

MINISTERIAL ATTENDANCE AT THE VOCAL CONFERENCE: THURSDAY 31 AUGUST

Good morning. Grateful for the invitation to speak to you today to outline the Executive's aspirations for culture and sport in Scotland.

The theme of this year's conference is Rising to the Challenge. A well chosen topic given the vision, which I think we all share, to increase participation in sporting and cultural activities and to set in place a pathway or escalator which will enable talent to be identified and nurtured. If we are to fulfil our potential as a cultural and sporting nation we undoubtedly must rise to the challenge.

These are exciting times for sport and culture in Scotland.

In sport we have the clear focal point of the London Olympics in 2012, and, we hope a Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2 years later. We must ensure that we are in the best possible shape to take advantage of all the opportunities that both these events will present: Not just for our top athletes but for everyone. It is for us to ensure that we use these opportunities to make participation in sport part of Scotland's psyche and not just a passion to be enjoyed from an armchair.

Scotland's Achievements

I know it is usually much later in the year when we look back at achievements over the year. But before I speak about the ambitions and the policies we are setting in place to underpin culture and sport, I would like to take a few moments to reflect on some of the successes we have enjoyed in the first 8 months of 2006.

In February the national rugby team retrieved the Calcutta Cup; David Murdoch's rink captured the world curling championship in April and quite recently our Under 19 football team reached the final of the European Championships. In Culture, the National Museums, Galleries and Library are enjoying record attendances of over 3 million visitors per year. 500,000 people have visited the Kelvingrove museum since it was reopened in July, 3 Nobel prize winners attended this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival and Ali Smith won the Whitbread novel of the year for *The Accidental*.

Significantly, 17,000 performers have taken part in this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival with 1.5 million tickets sold. In sport the success of the year must have been in Melbourne when the Scotland team enjoyed its most successful Commonwealth Games ever.

I am sure you will agree that these are significant achievements for a nation of just over 5 million. While congratulations are due to all associated with these successes we must recognise the boost that they give to Scotland and to our image abroad. We need to capitalise on this success and demonstrate how easy it is to take the step of becoming involved in cultural activities and sport, the benefits and the structures in place to underpin the pathway to success.

Sport 21

Last October I initiated a review of Sport 21. I would like to take this opportunity to put on record my thanks to Chris Robison for his valuable work in taking forward the review and also to the members of the Steering Group who have supported Chris throughout the process.

Let me be clear, I remain committed to the visions and values of Sport 21. However, I think we were all of the view that it needed to be refreshed to take account of the challenge of securing legacies from a London Olympics and, we hope, a Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

Sport 21 secured a joint approach to determining objectives. I want to take this one step further and define clear roles and responsibilities and how partners can deliver national priorities while addressing local issues. I am keen that we set in place our objectives for the development of sport and how we will assess progress. This requires leadership and I believe that the time is right for the Scottish Executive to assume this role.

Let me assure you that we have no intention of foisting upon you unified national approaches to sport development. We fully recognise that there must be scope for councils to respond to the particular needs of their communities but we need to set a national agenda for change and a roadmap for those organisations involved in the delivery of sport at local, regional and national levels and this needs to be monitored and reported.

The 11 targets of Sport 21 are aspirational but, like many national targets, they have proved difficult to measure. They take no account of local variations and fail to acknowledge what achievements have actually been made.

I have no intention of losing sight of the need to measure progress on the range of areas covered by the current targets. Let me assure you that, while we will be looking for new approaches to be developed, we will continue to monitor participation rates, availability of sports facilities, medal success and the support and development of volunteers. However, this will involve councils, sports governing bodies and others in developing light touch systems by which they can regularly monitor and review progress.

We will support the introduction of external peer evaluation, in capturing and sharing best practice and in publishing regular reports on progress across the country. The Scottish Executive and sportscotland will work with COSLA, VOCAL, local authorities and sports governing bodies to develop management information systems which will guide and inform the delivery process.

The new sport strategy will need strong leadership and I look to VOCAL members to rise to the challenge and commit to delivering the infrastructure which will in turn secure improvements in performance and participation which will secure our place in the world as a vibrant sporting nation.

