, need to apply for funding greater than the Awards for All cut off (not least because they will be paying professional fees and wages). We were told of an experience where the first thing the artist and his collaborators did was to raise £1,000 to pay someone to write the form for them. They were unsuccessful in their application. At the other end of the scale there are artists who have been successful in the past, even to the extent of getting the much prized and respected ‘Creative Scotland’ award of £25,000, but next time they apply they still have to complete the same amount of detailed application. There is no ‘fast track’ within SAC structures.

⁷ Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State, Department of Culture Media and Sport, speech at the Millennium Awards, Southwark Cathedral, London 20 March 2002. See www.culture.gov.uk/lottery/index.

⁸ We appreciate that these changes need to be worked through with the Executive and DCMS and meet the demands of financial directions and the audit regime.

Of course large organisations in receipt of large amounts of money need to be properly monitored. Perhaps NESTA's approach offers a model that can be adapted for parts of SAC's monitoring process.

But again there is the view that form filling is part of life, a necessary evil. We disagree. There has to be an easier way. A simplification of the process is overdue and SAC should be taking the lead from other public bodies and put its processes on line. While not everyone has access to a computer at home or work, libraries, community centres, learning centres and cyber cafes provide high quality and locally-based services.

'Overworked', 'underpaid', 'a thankless job': these are the words used to describe SAC and its staff. There is a very widely held perception that SAC staff, to a man and woman, are overworked and very busy. The implication is that they are too busy to forge new partnerships or to see work. It seems that this has become worse over the last few years.

During this consultancy we have begun to wonder: if everyone says SAC staff are too busy then the question is too busy doing what? We conjecture that, in many cases, the answer is that they are too busy feeding a bureaucratic machine (or doing 'stuff' as we like to say).

One aspect of the work of these busy people is servicing committees. We understand the importance of peer group review – it is, after all, central to academic procedures and practice – but in the case of SAC it is just not working. The peer group review of the committee system is a discredited approach to decision making. The clear message that came from the cultural community is that they were quite simply not willing to serve on committees. Partly this was because it meant being mean to your mates, but partly it was because it seemed like a lot of effort for not much power since the discretionary funds were minute and officers had decided anyway.

SAC has too many policies, too many funds. The sector is suffering from planning blight. The bureaucracy of SAC is swamping officers as much as clients.

If SAC is to be more effective in development, particularly the development of the art itself, then it needs to keep looking out and across. This is a role that its staff is capable of doing and its new structure encourages. Yet the art form committee remains and it irrevocably pulls everything back into the art form silos.

We are aware that another aspect of the review will be looking at this area, and so we do not offer detailed options. However, our conclusion is that the committee system – at least for art forms and most likely more widely than that – must be scrapped. We recommend that officers be trusted to make decisions or recommendations to Council and, as we suggested above, for some of funds to be devolved to others to disburse. We are not discounting the use of expert panels altogether – we recognise that the 'Creative Scotland' approach seems to work and we know that consultative fora which look at the development of an art form or sector over several years are useful for setting priorities. However, we believe that the day of the standing art form committee has gone. We know that this is a recommendation that could provoke controversy and, if adopted, it needs to be handled well in PR terms.

Related to this is an essential point around quality. There is a need for a mechanism that gives funding to new artists and new work. Almost as importantly there is a need for structures that let others drop out. Many of our consultees claimed that they wanted to hear of more decisions

being made on the grounds of quality: that is, '[y]ou are not being funded for this project because your work is just not up to it.' Now, in reality such comments are difficult to hear. We all recognise that when companies or projects have failed to gain SAC funding the letters pages of the national newspapers are filled with protests. However, we see that at the root of this issue is a key concern about the role of SAC: in short, does SAC have a view on standards at all? SAC must aspire to clarity in decision making; must make decisions based on quality; and must be willing to articulate their understanding of and interpretation of quality.

This is further confused by a perception that SAC, in its high-profile focus on social justice, fails to acknowledge that, while greater access is a goal for all, some are better at it than others, and that, finally, the strive towards a more inclusive arts provision should not be about box ticking.

5.10 Communications

SAC must develop a communications strategy that moves beyond a change of logo or handling the press.

The SAC communications strategy needs to include a commitment to partnership working with the cultural community as well as other partners. In the case of the former, a private discussion where SAC does not set the agenda might be helpful. In a revamping of their communications strategy, SAC needs to sharpen up its information and PR role.

The key issue in all of these is that they must be led at Chair/Directorate level. Often we heard about individual initiatives or contact at an individual level that was not seen as a shared or corporate approach or involved a joint engagement with planning.

The Council members seem to have a very low profile as Council members (although as individuals they have high profiles in their own area of work). The cultural community usually knows the identity of the chair of their own committee and the identity of the SAC chair was known to all of them and all the organisations we talked to. However, only the chair of the Lottery Committee was widely known across the consultees for both her role at SAC as well as her 'day job'. We know that SAC Council members are busy people too, but perhaps the agency's profile in some sectors would be enhanced if their identity as Council members was more widely known.

