Cultural Commission
Study of the Input of the Voluntary Sector to Culture in Scotland

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December 04

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Contents   *Pages*

1.   Introduction and methodology

1.1.   The Cultural Commission (CC) contracted Bonnar Keenlyside Ltd (BK) to undertake a Study into the Input of the Voluntary Sector to Culture in Scotland in September 2004.

1.2.   The Cultural Commission is an independent body established by the Scottish Executive for the specific purpose of undertaking a review into culture in Scotland. The Commission, chaired by James Boyle, was established in May 2004 and is due to produce its final report in June 2005. The Commission is undertaking a phased programme of consultation with the public and cultural sector. The review of the Voluntary Sector ran alongside this consultation including a specific theme group involving the voluntary sector.

1.3.   The terms of reference for the review were to:

- identify and map voluntary and charity sector arts and culture activity across Scotland, highlighting any gaps in activity (these may relate to geography or relate to the nature of activity or the demographics of participants)
- audit the contribution of the voluntary/charity sector to arts and culture provision across Scotland and comment on opportunities to develop and support this, highlighting examples of excellence or best practice
- comment on the nature of the relationship between the voluntary/charity sector and the public and private sectors, highlighting examples of partnership

1.4.   A fixed timescale was established for the project. This linked to the phases of work of the Cultural Commission and the need for the findings of the project to inform the Commission's development work in January 2005.

1.5.   BK worked with a core advisory group which included:

- Karen Watson –for the Cultural Commission
- Rachel Blanche – researcher and analyst for the Cultural Commission
- Stewart Atkinson – Dumfries & Galloway Council and Vocal
- Fiona Campbell – Voluntary Arts Scotland
- Caroline Docherty – Scottish Arts Council
- Carol Main – Voluntary Arts Scotland
- Jill Miller – Glasgow City Council and VOCAL
- Claire Downs - CoSLA
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Methodology

1.6.   The process began with a briefing meeting between BK and the advisory group. At this meeting the terms of reference, scope and methodology for the project were agreed.

- the scope of the project was confirmed as primarily focusing on voluntary sector groups rather than those professional organisations managed by a voluntary board
- the definition of culture was confirmed as being the same as the Cultural Commission – therefore not excluding but not focusing on sports, play or tourism.

1.7.   The timescale for the project was discussed. It was recognised that, although the short timescale could have an adverse effect on the survey response, the deadline of January 2005 was necessary if the results were to inform the next stage of the Commission's work.

1.8.	An iterative methodology was designed based on three phases of work with each phase informing the next and becoming more focused as the project developed. The three strands were:

- quantitative survey
- qualitative interviews
- development sessions.

Quantitative survey

1.9.	The first stage of the research was the broadest, designed to include the entire sector, achieved through a survey of cultural sector voluntary groups. The survey was discussed and agreed with the advisory group. The survey is included as Appendix A.

1.10.	The objectives for the survey were to collect quantitative information about the:

- scale and distribution of the voluntary sector
- characteristics of the sector
- input of the sector in terms of activity, participants and finance.

1.11.	The focus of the survey was on collecting quantitative data, in addition the opportunity was taken to gain a broad sense about the key issues affecting the sector.

1.12.	The database for the survey recipients was gathered from:

- local authorities
- public databases
- SCVO Scottish Charities database
- Hi Arts
- Voluntary Arts Scotland
- Scottish Museum Council
- cultural sector umbrella bodies.

1.13. Of the 32 local authorities in Scotland, 21 were able to support the project by providing information about the voluntary cultural sector groups in their area. Of these, five distributed the survey on behalf of BK and therefore did not provide BK with information about the groups.

1.14. BK identified a database of over 3000 cultural sector voluntary groups. In addition over 1500 were contacted directly by local authorities and Hi- Arts.

1.15. The survey was mailed and emailed to recipients by BK at the end of September 2004. The closing date was 11th November 2004. This allowed the first wave of recipients six weeks to complete and return the survey. In addition to the direct distribution, a 'snowball effect' also occurred with the survey being distributed within the sector. The survey was available in a hard copy format and interactively online.

1.16. There were 676 responses received before the closing date and these responses form the base for the survey analysis. In addition 150 responses were submitted after the closing date, these were logged and the free responses concerning key issues were reviewed and included in the analysis of this question.

1.17. Following analysis of the survey findings and a presentation to the advisory group, the topics and participants for the second phase of the research were established and agreed.

Qualitative interviews

1.18. The second phase involved more detailed consultation with voluntary sector cultural groups, local authorities and sector agencies.

1.19. Over 500 survey respondents indicated their interest in further involvement in the consultation process.

1.20.   50 telephone interviews were undertaken. A participants list is included as Appendix B.

1.21.   The aim of the individual consultation was to move on from the problems identified through the survey to begin to probe key issues and explore and test options for the development of the sector.

Development sessions

1.22.   The final stage of the project was development sessions. The purpose of these sessions was to bring together various stakeholder groups with an interest in developing the sector to identify opportunities and practical solutions in order to inform the recommendations to the Cultural Commission. The stakeholder groups included: cultural sector voluntary groups, local authorities, public bodies and cultural sector umbrella/membership organisations.

1.23.   Over 70 participants attended the three sessions and there was considerable interest from the sector. Details of attenders are provided in the participants list Appendix B.

1.24.   Participants at the sessions received a brief thematic presentation from BK. The main focus of the sessions was on discussing key questions and the ideas and contribution of the participants.

Report

1.25.   This report is structured as a thematic review of the key issues identified in all strands of the consultation. The final section summarises the main themes and includes Bonnar Keenlyside's recommendations for further investigation.

2.   Findings

2.1.   The findings of the research are informed by the:

- the database assembled by Bonnar Keenlyside
- data from the 676 survey respondents
- free responses from the over 800 survey respondents (including late responses)
- telephone consultation with 50 individuals
- development sessions attended by 70 participants.

2.2.   The results are presented as the following key themes:

- mapping the sector
- contribution of sector and recognition
- financial sustainability
- renewal
- development
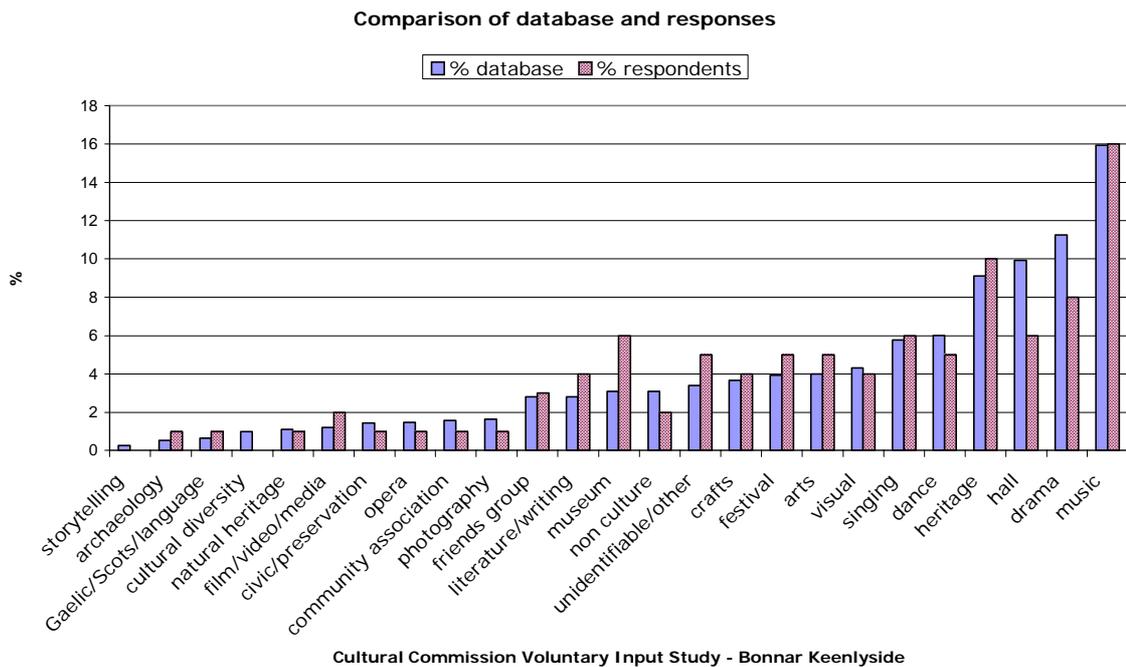- relationship with public sector.

Mapping the sector

2.3.   One of the factors informing the commissioning of the study by the Cultural Commission was the need to understand better the cultural voluntary sector in Scotland. It was felt that few facts were known about the sector as a whole such as the number, type and distribution of groups.

2.4.   The process of gathering data to generate the database for the survey was also used as an opportunity to begin to understand and map the sector.

2.5.   While some local authorities had comprehensive information about the broad cultural sector in their area, it was more common to find that the information held was only partial; also a third of authorities were unable to provide data within the timescale for the research.

2.6.   The largest number of groups on the BK database are music groups. This includes pipe bands, brass bands, orchestras and folk/traditional music groups. If singing (choirs, choral groups) are added to music, this represents over 20% of the total database.

2.7.   As the chart below shows, the type of activity of respondents mirrors the profile of the BK database. The higher response from the museum and festivals sector reflects the contribution of the Scottish Museums Council and Fèisean nan Gàidheal in contacting their members directly.