If we are to achieve our goals of increasing participation and improving performance in sport we also need to:

- Develop further the player pathway; and to
- Ensure we have strong organisations; with
- Well trained staff and supporting volunteers; and
- Quality facilities.

We need strong foundations to underpin and sustain change.

The publication in June of **sportscotland's** audit report of local facilities highlighted the need for a radical rethink in facility provision.

A significant proportion of our existing stock is in poor shape. But it is not merely a matter of investing in our current stock.

We must have multi-sports facilities which can meet the changing profile of sport participation. They must be well designed, have robust maintenance plans in place and be appropriately located. We must not overlook the opportunities presented by recent improvements to the school estate and whether mutually supportive agreements can be put in place with the private sector.

That is why facility strategies are so essential in enabling local authorities, individually or collectively, to rise to and meet the challenge of facility provision. The strategies need to be linked to the community planning process to ensure they meet the needs and aspirations of the local

communities they serve; but they also need to take a forward look and assess trends in the popularity of individual sports as well as where and when people want to become involved.

But we also need to ensure that everyone involved in sport is motivated, well-trained, well-supported and, above all, valued.

We need the coaches and the volunteers who are the backbone of sport. Without them, sport simply would not happen.

We also need to ensure that the sports professionals are equipped to do the job. We need to ensure that graduates coming out of Universities and Colleges have the proper skills set to take forward the development of sport and ensure they play their role to the full in ensuring the sustainability of sports participation. Successful athletes and teams need excellent coaches. Inspirational coaches are required at every step of the pathway – beginner to elite.

By putting in place an appropriate sporting infrastructure we are looking to secure a step change in people's lifestyles and ensure that we deliver services which provide people with the activities they want, at convenient locations and at times suitable to busy and demanding lifestyles.

Sport has a wider dimension:

- ✓ It offers benefits to health – physical and mental;
- ✓ Improvements to self esteem and educational aspects;
- ✓ It addresses social inequality and social justice;
- ✓ It is able to build stronger communities;
- ✓ And it has positive effects on the economy – through sports tourism and hosting events, such as
 - The UCI World Mountain biking Champs at Fort William in 2007
 - The Surdman Cup, Badminton's World Team Championships, in Glasgow in 2007
 - Ryder Cup Golf in 2014
 - Possible bids for the World cross Country Championships at Holyrood Park in 2009
 - Possible bid for the Rugby World Cup and Cricket World Cup

Scotland has the label of sick man of Europe – never before has the need for an increase in physical activity been more important. We need to tackle rising obesity levels and the increasing levels of crime. Sport is not the complete answer but must be part of a co-ordinated solution.

To maximise the benefits that sport can deliver will need a strong effective sporting infrastructure – we are not there yet – it will take time. BUT we ignore the infrastructure of Scottish sport at our peril.

Olympics and Commonwealth Games

As I mentioned earlier, London will host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 for the first time in over 60 years.

These events will provide Scotland with an opportunity to gain the benefits of being associated with the Games, both through Hampden Park as a venue and through the Cultural Olympiad and other events that will extend throughout Scotland. The Torch Relay, for example, will trigger the start of community festivals and also bring extra excitement to established fixtures.

There will also be the potential to host Pre-Games training camps in Scotland and for local authorities to work together to prepare attractive packages for countries and specific sports teams. Officials in **sportscotland** and the Executive's London 2012 coordination team are working together to ensure that we take advantage of this opportunity to enhance Scotland's international profile further and create new and firm up established links with other countries.

I was pleased that Scotland was able to take advantage of the London 2012 Roadshow in July. I know that some of you may have been disappointed that your area was not included on the roadshow itinerary this year, but there were clearly limitations on how many places could be reached in the finite time we had the bus.

It is our intention to ensure that the London 2012 message is spread across the country. We will work with the London Organising Committee and others involved in planning events. We are committed to ensuring that the Games reach as many parts of Scotland as possible during the run up to this event.

Even more exciting is the prospect of Glasgow hosting the 2014 Commonwealth Games and the benefits that this would bring to the whole country.

The whole of Scotland will be under the international spotlight, not just Glasgow, and will have the opportunity to be involved in the Games and to show the rest of the world what our country has to offer.