While SAC is generally considered efficient in its handling of enquiries and responses from officers, some concern was expressed about the Help Desk and whether it is sufficiently resourced to handle all but straightforward enquiries. Journalists, in particular, were frustrated by not being able to get the background information they required when they requested it from the Help Desk. In some circumstances the information they were seeking – statistics and policy documents – was available on the web site but it is generally agreed that the web site remains difficult to navigate and search. Journalists need to know where to get information and get it quickly: a serious look is needed at the web site to see how it can be developed to provide information in a clear straightforward way not just for the media but for a wider public. The re-vamping of the *Annual Report*, and the omission of financial and programme information about core funded organisations, was regarded by some as being a backwards step in terms of transparency. While this may save money on printing costs, the information could still be made available perhaps via the web site. Another point on transparency concerns Council meetings, which are, of course, open to the public. However, it is extremely difficult to find out from the web site where and when the next Council meeting is.

As hinted at above, poor communications also have implications for transparency. Few of those we interviewed were aware of the new staff structure, and those who had read the information in the *Annual Report* were none the wiser about responsibilities. We would also suggest that removing staff names from the web site, as has happened in the last few weeks, is not an aid to transparency.

From a broader, *public* perspective, it seems clear that levels of awareness and understanding of the remit and role of SAC suggest a need for more attention to be given to an effective corporate communications strategy, linked to a targeted broad-based programme of proactive public relations activity.

Despite raising the issue with consultees, there was little said *specifically* about the idea floated in the brief for the establishment of high level fora and showcase debates. Considering again the contributions and the key themes, and drawing on our own experience and expertise, we can comment on the potential to develop a programme of showcase events linked to a wider debate on the arts.

First, a forum which was mentioned to us was the use of the 'art breakfast' during the festival as a well-placed PR event intended to attract a wide audience to listen to some serious discussion about the arts. This was suggested as a way of engaging the business sector in particular.

We would also point to the success of the discussions promoted by the Edinburgh International Festival. Many of these have been directly related to the festival programme, but some have also related to wider issues of culture and politics: most notably the series in 1999 that featured many artists, including James MacMillan. We would also point to the success of the Reith lectures and organisations such as the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the RSA in promoting debate and intellectual thought.

At a more modest level the CCPR has, over the last year, organised one daylong and three half-day seminars on themes as diverse as the 'National Cultural Strategy', 'Evaluation', 'Excellence' and 'The Event'. What these have demonstrated to us is a real interest in the arts community, academics, journalists, commentators and policy makers, for discussion and debate around the cultural policy issues of today.

Debate and discussion can, therefore, operate different levels to different audiences and with varying degrees of profile.

However, regardless of scale or format, we would suggest that what we have been hearing throughout our consultation is that more needs to be done to advocate for the artists and arts in a serious way. An event that is solely about promoting SAC or the Minister would lose its appeal after the second glass of wine. Even an event like the 'Creative Scotland' awards is regarded in some circles with a degree of cynicism because of its 'Scotland's Oscars' tag line, although it clearly has its place as an event to promote individual artists.

We are also acutely aware of the reluctance of the arts community to indulge in 'tokenistic' consultation. What appeals is controversy and genuine engagement in debate that shapes the agenda.

The consultation that preceded the National Cultural Strategy and much of SAC's own consultation days has failed to live up to this. So, while we might hesitate to suggest the Minister launch a new enlightenment, we might be bold enough to suggest he consider launching a 'debate on the future of Scotland's culture'.

6. Conclusions

We began this report with a **Preamble** that commented on SAC's former slogan – 'Arts at the heart of the nation'. In March of this year SAC launched a revised logo and new slogan seeing SAC as 'Championing the Arts for Scotland' and thereby casting the organisation in an advocacy role. It is clear from our consultations that this is a role of some potential and significance. With this in mind, the conclusions we present have implications not only for SAC but also for the Executive.

If SAC is to be a leading development agency in the arts, then it needs to have a new communications strategy which not only sits in the press office, but which permeates the whole organisation. Transparency lies at the heart of good communication, and SAC needs to look at its main communication tools again to see how they can be improved. Areas of priority are the Help Desk and web site.

In a role as advocate and funder in a 'new' Scotland, we, and our consultees, anticipate a newly negotiated relationship with the Executive, a sharper, smarter, more focused remit that carries with it a refreshed and revised approach to dealing with partners throughout Scotland, and a clearer view of the international world. With such a re-articulation in place SAC can indeed deliver as an advocate for the arts. In such a role SAC can act on behalf of and in partnership with the Executive in shaping the debate on Scotland's arts and culture, and assuring its place at the heart of the nation.

There is confusion about the role and remit of SAC that affects all aspects of its work. To clarify this the arm's length principle needs to be re-visited and relationships clarified between the Executive, SAC, the cultural community and the partners and agencies which interact with SAC. 'Ministerial interference' needs to be transformed into 'Ministerial leadership'.

Recognising the increased level of scrutiny that is part of today's Scotland, SAC needs to develop a better relationship with the Parliament and, in particular, the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. The use of parliamentary briefings, meetings with the Committee, and high level engagement with cross party groups are all suggested as ways of improving the relationship.