Comparison of database and responses

% database % respondents

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2.8.   The smaller numbers of groups on the database from the areas less associated with culture – such as archaeology, civic/preservation groups and groups focusing on a specific language or minority ethnic culture – reflect the way that local authorities define culture and the small number of authorities that have developed broad cross sectoral databases.
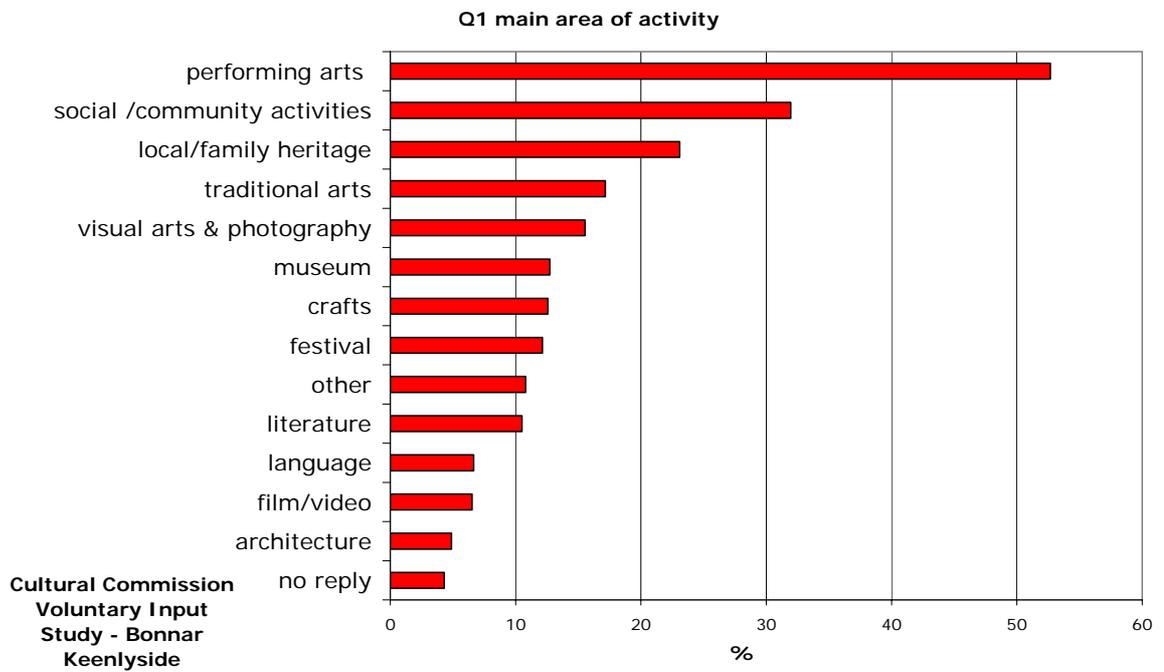
2.9.   As the chart below shows there is a strong correlation between the original database and the responses. The higher level of response from Highland and Aberdeenshire reflects the fact that organisations in these areas were contacted directly by Hi Arts and the local authorities. There was generally a higher level of response from local authority areas including rural communities. There was a lower level of response from the smaller, non metropolitan areas.

2.10.   According to the data available, it would appear that significant levels of cultural sector voluntary activity are taking place in the more rural areas of Scotland. However the database partly reflects the information provided by local authorities. It may therefore be the case that the local authorities including significant rural areas and a smaller professional cultural infrastructure have a greater interest in, and knowledge of, the voluntary cultural sector.
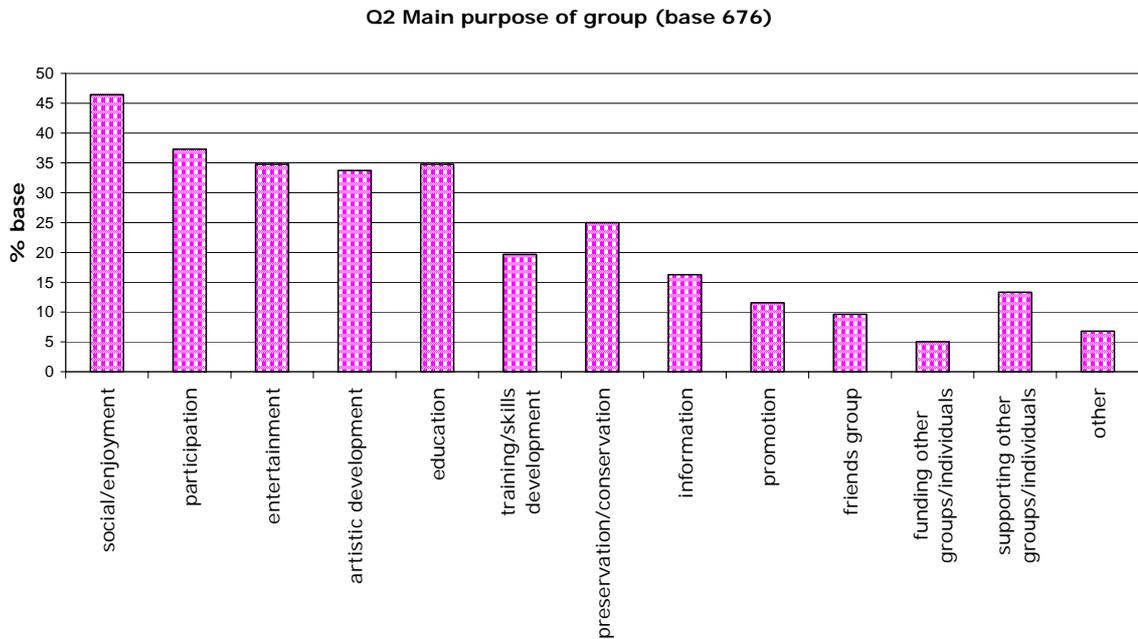

Cultural Commission Voluntary Sector Input Study - Bonnar Keenlyside
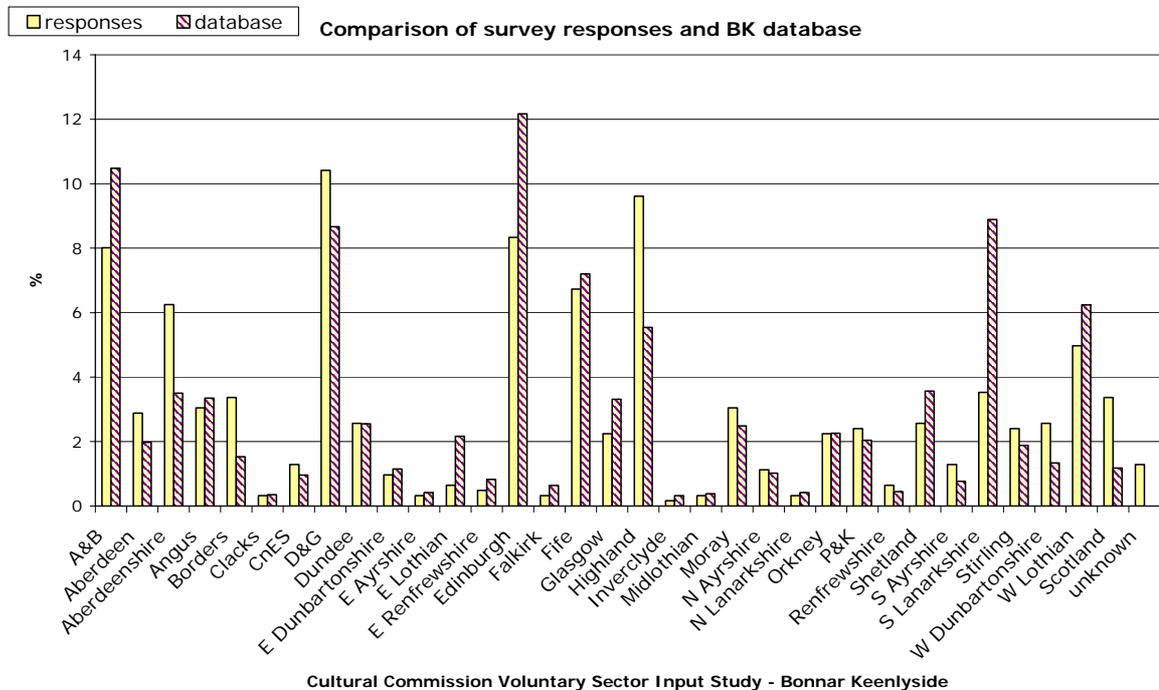
2.11.   The process of collating the database identified the fragmented nature of the sector and the lack of a single coordinating resource. There is also considerable variation in the knowledge and capacity of local authorities. In particular, few local authorities appear to have undertaken a mapping exercise of the broad cultural sector.

2.12.   The process of developing the database has enabled BK to gather basic information about the scale and nature of the sector but it is evident that the 4,500 groups identified and 676 survey respondents only represent a portion of the overall sector in Scotland.

Contribution of groups and recognition

2.13.   The focus of the brief included making an assessment of the input of the voluntary sector to culture in Scotland. From the research it is possible to identify the types of outputs generated by the sector and the levels of activity and number of people touched by the sector. In addition, qualitative information has been gathered about the benefit and impact of the sector for participants and communities throughout Scotland.

2.14.   The activities identified by groups highlight the broad contribution that the voluntary sector is making to all areas of culture. The pattern of responses here correlates with the main database.

Q1 main area of activity

Category	%
performing arts	
social /community activities	
local/family heritage	
traditional arts	
visual arts & photography	
museum	
crafts	
festival	
other	
literature	
language	
film/video	
architecture	
no reply	

%

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2.15. While the main activity of the respondents is the performing arts, the main purpose of groups is social and enjoyment. Many groups originated and exist to provide members and audiences with a pleasurable experience. This activity provides the participants with positive social interaction and a fun activity that may contribute towards their wellbeing.