The Games will also bring social benefits. People will be inspired by the prospect of the Games and the performance of Scottish athletes at the Games to take up sports and physical exercise.

The Bid Team has also established an All of Scotland sub-group to consider how benefits such as these can be spread throughout Scotland. This group has a wide membership and will ensure that all areas of Scotland benefit from the Glasgow Games. The input of the All of Scotland sub-group will be key in delivering the Games and the associated cultural programme.

The 2014 Commonwealth Games are a tremendous opportunity for all of Scotland. However the opportunity could be lost if we are not ready to take advantage. Your support will be important to producing a winning bid – and it will be vital to delivering a successful Games in 2014.

Culture

Turning to the arts, heritage and libraries aspects of culture, I think it's fair to say that, since last year, there have been major developments - on which your conference now plans to reflect. These are genuinely historic times for Scotland's cultural life – with the local authority sector positioned at the forefront of some of the most exciting aspects.

The aspects affecting the local authorities are some of the most important too. While the changes planned for the national infrastructure will also play a vital part, it's essential that cultural providers at national and local levels should move ahead together – delivering their respective roles in a highly complementary way. The fact that we are able to work together so enthusiastically, effectively – and, I may say, agreeably - as 'partners', is already bearing fruit in work that's being taken forward.

What I want to say today about the new cultural policy concerns:

- the reasons I believe it's right to be travelling along this particular road;
- what our implementation teams are doing as we progress; and
- where I hope we shall be at the end of the journey.

I believe our work on this policy is very like a journey. That is why the enthusiasm I mentioned - and stamina too! - are so important. We need everyone in this room to join us on the march – and, if you think there's anything vital we've forgotten to pack, we would appreciate you telling us!

So, first of all, why this particular route?

As it says in the policy document, "Scotland's Culture", we are all, already, actively committed to providing culture, through local and national culture bodies, facilities and in the support and promotion of talent.

What will change, however, is that now we have a clear delineation of our respective roles and responsibilities. That will help each of us to focus – it also assists efficiency, and helps to push resources to the support of quality cultural output. We no longer need to wonder what others are up to, and how their activity might be duplicating our own efforts. We'll **know** what they are doing, just as artists, and others looking to form partnerships and to seek assistance, will know exactly where to target their approaches. I have heard a lot of people say that they really welcome “Scotland’s Culture” for its clarity on these matters.

Another reason we embarked on this route concerns the need for equal opportunities to enjoy culture. That is easily said. And we have all been trying to achieve it - and **have** achieved a great deal that we can be proud of. But, as the First Minister affirmed on St Andrew’s Day 2003, our ambitions should aim higher.

He observed that culture was not accorded the status of a ‘national right’. Nor was it sufficiently accessible; nor perceived as a force for good to assist in learning, healthcare, well-being, regeneration, social and criminal justice, innovation and economic success. But there were international cultural rights already in place – so how could we build on those, providing a national approach that would help boost consistency and get more people to think about and, maybe, take part in, the country’s cultural life?

Having asked the Cultural Commission to think about this, I reflected carefully on their recommendations. As you all now know, what I decided to do was to go for the simplest solution possible to achieve the outcomes I’ve just mentioned.

There will be 3 elements in the ‘rights’ framework: starting at the top with the **international rights themselves** – which are already in place and require no action other than awareness, and careful thought about how to make them really count.

The second element is the national standards, which we shall ask the relevant national cultural organisations to develop for their respective sectors. People question what standards will look like. We envisage them covering key aspects of the experience each sector provides to its visitors, audiences and participants. Taking the museums’ sector as an example, ‘standards’ will include the quality of presentation and interpretation of exhibits, the accessibility of the premises, and other visitor services. They will be geared to boosting quality, and inform the development of entitlements.

That brings us to the 3rd element – the ‘business’ end that connects directly with citizens – namely, the **cultural entitlements** themselves.

Entitlements will be specific activities and opportunities to take part in and enjoy culture, designed to match local people’s aspirations. They will develop and enhance the provision that local authorities across Scotland currently deliver, heightening the profile of cultural activities in ways that we hope will encourage far more people to become involved.

They might include things like: access to information about local heritage, or to advice about cultural volunteering opportunities; free access to a live performance, or to guided gallery tours; or the chance to take part in a community arts activity.