There is a debate around the role of SAC as a leader, with some being suspicious of that word and remit. But our conclusion is that SAC is the body of expertise in the arts and should be more confident in that role. In particular, it needs to be confident about talking about art.

There is confusion over what is meant by a 'development agency' as opposed to a funding body, although there is also the view that SAC should be both. Like its leadership role, we are not sure that SAC is itself very clear what is meant about adopting either role. SAC is not viewed as an organisation that is risk taking.

It is a hackneyed phrase but an important point: there is a lack of 'joined up-ness' across public bodies in Scotland. This is not a problem for SAC alone. However, we do conclude that SAC must review, re-refresh and indeed re-invent all its partnerships and areas of joint working. A priority area is the local authorities where the relationship is overall very good but where there is scope for development in the light of community planning and in developing the support for projects in SIP areas. There may be staffing implications in this. We also believe the Executive has a role in leading a discussion between SAC and local authorities on their

respective local, regional and national remits.

Another priority for SAC is to develop partnerships with agencies involved in the other aspects of the Minister's portfolio. We believe that there are examples of good projects working effectively but, at a planning and at a strategic level, aside from the joint implementation group for the National Cultural Strategy, there is not even a regular process for exchanging information and ideas. We particularly point to the potential of closer links with sportscotland and VisitScotland.

In the area of international relations, we conclude that the Executive needs to provide a lead on geographical priorities that are, presumably, informed by wider considerations than just culture. The British Council is the agency which has the knowledge, expertise and resources to develop international cultural relations, but in a devolved Scotland that needs to be carefully negotiated. Foreign relations remains a reserved power. Recent examples of joint working suggest that the British Council Scotland is effectively negotiating these difficult areas. The key to delivering an international profile for Scottish culture is for all partners to continue to work closely together and not for the development of new structures. We also believe that clarification of roles and better information flow could assist the Scottish Executive in its work in both Brussels and Washington.

Part of international relations is support for the development of world-class work made in Scotland that can be exported from Scotland and for venues in Scotland to receive international work. Here SAC has a leading role alongside other national institutions and the larger local authorities in particular.

SAC is regarded by some as being 'Edinburgh-centric', which we conclude is more about perception than reality. We believe that SAC should continue to work with arts development organisations and agencies across Scotland (including local authorities) to devolve some of its decision making and funding, particularly funds related to local arts development or focused on the individual artist.

One area where SAC is not engaged (but, ironically, is perceived to be so) is in the area of audience development. While it is starting to look at this area, the perception is that the approach SAC takes to audience development is 'build it and they will come' and that their approach to the development of audiences is through the organisations it funds. There is scope for reviewing this area.

Overburdened with bureaucratic systems, SAC staff at every level are seen as being overworked. We conclude that this is due to the systems and not a lack of good staff. The committee system does not work and should be completely recast with the standing art form committees being scrapped. We suggest that the cultural community be consulted on the priorities for funding and that the use of experts should still be considered (as the 'Creative Scotland' model). Organisations in receipt of core funding should be treated in a more 'hands off' way, with 3-year funding agreements. Officers should be empowered to take decisions on smaller grants. The reasons for decisions have to be more clearly articulated. The application process should be put on line as a matter of urgency. The organisation can then re-focus on being a development agency at the heart of Scotland.

7. Recommendations

1. Scottish Executive and SAC must review of the arm's length principle with a view to establishing a new concordat relevant for the 'new' Scotland.

SAC must develop a more coherent and comprehensive set of relationships across Scotland including with the Parliament and other agencies. SAC must, as a matter of priority, review its relationship with Scottish Executive and with Ministers, with the Parliament, the Parliamentary Committees, and the Parliamentary cross party groups. This must be led at a senior level. This must be achieved alongside an effective communications strategy.

2. The different parts of the Minister's portfolio should be 'joined up'.

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport must convene meetings of the main agencies responsible for delivering the portfolio of culture, sport and tourism with a view to ensuring that there is joint planning and project development. This should be linked, where appropriate, with an international perspective involving other relevant partners.

3. The Scottish Executive must take the lead in developing an understanding between SAC, local authorities and other agencies on local, regional, national and international remits and responsibilities.

The role of the Minister and the remit of SAC should be re-assessed in relationship to the different but complementary needs of the markets and the agencies at local, national, regional and international level.

4. SAC must develop a shared agenda with the cultural sector.

In this SAC is charged to be clearer and more honest about reasons for funding decisions based on quality. SAC must define more clearly its role as a development agency and re-visit its relationship with the public to identify ways in which it can promote arts and raise public awareness.

5. SAC must streamline grant giving and decision making.

The existing committee structure must be abandoned. Officers must be empowered to make decisions and make awards. Some funding can be devolved geographically or thematically. SAC must become smarter in its use of technology: online applications should be in place within two years.

6. SAC must develop a corporate communications strategy which permeates the organisation and which acknowledges the range of partnerships and different 'publics'.

SAC must review its information role to ensure that it is transparent in its decision making. Information must be clearer, punchier and more easily accessible.