2.16. Around a third of groups identify artistic development and education as being amongst their main purposes. For these groups there is a development aspiration connected with improving quality and extending artistic experience as well as learning. These purposes represent a good fit with the priorities of public sector agencies such as the Scottish Arts Council and local authorities.

2.17. Around a quarter of the respondents state that their main purpose is preservation/conservation. This highlights the contribution made by the voluntary sector to the maintenance and development of Scotland's local, natural and built heritage.

2.18. As well as directly providing activity, over 20% of respondents to the survey identified their main purpose as supporting other organisations rather than.. These support bodies include local fora providing networking and funding and friends bodies providing support and fundraising for cultural institutions.

Q2 Main purpose of group (base 676)

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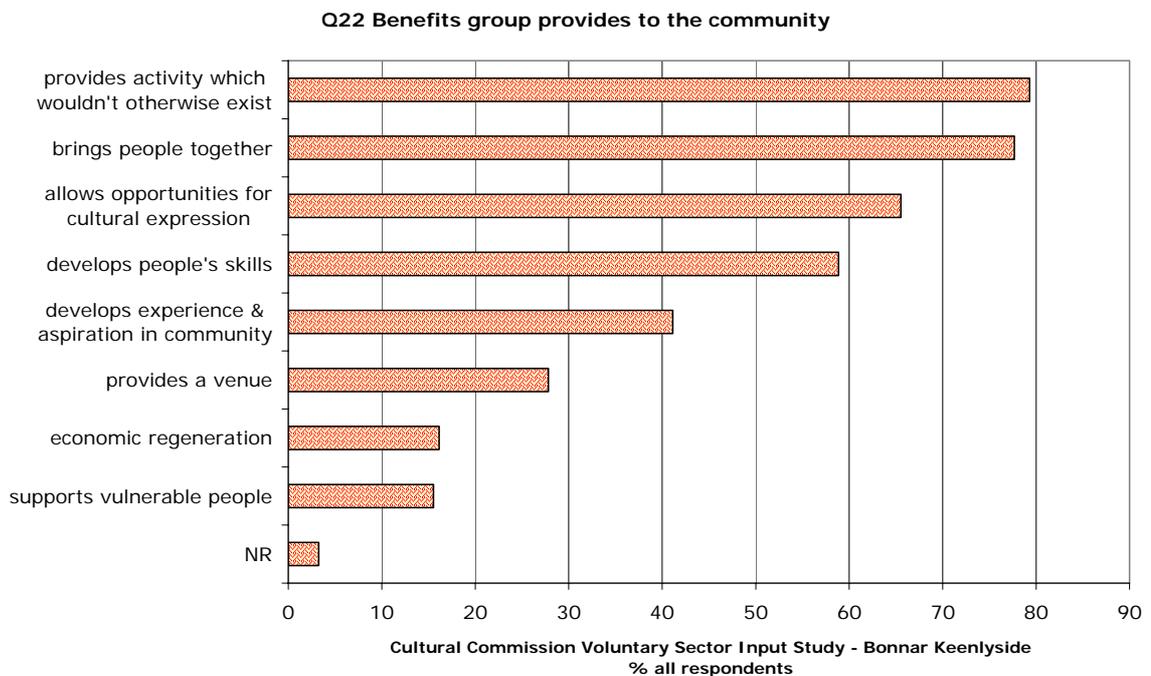
2.19.   The majority of respondents appear not to provide their activity for specific sectors of the community but instead are available for all.

2.20.   18% of respondents provide activity for children and young people. This includes organisations such as youth theatres, junior bands and the feisean. For these organisations, compliance with new child protection legislation will have a major impact on their operation.

Q11 Organisation primarily for a specific group

Cultural Commission Voluntary Sector Input Study - Bonnar Keenlyside
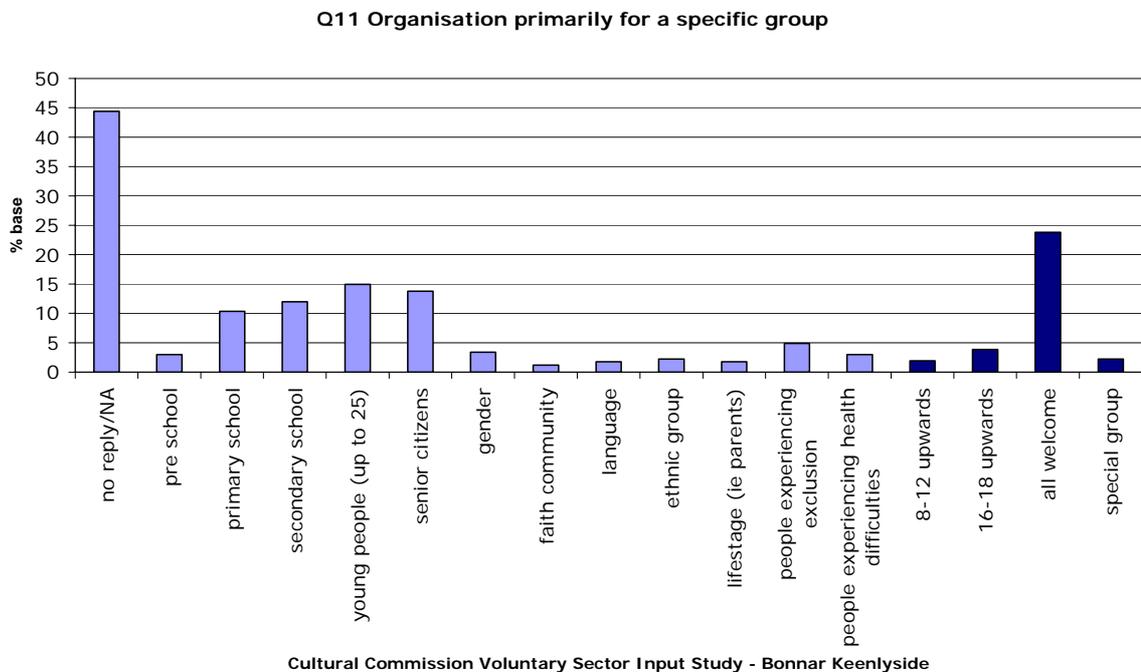
2.21.   The survey attempted to measure the input of the voluntary sector to culture in Scotland by measuring basic outputs such as membership, attendances, meetings and special events. From the 676 respondents to the survey, the outputs included:

- over 250,000 members
- 3 million attendances at activities, events and facilities per year
- over 35,000 regular meetings and 9000 special events
- this equates to over 100 cultural opportunities being provided by voluntary cultural groups in Scotland each day of the year.

2.22.   The survey aimed to gather information about the reasons for people's involvement in voluntary sector cultural groups and therefore the potential benefits gained by participants. The response to the question identified that there were potential social, cultural, community, skills and personal benefits from participation.

Q21 Reasons for involvement in group

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% all respondents
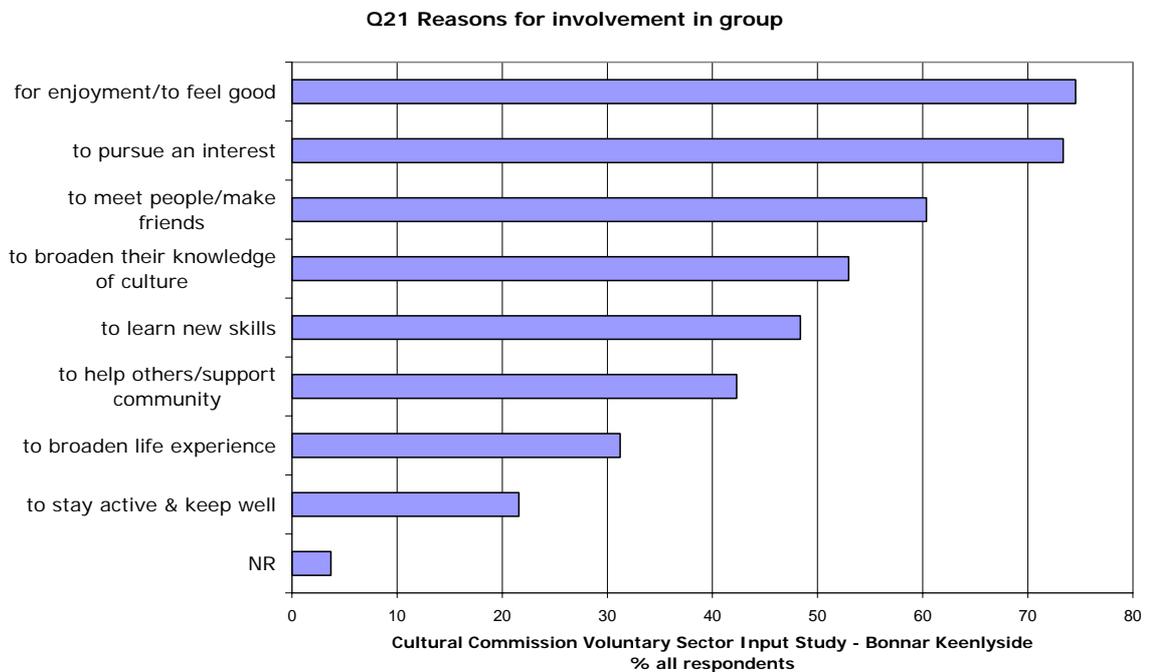
2.23.   The survey also aimed to identify the benefits that are realised by the wider community from the activity of voluntary sector groups. The response to this question highlights the important role of the sector in providing activity and venues for communities that would otherwise be lacking. This is particularly the case in rural communities that do not have the advantage of a professional cultural infrastructure. The groups identify that without their activity there would be a cultural gap.