I mentioned that the First Minister was keen to see the wider benefits of culture brought to bear in a range of different policy areas. In the Executive, as well as appreciating culture’s intrinsic value, we aim to utilise its many positive impacts in exactly that way. I meet regularly with each of my Cabinet colleagues with a portfolio, to help develop our shared agenda for culture.

The cultural planning activity that we now are promoting to local authorities should help you to bring culture’s benefits to bear across the range of local services, in ways that will inform the strategic activity of Community Planning Partnerships. It will be a true mark of success if your

efforts can result in culture's role being identified within all relevant local planning documents, such as: community learning and development strategies, regeneration outcome agreements, integrated children's services plans and the Community Plan itself.

Those are the aspirations that motivate us on our journey. We seek **quality**, and **improved access** to culture's many benefits and delights – for all citizens and for colleagues whose activities could achieve much more, with culture playing its part.

It's vital that we travel **together**, to implement the new policy successfully. And that's precisely what we're doing.

We've convened the Cultural Planning and Entitlements Working Group, overseeing the production of new guidance that should be of great practical benefit to all those involved in developing cultural planning and entitlements. The guidance will include 'best practice', quality assurance and incentives - all of this geared to helping local authorities and Community Planners to do the things that will be required under new legislation.

Clearly it is invaluable to have local government colleagues working with us on that project, and I want to take this opportunity to thank them, and the cultural agency representatives, for their commitment and hard work.

As you may know, the person who is writing the guidance, under the auspices of the working group, is also a highly experienced local government official – Sue Selwyn, the Head of Culture and Lifelong Learning at Falkirk Council.

In "Scotland's Culture", we said that we planned to support projects to assist learning about entitlements and cultural planning, by exploring the steps and processes involved.

Those 'pathfinder' projects will provide feedback to be shared with all Scottish local authorities. At the moment, some of you will be considering applying to be pathfinder 'hosts', in response to our recent invitation. We decided to support the Highland Council's pledge for young people – which should provide a comprehensive opportunity to examine ways to consult young people and tailor provision that meets their wishes.

Each pathfinder will focus on a priority group. We are committed to helping local authorities to reach **all** sections of society – including those we know to be under-represented at present. As it says in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "**everyone has the right .. to enjoy the arts**"!

Other steps we are taking *en route* to delivering "Scotland's Culture" include:

- The drafting of a **Culture Bill** – which will issue for consultation by the end of the year, supported by the guidance that will help to explain and interpret the Bill's clauses on the new local authority duties;
- We are working with the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen to prepare for their transition to form the new arts development body, **Creative Scotland**;
- We are exploring with the **National Collections bodies and the national performing arts companies** ways to turn their activity into a truly national resource, which local authorities can, in turn, procure for audiences at local venues.

All our work to deliver on the new cultural policy is being undertaken with maximum openness and consultation. All local authorities – not simply those on the working group – should feel able to contribute and bring forward their views.

We also intend to 'join-up' the solutions that emerge with other key policies – such as public service reform.

In many ways, the implementation process we're now embarked upon is just as important as the outcome – since the **right** process, developed with real commitment, should secure outcomes that benefit everyone.

What will our destination look like, at the end of the road? Will we see more people, and more diverse communities, enjoying culture - and talent and excellence fêted and embraced at the heart of the nation's life?

The answer is a matter for all of us here. It's also a matter for our colleagues in other departments of local and national government. And it's a matter for the cultural agencies - and for all creative and community bodies who can help deliver local entitlements.

As I have indicated, we, in the Executive, shall be looking at what support we can give – both in the lead-up to legislation and beyond.

Will you examine the ways **you** deliver culture and engage with the communities you serve? Will you challenge your colleagues in the Council to think about new cultural priorities, about working together across departmental and local authority boundaries, to maximise resources and the diversity of culture that's available? Will you explore new ways of reaching those who don't already take part?

I am greatly heartened by the spirit of local government's response to the new policy. I know that this spirit rises from the great things you are doing now – and, going by the theme of this conference, it's clear you relish the potential of the great things yet to come.

These are exciting times for sport and culture in Scotland. Many challenges lie ahead. Working together I am confident that we will rise to and meet these challenges.