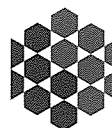


FROM THE MINISTER



Department of
**Culture, Arts
and Leisure**

www.dcalni.gov.uk

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Your Ref: C396/09
Our Ref: GM/709/2009

29 January 2010

Barry McElduff MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure
Room 424
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McElduff,

Report on CAL Committee Inquiry into funding for the Arts in Northern Ireland

I refer to your letter of 19 November 2009 in which you requested a response to the recommendations contained in the Report on the CAL Committee Inquiry into the funding of the Arts in Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank the Committee members and staff for their work in conducting the inquiry and producing the Report.

The Report has provided a valuable insight into how the sector views current funding and support. It also offers helpful direction on the Committee's views on where budgets and efforts might be extended or targeted in the future. Consequently, DCAL and its Arms Length Bodies will give careful consideration to the logistical and resource implications of the recommendations in relation to the potential benefits they may derive. My response to each of the recommendations is attached as an annex to this letter.

The Report validates the DCAL approach in many areas as the actions detailed in a number of the recommendations are already in place. For example, the Arts Council already works closely with Arts and Business NI and targeting social need is a cross-cutting theme within its funding streams.

In relation to the per capita spend on the arts, my Department's Research and Statistics Branch will be carrying out further research into this area in response to the recommendation contained in the Report.

I would point out that my discussions on the Report with stakeholders have revealed that there is a perception that the Committee has placed emphasis to evidence provided by organisations representing the community and voluntary arts sectors. It was also felt that proportionate attention had not been given to the evidence of those from the professional arts sectors, whose outreach work was somewhat understated in the Report.

With regard to comments made during the Assembly debate on the Inquiry Report on 24 November 2009, I would also confirm that the Arts Council has an established appeals procedure in relation to funding applications. It also has mechanisms in place to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications.

I can confirm that DCAL and its Arms Length Bodies, will continue to ensure that investment in the Arts is effectively targeted, both geographically and across the various art forms, and to areas with little or no previous involvement in the arts.

*Yours sincerely
Nelson McCausland*

**NELSON McCAUSLAND MLA
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure**

CAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON FUNDING OF THE ARTS

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. We recommend that DCAL undertakes research to ascertain how much money is being spent on the arts by other government departments. This information should be used by DCAL and the Arts Council to gain a wider understanding of where arts funding is currently being targeted and to identify areas which receive little or no funding from any department.

Action:

- **DCAL will undertake research commissioned internally to gather and analyse data relating to spend on the arts in Northern Ireland.**

2. We recommend that DCAL works with local councils post-RPA to assist them in reviewing how much they spend on the arts, with a view to ensuring that there is a greater degree of equality in arts provision across the different council areas than exists presently.

Action:

- **DCAL will work with district councils on the transfer of arts funding and as part of that process will address the issue of variation in the level of provision across council areas.**

3. We recommend that DCAL targets its investment in the arts in such a way as to further embed the arts in people's everyday lives right across Northern Ireland. The Committee is of the view that greater participation and access to the arts will lead to greater support both among the public and within government for increased funding for the arts.

Action:

- **DCAL will continue to work with the Arts Council to ensure that investment in the arts is effectively targeted both geographically and across the various art forms.**

4. We recommend that DCAL sets up an inter-departmental group on funding for the arts.

Action:

- **DCAL does not consider that an inter-departmental group is necessary given current information available in relation to arts funding.**

5. We recommend that the Arts Council pro-actively seeks out arts organisations that may be eligible for EU funding and assists those organisations in making applications for such funding.

Action:

- **The Arts Council already works with arts organisations to source European funding and will continue to do so.**

6. We recommend DCAL and the Arts Council work together so that budgets for coming years can be finalised in the January ahead of the new financial year in April, so that arts organisations are given as much prior notice as possible of their funding position.

Action:

- **DCAL and the Arts Council will continue to work closely on finalising budgets, but timings are constrained by the central confirmation of Departmental budgets.**

7. We recommend that DCAL and the Arts Council work with Arts & Business NI to ensure that more support is given to community based arts organisations in terms of accessing private sponsorship.

Action:

- **DCAL and the Arts Council will continue to work with Arts and Business NI to help maximise private sponsorship of the arts in the continuing difficult financial environment.**

8. We recommend that the Arts Council increases the level of funding which goes to community arts organisations.

Action:

- **The Arts Council has indicated that it will consider funding decisions in respect of applications from all areas of the arts sector in the context of its strategy and that of DCAL, and in light of its future budget allocations.**

9. We recommend that the Arts Council requires professional arts organisations which it funds to increase the amount of outreach/community work they currently deliver.

Action:

- **The Board of the Arts Council have agreed to consider this in the context of the 2010/11 budget settlement.**

10. We recommend that the Arts Council sets up a specific funding programme for community arts organisations that deliver participation opportunities to people living in Super Output Areas ranked in the top 20% of areas of deprivation according to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure.

Action:

- **Targeting Social Need is a cross-cutting theme which the Arts Council has mainstreamed within core funding in both its Lottery and Exchequer programmes.**

11. We recommend that the Arts Council increases the current budget for the Start Up programme which will distribute grants to community based groups which have received little or no previous funding from the Arts Council.

Action:

- **The Arts Council has advised that it agrees with the Committee that the Start Up programme has been highly successful and the Board of the Arts Council will consider this recommendation in the context of its 2010/11 budget allocation.**

12. We recommend that in distributing these funds, the Arts Council proactively identifies groups which may be eligible for this funding.

Action:

- **The Arts Council agrees with this recommendation and will continue to work closely with community based groups.**

13. We recommend that given its levels of participation, we recommend that the Arts Council increases the level of funding which goes to voluntary arts organisations, such as those involved in amateur drama or the traditional arts.

Action:

- **The Arts Council Board will consider this recommendation in the context of the 2010/11 funding settlement.**

14. We recommend that in the interests of transparency and fairness, the Arts Council should establish a feedback process for unsuccessful funding applicants to clarify why they did not receive funding.

Action:

- **The Arts Council has advised that it has operated an appeals process for a number of years.**
- **In endorsement of the principle of transparency and fairness, Arts Council letters of rejection outline the reasons why applications were not successful and offer the applicant opportunity for feedback from relevant officers.**