2.24.   In addition, the groups identify their important role in terms of community development in bringing people together and providing aspiration and experience.

2.25.   Two thirds of respondents identified the cultural benefits of their activity, providing participants and communities with opportunities for cultural expression.

2.26.   Many of these identified benefits link to the priorities of public sector agencies.

Q22 Benefits group provides to the community

Cultural Commission Voluntary Sector Input Study - Bonnar Keenlyside
% all respondents

2.27.   Having, in the main body of the survey, identified the inputs, contribution and benefits of the sector to culture in Scotland as well as other social, community and economic benefits, some respondents then highlighted the topic of recognition.

2.28.   The survey respondents identifying this theme emphasised the contribution made in terms of the time input of volunteers (in particular committee members) as well as the level of activity being provided by the sector (which might otherwise have to be provided by the public sector) as well as the knowledge, expertise and quality being offered.

2.29.   The subject of recognition was further explored in the individual consultation and development sessions. The main issue identified was that the contribution of the sector was not valued or appreciated especially by public bodies. There was felt to be both a need for a strategic recognition of the importance of the sector as well as tangible evidence that the contribution of the sector was valued equally to that of the professional cultural sector.

2.30.   The research process identified the fragmentation within the sector and the lack of consistency. While some sector bodies had gathered information about their particular sector this was not consistent and had not been consistently shared; some areas of the cultural sector (in particular voluntary groups) do not have a sector representative body; while some local authorities have developed databases and resources and invested in the development of the cultural voluntary sector, this is not the case for each council.

2.31.   The result of this fragmentation and variance is that there is no single voice for the cultural voluntary sector in Scotland. This minimises the opportunities for the sector to achieve recognition of its contribution and to make a strategic impact.

2.32.   The participants at the development sessions identified the importance of gaining understanding and strategic support at the highest levels of government in order to achieve positive change.

Financial sustainability

2.33.   The second theme arising from the survey and consultation concerns finance and financial sustainability. The survey aimed to collect broad information about income and expenditure including public funding. The additional consultation further identified particular concerns about financial sustainability and particular specific costs that impact upon long term viability.

2.34.   The survey identified that the main and most important sources of income for respondents were generated from the organisations' own activity including membership, sales/admissions and fundraising exercises. 38% of respondents received no public funding and were therefore entirely self sufficient. The consultation identified the importance of this self sufficiency for many organisations and a desire to perpetuate this position by maximising the resources of individual groups and identifying other opportunities such as sponsorship.

2.35.   Where respondents did receive public funding the most likely source was the local authority which provided funding to 38% of respondents. 20% of respondents identified local authority funding as one of their three most important sources of income.

2.36.   The National Lottery has had an impact on the sector with a quarter of respondents receiving some form of Lottery funding. However while Lottery funding will have enabled groups to invest in capital or one off projects, it will not necessarily contribute towards organisations' ongoing financial sustainability.

Q15 Sources of income
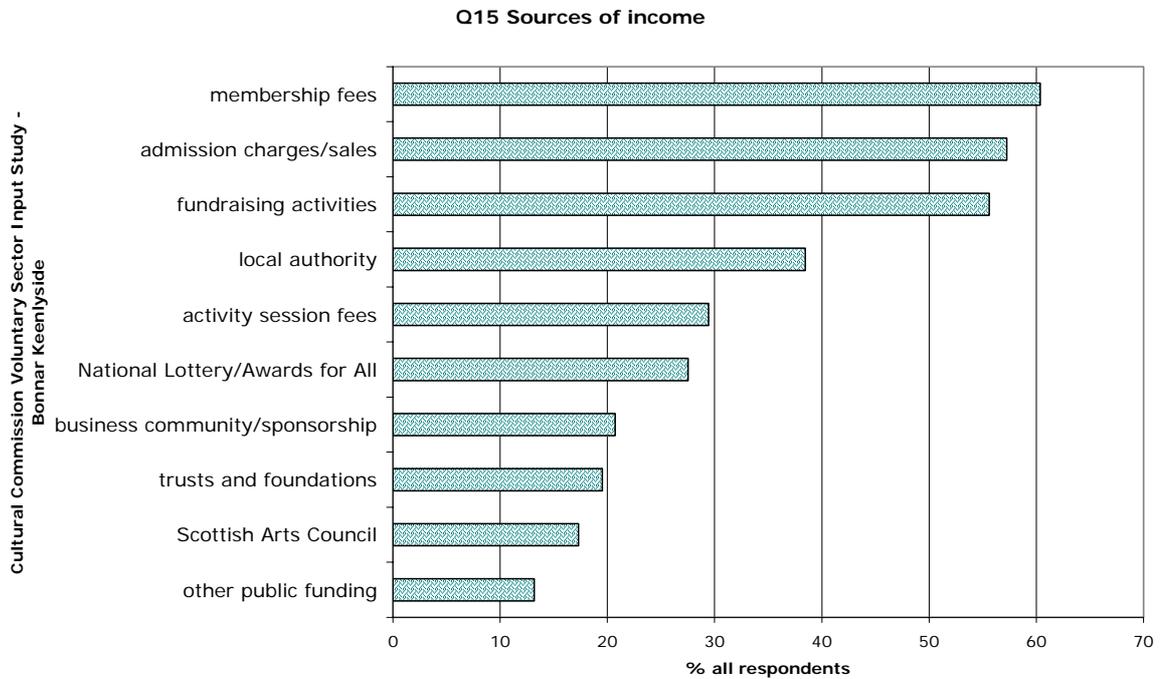
2.37. While the main and most important sources of income relate directly to the activity of the organisation, many of the main sources of expenditure do not relate directly to activity and are incurred before any activity has been delivered such as administration.

Q17 Sources of expenditure

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% all respondents
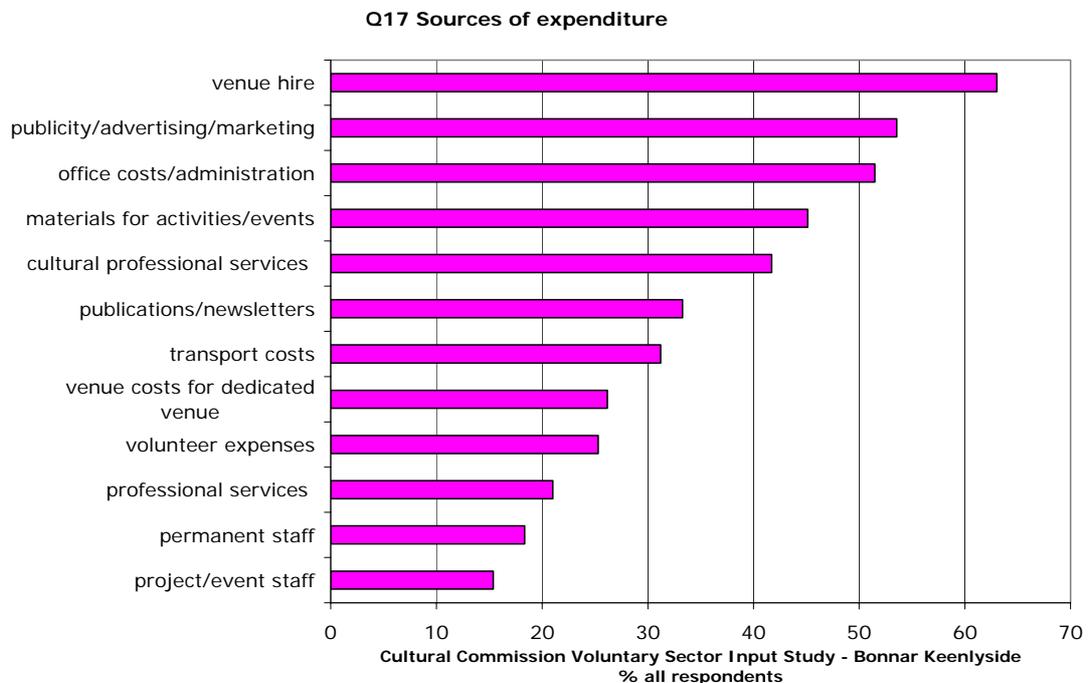
2.38. The cost of venues was the main source of expenditure for 60% of respondents to the survey.

2.39. In the additional consultation respondents identified major concerns about the cost of venues. In particular, charges for local authority venues were seen as being very high which had a negative impact on the groups' ability to continue or develop their activity.

2.40. As well as direct venue costs, participants in the consultation also identified other significant costs that impact upon their sustainability such as public liability insurance and other professional fees such as accountancy services. A concern was also identified about the financial impact of legislation including charity, tax and child protection law.

2.41.   The survey and consultation identified an aspiration for development and an existing relationship between the voluntary and professional cultural sectors. This interaction, in the form of tutors, soloists, conductors, guest speakers and band masters, comes with a financial cost attached. The consultation identified an aspiration to use more professional services which is prevented by financial barriers.

2.42.   The main problem identified in the consultation was the imbalance between income and expenditure with the costs associated with venues, administration and insurances continuing to rise year on year while the groups feel they are unable to generate an increased level of income from their activity. The limit to income relates to the nature of the activity being provided and the value placed upon it by potential participants and audience members. Also the charitable motivation of many groups creates an ethos where higher charges would be inappropriate.

2.43.   Participants from rural (in particular island) communities identified additional financial pressures owing to several factors including in terms of income the smaller catchment for audiences and fundraising campaigns and for expenditure the additional costs (transport, accommodation etc) incurred in utilising the services of professionals from outwith the community.

2.44.   Given the gap identified in the consultation between income and expenditure, the main key concern identified by respondents was financial sustainability and the main solution identified was funding.

2.45.   Funding however is also a major concern, both in the availability of funding and in the administration associated with it. Funding applications are considered to be overly complex and the processes excessively bureaucratic. For entirely voluntary organisations, where funding applications are made by volunteer committee members in their spare time, accessing funding is a major concern.

2.46.   There is also a concern with ongoing sustainability given the fact that many funding opportunities only relate to additional activity and specific projects rather than core operational costs. For the majority of groups the most common source of funding (local authority) is only available on an annual basis allowing little opportunity for forward planning.

2.47.   It is therefore no surprise that nearly 60% of respondents to the survey should identify funding as the most pressing need for their group.

2.48.   The consultation provided the opportunity to explore further issues connected with funding, these included identifying attitudes towards subsidy. There was consideration of both direct subsidy to the groups and also indirect subsidy, where public funding is applied to specific aspects of operations and not given directly to the groups. While some organisations identified the absolute crucial importance of their core subsidy, generally there was a preference for indirect subsidy as this was considered to create a more simple and equitable system and reduce some of the inefficiencies of the current system.

Renewal

2.49.   As the following chart shows there is a process of renewal and development in the sector with new groups continually being formed and other organisations being sustained from the 19th century.

Q5 Approximate year in which established (base 676)
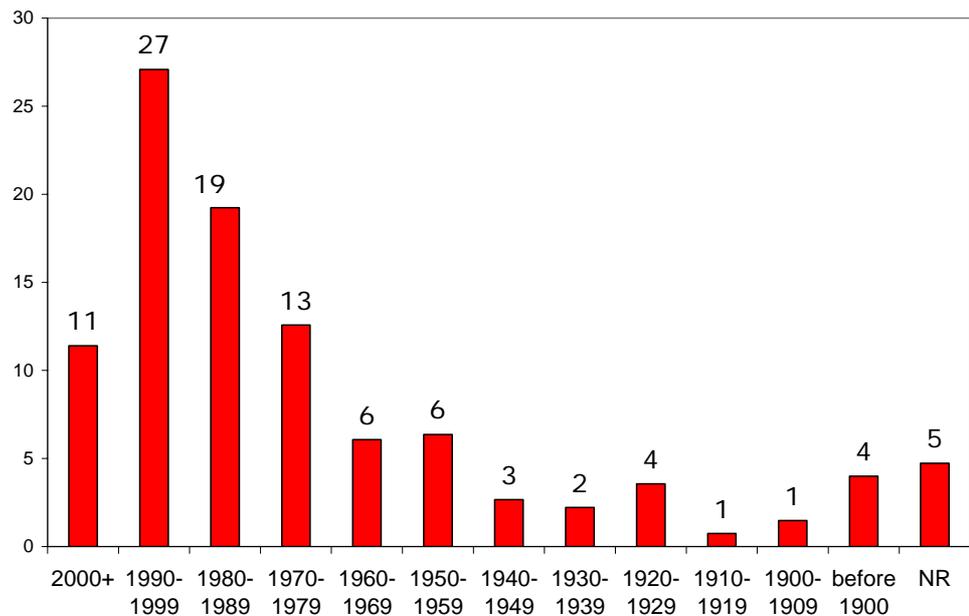
2.50.   Despite this process of renewal many findings from the survey indicate that the continued attraction of members, audiences and committee members is one of the major factors impacting on the sustainability and development of the sector.

2.51.   While a small proportion of respondents identify having problems meeting demand for their activity, the majority identify challenges with recruitment with over half identifying spare places and a further quarter reporting problems attracting members.

Q10 Capacity within groups
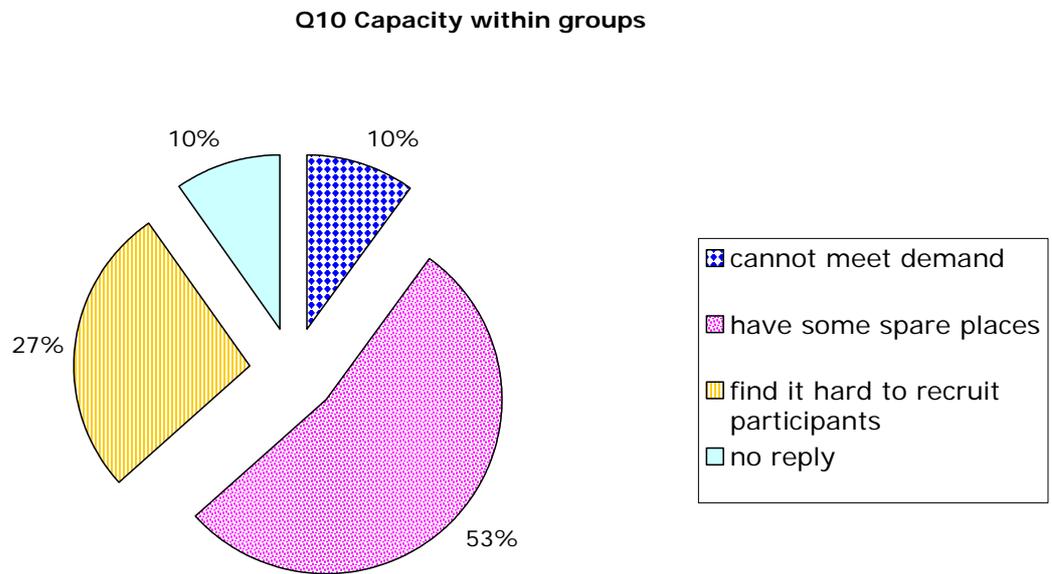
2.52. Although overall funding was identified as the most pressing need for groups, it was followed by attracting members, audiences and committee members.

Q20 Pressing needs for groups

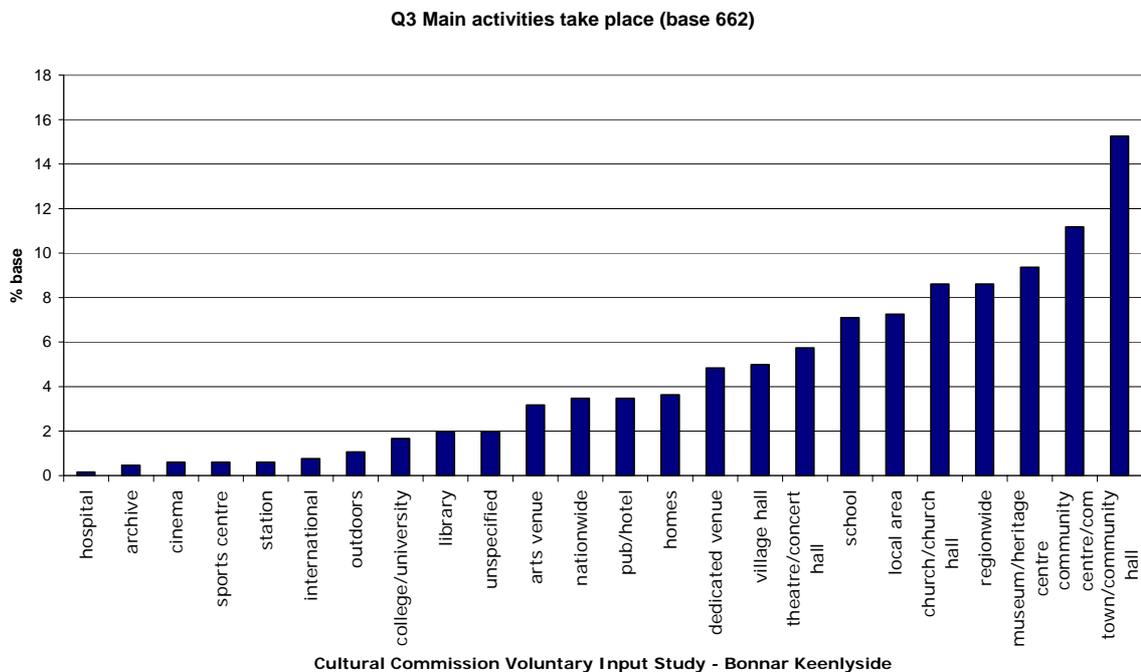Cultural Commission Voluntary Sector Input Study - Bonnar Keenlyside
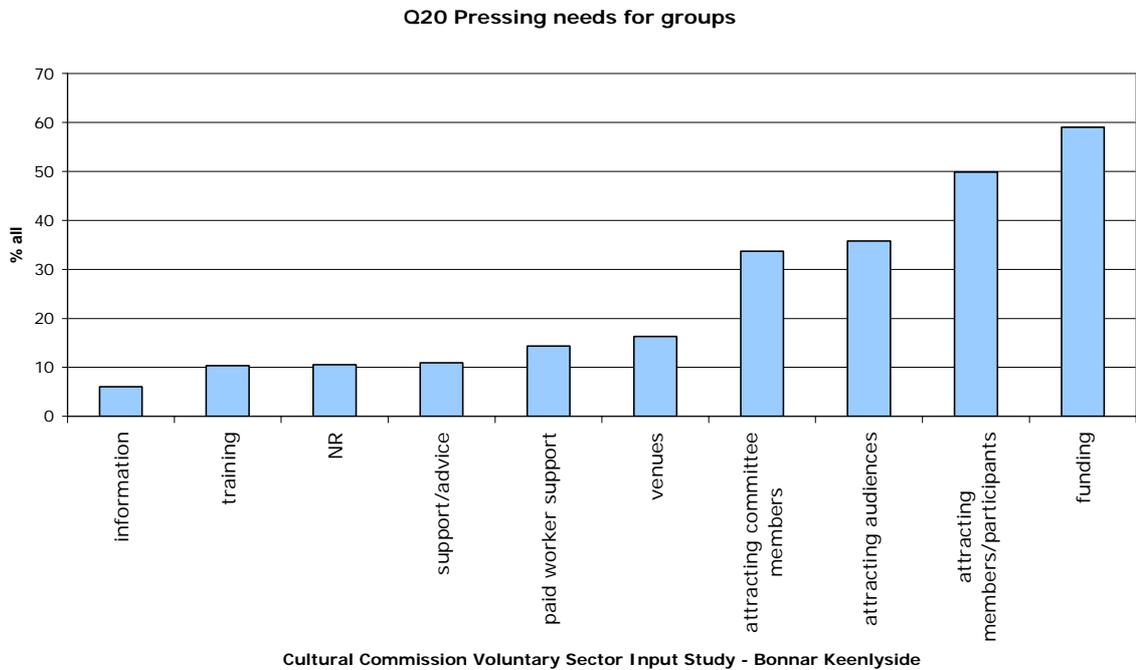
2.53. These challenges were explored further during the consultation and development sessions. Further issues identified included:

- for committee members, time commitment and responsibility is a barrier. Participants often identified that owing to other responsibilities few people were able to make the commitment expected. This had led to a common situation arising of a static and aging committee which had a negative impact on the organisation's ongoing sustainability and development
- for audiences, it was identified that there was significant competition for leisure time. This creates a problem when an alternative option is seen as providing a higher quality offer perhaps with a more attractive programme or more comfortable or attractive venue. As with committee members, audiences were considered to be aging.

2.54.   Given the aging profile of audiences and committee members, participants identified young people as an important target group for their activity. However accessing and attracting young people was seen as a particular challenge that few groups had been able to meet.

2.55.   The lack of knowledge and experience of culture by younger people was seen as a barrier to their interest. The fact that young people were not taught country dancing, the pipes or about their heritage or archaeology was perceived as a major reason why young people would not be attracted to these activities in childhood or adult life.

2.56.   The lack of pathways was identified in the consultation as a barrier to renewal. Pathways are the mechanism that enable the connection to be made from an initial experience or interest to an ongoing involvement in a voluntary sector cultural group. The participants in the consultation identified that pathways should exist not only for children and young people but also for young retirees.

2.57.   Another factor which was considered by development session participants to impact upon renewal was the leadership, enthusiasm and dynamism of groups. It was felt that one positive move that could be made to achieve renewal was to recognise the need for proactive development.

Development

2.58.   The consultation did identify an aspiration for development. Many of the groups identified the following aspirations:

- quality
- diversity of activity
- scale and level of activity
- capital aspirations.

2.59.   Sadly some respondents could not identify development aspirations because of their primary focus on survival.

2.60.   As well as the issues of finance and renewal identified previously, other barriers to development included venues, contacts, skills and knowledge.

2.61.   The following table shows the venues currently being utilised to accommodate the activity of the respondents. It shows the particular importance of community venues including those provided by the voluntary and cultural sectors as well as public venues primarily provided by the local authority.

Q3 Main activities take place (base 662)

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2.62.   As well as the financial issues connected with use of these venues, there are other barriers to development including:

- the availability of venues – some respondents report gaps in provision for venues
- the suitability of venues and their ability to support the activity provided this in particular affects performing arts groups
- the attractiveness of venues for audiences and participants
- the lack of a dedicated venue – this particularly affects heritage organisations which have worked to gather collections but have no where to display them
- the lack of storage space for groups' materials and collections.

2.63.   For organisations providing venues including museums and community venues, there are concerns associated with venue costs such as utilities and maintenance. In addition some groups reported concerns about security in terms of venues with no long term leases to support their development aspirations.

2.64.   How well networked groups are is an indication of their levels of awareness about key issues which impact upon development (such as legislation and funding etc) and also their ability to form partnerships which can support development.

2.65.   The survey identified that the most likely sources of networks are between local groups.

Q13 Does your group have relationships with any of the following?
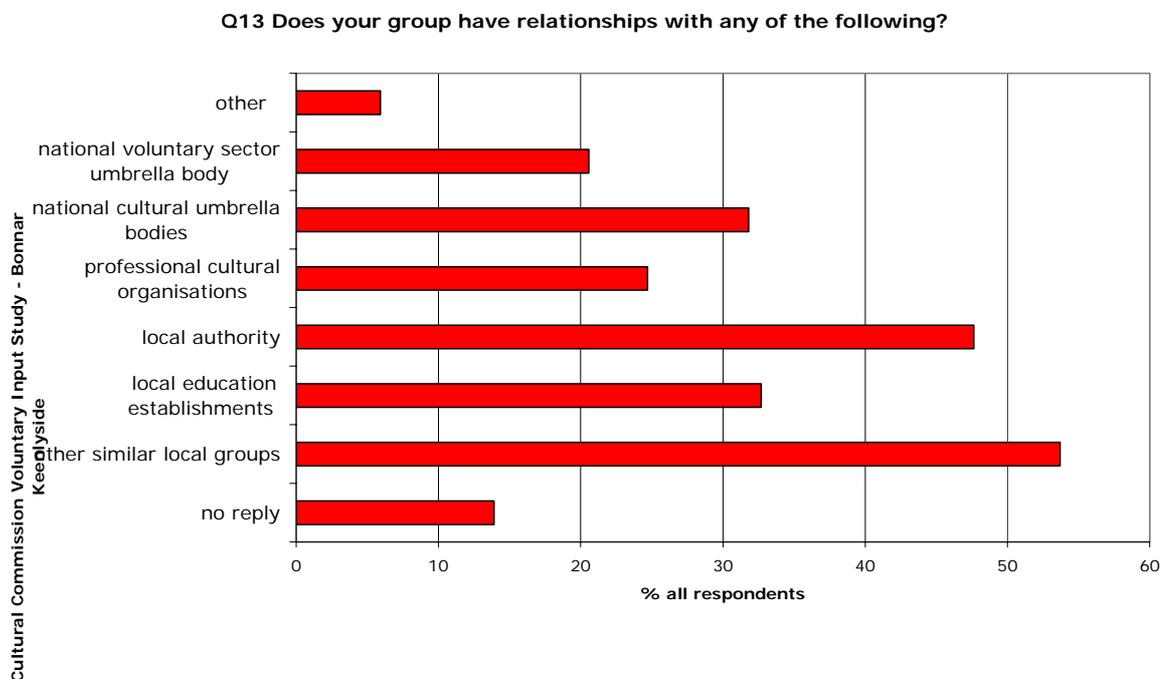
2.66.   The local authority is the second type of organisation that respondents are likely to have a relationship with.

2.67.   The survey and consultation also identified the importance of sector bodies such as the Scottish Museums Council, Embroiderers' Guild, Royal Country Dance Society or Fèisean nan Gàidheal amongst many others. These bodies were seen as important sources of information and advice. Possibly because respondents had opted into these relationships they were respected and valued. Some of these organisations represented an important intermediary between the public sector and the individual groups. In particular organisations such as Making Music had an important function in the distribution of public funding and were seen as being more accessible than other funding sources. There was however a recognition that some of these sector organisations were more valuable and proactive than others, some were identified as being weak.

Q14 group is a member of/receives information from (number of responses)			
other sector association	127	various	8
voluntary sector	51	Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association	8
Scottish Museums Council	39	civic organisation	7
local authority	34	Scottish Council Archaeology	7
Making Music	40	village halls	7
Scottish Arts Council	28	Royal Country Dance Society	7
Voluntary Arts Scotland	26	An Comunn Gaidhealach	6
local arts forum	26	Scottish Photographic Association	6
Scottish Community Drama Association	21	Scottish Association of Writers	5
tourism body	18	Federation Accordion and Fiddle Clubs	4
National Operatic & Drama Association	16	international	4
none	16	Scottish Book Trust	4
Enterprise Music Scotland	15	Social Inclusion Partnership	4
local museums/heritage forum	13	Guild of Spinners Weavers & Dyers	4
Hi Arts	11	British Association Friends of Museums	4
other	10	Lace Guild	4
Scottish Local History Forum	10	Scottish Amateur Brass Band Association	4
Fèisean nan Gàidheal	8	Traditional Music & Song Association	4
promoter	8	Heritage Railway Association	4

2.68.   In the survey 10% of respondents identified support/advice as a pressing need for their group, 10% also identified a need for training and 6% a key issue regarding information.

2.69.   The additional consultation identified particular areas where participants identified skills gaps and support needs. These included:

- promotion
- publicity
- funding opportunities
- impacts of legislation
- skills requirements for committee members
- project development.

2.70.   The majority of these information and support needs were generic with the same requirements existing for heritage as arts groups.

2.71.   Participants appeared to find it easier to access specific information related to their activity, primarily from other local groups and sector bodies, than generic information related to the operation of their organisation.

2.72.   While the consultation identified the need for accessible resources to provide information and highlight good practice, there was also felt to be a need for a human resource to interpret and support the information. Participants were able to identify the benefits of contact with a locally based development officer who supported their activities, provided training and networking opportunities and ongoing advice.

2.73.   In terms of resources, there was low awareness of the plethora of existing available sources including those available as web resources. There was evidently poor signposting to these resources.

Relationship with public sector

2.74.   Many facts from the survey highlight the importance of the relationship between the public sector and voluntary sector in particular local authorities including:

- the local authorities' role as venue providers (and the fact that venue hire is the main cost experienced by respondents)
- 47% of respondents having a relationship with the local authority and therefore conversely more than half not having such a relationship
- 39% of respondents receiving funding from the local authority and 57% public funding in general
- voluntary sector cultural organisations meeting public sector priorities in terms of cultural development, community development, personal and social development and economic regeneration.

2.75.   The additional comments as part of the survey identified the importance of the relationship with the local authority. Not only is the council a direct source of funding but also the gatekeeper to other public funding such as Lottery funds. Some respondents identified concerns about their relationship with the local authority and in particular the lack of support they received.

2.76.   This relationship was explored in the individual consultation, this identified barriers created by perceptions. Voluntary sector organisations were concerned that entering into a relationship with the local authority would come with strings attached and that the council would issue dictates about the group's activity, membership and operation. This attitude partly links to the views expressed about the bureaucracy associated with public sector funding applications. The independence and self sufficiency of voluntary cultural groups was asserted.

2.77.   Given the importance of the relationship between the voluntary and public sectors, this topic was discussed further at the development sessions. The objective of the discussion was to identify options that would enable both the voluntary groups to retain their independence and the public sector to meet its requirements to meet strategic priorities and accountability.

2.78.   Both participants representing groups and those representing the public sector identified some very positive relationships with some groups receiving considerable support from their local development officers.

2.79.   While many ideas were suggested at the sessions, the key theme was the need for change in both sectors in order to achieve a common meeting ground. Some of the changes identified included:

- changing the language and complexity of funding applications and guidelines
- increasing the strategic awareness of the voluntary sector
- changing structures to provide more direct access to officers and create individual relationships.

2.80.   There was however a recognition that the requirements on local authorities for accountability were increasing and that many groups would wish to continue to exist outwith any relationship with the public sector.

2.81.   In addition to the relationship with local authorities, a specific issue was identified about enterprise funding for the voluntary cultural sector. Many participants were able to identify the economic impact of their activity and facilities including both direct economic impact as well as through creating an attraction for tourists and visitors. There was frustration that the terms of Scottish Enterprise Network's charter restricted its involvement in this sector and prevented groups from entering into a partnership based on their role as agents for economic development.

3.   BK Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1.   Bonnar Keenlyside was charged with providing the Cultural Commission with recommendations about how the cultural voluntary sector in Scotland could be developed.

3.2.   Within the terms of the brief, BK has been able to identify and discuss some potential ideas for development but not to develop and test these ideas in order to identify the resource and delivery implications of these options or their achievability.

3.3.   The recommendations included here therefore aim to identify options and ideas that the Cultural Commission may wish to investigate further.

3.4.   The research identified some generic areas where change is required (some currently being considered by the Cultural Commission) that also impact upon the voluntary cultural sector; in addition there are a smaller number of specific actions that relate to the voluntary cultural sector only. There are therefore four different types of recommendations:

- opportunities for further research
- generic ideas related to the voluntary sector
- generic options applicable to the cultural sector
- actions specifically related to the development of the cultural voluntary sector.

Mapping the sector

3.5.   The research process provided some information which begins the process of mapping the cultural voluntary sector in Scotland. The process identified the number of sectoral groups in existence and the difference between them in terms of their capacity and representation of their sector. The involvement of the local authorities in Scotland also highlighted the variation in their levels of knowledge about the local voluntary cultural sector of their area. While some authorities had developed public community databases and resources, few had undertaken a broad cultural mapping including all sections of the cultural sector (including galas, archaeology, friends of parks groups etc) and groups with no formal (often funding) relationship with the local authority.

3.6.   Therefore while BK was able to contact over 4,500 organisations and received a response from over 800 groups, we recognise that, within the timescale and resource allocated for this research project, it was impossible to achieve a comprehensive mapping of the sector.

3.7.   Despite the acknowledged limitations of the overall database and the number of survey respondents, the data generated through the process was identified by all those involved in the project as having considerable value in beginning to understand the sector and to identify key facts and issues.

Mapping the sector recommendations

3.8.   The outcome from the following recommendations would be:

- the cultural voluntary sector is consistently mapped and widely understood.

3.9.   In order to develop a better knowledge and understanding of the scale, nature and input of the voluntary cultural sector, BK recommends the following actions:

- local authorities to undertake broad cultural mapping exercises including the voluntary cultural sector to inform local cultural planning
- sector organisations to gather and share information about their respective sectors
- the Cultural Commission/Scottish Executive to undertake a more in depth mapping exercise based upon this research project.

Input and Recognition

3.10.   The survey identified the significant input that the voluntary cultural sector is making to culture in Scotland. There are several dimensions to this contribution:

3.11.   In terms of activity the voluntary sector is:

- providing activity that would not otherwise exist including the traditional skills of Scottish culture and preservation of national and local heritage
- providing venues that would not otherwise exist including valuable community venues that support the sustainability of communities
- providing opportunities for children and young people that exist outwith the formal education system and therefore offer young people a broader range of experiences than those offered in the curriculum and potentially attract young people alienated from education and other formal structures

- supporting other artists, organisations and cultural institutions as well as general charitable fundraising.

3.12.   In terms of the scale of activity:

- BK identified over 4,500 voluntary sector cultural groups
- from the 676 responses to the survey alone, there were
  - 250,000 members
  - 3 million attendances per year at cultural events and facilities
  - over 100 cultural opportunities provided per day in Scotland.

3.13.   In terms of the objectives and benefits of the sector's activity, the consultation identified the following:

- social
- economic
- educational
- community
- cultural development
- skills
- active living.

3.14.   The research therefore showed that the voluntary sector is making a considerable and positive contribution to culture in Scotland. Without its activity there would be significant gaps in provision and individuals and communities would not experience the benefits they currently do.

3.15.   Having identified the contribution of the sector to culture in Scotland, the research also identified the fact that this contribution is not felt to be recognised or valued.

Input and Recognition Recommendations

3.16.   The outcome relating to development in this area would be:

- in future years the voluntary cultural sector will state that its contribution is recognised and valued.

3.17.   In order for the contribution of the sector to be better known BK recommends the following:

- despite its limitations, this research identified significant data about the contribution of the sector, this should be shared with participants and the sector as a whole in order to support individual groups and collective development
- the sector should be encouraged to collect and collate further data and statistics. This should be supported with training to communicate the purposes and benefits of such an exercise and to achieve consistency in data.

3.18.   The sector needs a single portal in order to achieve a greater profile and a higher strategic impact. This would enable the sector to speak with a single voice and could act as the flag bearer for the cultural voluntary sector as a whole. The creation of a single navigating resource could contribute to the achievement of this, this idea is further explored in the recommendations relating to development.

3.19.   In addition to these actions, opportunities for celebration and advocacy should be explored. These actions should focus on communicating the value and benefits of the sector and on raising the sector's profile to participants and strategic bodies. These opportunities should be provided on a national, regional and local level. The same opportunities would also contribute to objectives related to renewal (through attracting new participants) and development (through providing networking opportunities). Specific ideas suggested in the consultation include:

- local cultural sector day providing a market style approach where groups can promote their activity to potential members, increase their local profile and network with other groups
- annual conferences providing national networking and strategic development opportunities
- day in Parliament – an opportunity to celebrate the sector at the highest national level and lobby elected members
- awards scheme rewarding quality, aspiration, good practice and development.

3.20. For all of these recommendations, it is important that they provide the opportunity for the whole cultural voluntary sector to come together creating a greater critical mass and a significant resource and voice.

Financial sustainability

3.21. The survey identified significant potential threats to long term viability for groups. The data showed the respondents to be heavily dependent on their own activity and resources for income generation, this ability to raise funds was considered to be restricted by the nature of the activity and market. While income was considered to have a cap, expenditure was reported to be rising in particular costs relating to venues and the operation and administration of groups rather than activity costs.

3.22. While 38% groups are currently self sufficient, the growing gap between income and expenditure has created a position whereby funding is seen as the main mechanism for achieving financial sustainability.

3.23. Funding generally was identified as the most pressing need for the survey respondents.

3.24.   The issues connected with funding include the bureaucracy, complexity and inflexibility of funding as well as the focus of the majority of funding opportunities on projects rather than core costs. Applying for funding is a particular challenge for voluntary groups because of issues connected with time and skill requirements.

3.25.   Many participants identified the aspiration to maximise the resources, skills and ability of the sector and to maintain self sufficiency and independence.

Financial sustainability recommendations

3.26.   The outcome of the following developments would be that:

- more groups are financially sustainable.

3.27.   Dedicated funding for voluntary cultural sector groups should continue to be provided. The opportunity to move towards more sustainable funding should be considered with the creation of medium term (3-5 year) funding with schemes remaining consistent in terms of title, conditions and priorities.

3.28.   Specific funding opportunities should be considered for particularly isolated communities such as island communities to cover the increased costs related to hire of professional services, travel and networking. The objective of these funding opportunities would be to support the development of cultural sector voluntary activity in these communities including development in quality and exposure to a diversity of experiences.

3.29.   As well as the provision of funding opportunities, there should be greater opportunities for dialogue about funding to reduce negative perceptions, increase success rates and create greater awareness. This is further explored in the recommendations relating to development.

3.30. In addition to direct subsidy, opportunities for indirect subsidy should be investigated.

3.31. The major opportunity would be the subsidy of venues. This would reduce the major source of expense incurred by groups enabling them to utilise the income generated from activity to improve the quality of their outputs. Subsidising venues directly also has the potential to reduce the inefficiency of the current situation where local authorities fund groups to enable them to buy space in local authority venues – both transactions being administered by the local authority. This would potentially increase the number of groups that could be self sufficient enabling them to utilise their time resources to explore other opportunities. It also would potentially change the relationship between the local authority and sector changing the focus to development partnerships.

3.32. There are also other opportunities that could be investigated for indirect subsidy such as creating schemes to reduce the costs of insurances or professional services. These could be offered via local or sectoral bodies.

3.33. Reflecting the independence and evident resourcefulness of the sector, there was a desire to maximise groups' ability to be self sufficient. While a reduction in venue costs could go some way to achieve this, investment should also be made into skills and capacity. This is further considered in the development section, however in financial terms this would include opportunities relating to training and resources to support committee development.

3.34. Concerns were expressed about the impacts of legislation both on renewal, development and financial sustainability. Further investigation should be undertaken to identify the financial implications of changes to tax, charities and other legislation and to identify any opportunities to minimise negative financial impacts on the voluntary cultural sector.

Renewal

3.35.   Overall 70% of respondents identified renewal as a pressing need for their organisation. This includes attracting members, audiences and committee members. The survey identified that there is spare capacity within groups with over a quarter of survey respondents finding it difficult to attract participants.

3.36.   Participants in the consultation identified the responsibility and time commitment required of committee members as a barrier. For audiences and members the competition for people's leisure time was cited.

3.37.   The consultation identified that the profile of members and audiences was aging and there was often a lack of turnover in terms of committee members.

3.38.   The target groups identified for renewal therefore were young people (strategically) and young retirees (practically).

3.39.   The consultation identified the importance of a proactive approach to development and dynamism in order to achieve positive renewal.

Renewal Recommendations

3.40.   The outcome of development in this area would be that:

- groups attract and retain members, audiences and committee members.

3.41.   The renewal of the sector would be supported by the options identified in the recognition theme relating to the profile of the sector and opportunities to raise the sector's profile locally and nationally.

3.42.   In addition renewal of committee members could be achieved through the initiative discussed in the section relating to development with better training making holding office more attractive and potentially resulting in transferable skills that would benefit individuals in their lives and careers. The introduction of resources outlining good practice could help groups achieve the dynamism and positive change that would support renewal.

3.43.   The consultation identified the importance of experiences and pathways. More opportunities to gain a diversity of experiences should be provided including schools providing young people with a broad grounding in culture that will inform their future lives. These experiences should not only comply with the formal curriculum requirements but reflect the diversity of Scotland's culture including, for example, heritage, archaeology, traditional Scottish culture and crafts as well as non western cultural traditions. Experiences should not only be provided to young people but opportunities should also be made available to other groups in society possibly at target points in their lives such as when retiring.

3.44.   As well as the provision of a diversity of experiences, pathways should be developed to enable the link to be made from an initial experience or interest and an ongoing participation. The development of new community schools could be a mechanism to achieve these pathways, providing a natural hub within communities and a natural home for information, activity and development.

Development

3.45.   The consultation identified an aspiration for development including the desire to attract more people, produce work of better quality and to offer new and more activities.

3.46.   However the aspirations for development were often prevented by a range of barriers including finance, venues and skills.

3.47.   Financial barriers, including the availability of funding, are examined separately.

3.48.   In terms of venues, issues identified included the availability of suitable venues which meet the needs of groups and audiences and the cost of venue hire.

3.49.   Contact with other groups and organisations provides opportunities for development by introducing new ideas, resources and opportunities. While the research identified the importance of contact with other local groups and the role of sector bodies in providing information, advice and expertise, it also found that up to a third of groups operate without any connections with other groups or organisations.

3.50.   Given the problems identified within the research (for example finance and renewal) it is not surprising that participants had considered the actions they could take to meet these challenges. However the participants identified that there were skills gaps which impacted on their ability to develop, these included:

- publicity
- audience development
- funding
- legislation
- committee skills.

3.51.   The consultation identified the existence of many resources to support the development of the sector, however these resources were not widely known by sector groups. As well as resources, participants emphasised the importance of personal interaction to encourage and facilitate development.

Development recommendations

3.52.   The outcome from intervention in this area would be:

- groups will have greater capacity and produce attractive activity of a high quality.

3.53.   In order to provide voluntary sector cultural groups with the information and advice they need the creation of a single resource should be identified. This would require the following actions

- identify and assess existing resources including
  - good practice
  - contacts/directories
  - information regarding: funding, promotion, audience development, committee structures, legal structures and legislation
- identify gaps in existing resources
- create a single portal that provides a navigation service to resources.

3.54.   This recommendation has several objectives:

- to overcome the fragmentation within the sector by creating a single resource for the voluntary cultural sector
- to provide a clear pathway to the required resources that overcomes the barrier of the lack of awareness of the support that already exists.

3.55.   The service should be provided nationally, be relevant to the entire sector and involve all the national, regional, local and sectoral bodies that have an involvement with the cultural voluntary sector.

3.56.   While the focus of this development would be the internet, some resources should be provided in other formats to be accessible to those without internet access or skills.

3.57.   The option of a human resource to develop and support the portal should be considered given the importance of this identified by participants. The human resource could be available to respond to questions, to direct and navigate and also to promote the service and be a flag bearer for the sector.

3.58.   The resource identified above would provide a help and enquiry service on a national level. However the consultation identified the importance of support and development on a local level. To achieve this local cultural voluntary sector development officer (development officer) positions should be created within local authorities.

3.59.   The development officers would have the following remit:

- to improve quality, aspiration and ambition through specific projects possibly connecting individual voluntary groups or making connections between the voluntary and professional sectors
- supporting groups in sustainability through the provision of training in: promotion, audience development, committee skills, impacts of legislation etc
- supporting groups in their ambitions through providing information and advice including specific advice on funding applications
- promoting the central information portal and navigating groups to relevant information
- raising the profile of the sector through collating information and creating a central focus

3.60.   These functions focus on the voluntary cultural sector groups, the development officer would also have a strategic remit. This could include:

- promoting and advocating within the local authority
- supporting connections between the cultural voluntary sector and cultural development, education, economic development and social work teams
- representing the sector in strategic planning including community planning.

3.61.   The local development officers should meet regularly, along with the central resource, in order to share ideas, experiences and keep up to date. The officers (and central resource) should be seen as a network providing support for each other and seeking to develop opportunities and partnerships for the benefit of individual groups and the sector as a whole.

3.62.   The creation of a single resource within each local authority area should reduce the current problems associated with navigating within the authority.

3.63.   It is vital that the development officers represent the entire voluntary cultural sector and not one particular sector of it.

3.64.   In addition to the creation of the national resource and local development officers, the opportunity to create local cultural fora for voluntary sector groups should also be considered.

3.65.   These fora (which again should encompass the entire voluntary cultural sector) would provide the opportunity for:

- networking
- information exchange
- the local sector to create a single voice and have a local impact
- planning – for example some of the advocacy projects.

3.66. The consultation identified the strength of resource available within the cultural voluntary sector including considerable expertise and experience. The aim of the fora is to galvanise this resource and support development from the interaction between groups and the sharing of experience.

3.67. Lack of appropriate venues has been identified as a barrier to development. Earlier we recommend that local authorities undertake comprehensive mapping of the local voluntary cultural sector. In addition this mapping should audit the venues available to support voluntary cultural activity. This audit would identify gaps in terms of venue provision and venues which are not fit for purpose. This should inform a capital investment strategy to support the voluntary cultural sector.

Relationship with the public sector

3.68. Development in this area would lead to the following outcome:

- the voluntary and public sector will form a genuine partnership to mutual benefit

3.69. The research identified the importance of the relationship between the voluntary cultural sector and public sector in particular with the local authority.

3.70. Local authorities provide funding, venues, act as the gatekeeper to further funding and often provide a development service. They provide one the key relationships and therefore are a potential source of information.

3.71. Voluntary sector cultural organisations provide significant activity and venues, without which the local authority would face gaps in provision. They provide a particularly significant resource in areas that do not benefit from a comprehensive professional cultural infrastructure. They fulfil public sector priorities in terms of cultural development, social development, economic regeneration and community wellbeing.

3.72.   However the consultation identified that barriers exist between the two sectors including a perception that engagement with the local authority results in a loss of independence. In addition there are specific barriers associated with the bureaucracy, complexity and availability of funding, the cost and availability of venues and issues connected to accessing officers within the local authority. There are also failings in terms of communication.

3.73.   There are specific concerns about access to enterprise funding to support voluntary sector organisations that have a proven economic development function within their local community.

Relationship with the public sector recommendations

3.74.   The first recommendation concerning the relationship with the public sector may fall outside the strict remit of this brief. Through the process of the research and consultation it is apparent that one of the biggest changes could be realised from the local authority making culture a strategic priority. The format for this would be through the community planning process with culture becoming one of the themes that the local authority and its partners is committed to achieving. This change in the attitude towards culture would impact upon the resources, partnerships and delivery of culture within local areas. This would have a positive impact upon the voluntary cultural sector.

3.75.   The voluntary cultural sector should have an involvement in cultural and community planning, ensuring that its voice is heard, contribution recognised and needs understood. The mechanism for achieving this could be through the development officer role identified above in association with the cultural fora.

3.76. Other recommendations detailed above would result in significant change in the relationship between the cultural voluntary sector and public sector including:

- subsidy of venues to reduce venue costs for cultural voluntary sector groups
- creation of development officer posts (supported by national resource)
- creation of local cultural fora

3.77. In addition public sector agencies should review their funding procedures to ensure that (while continuing to meet accountability requirements) they are as straightforward as possible and the language is clear.

3.78. These interventions should have the result of changing the relationship with the voluntary sector, making the local authority more of a development body, supporting and facilitating the sector. The focus of funding could move towards development and strategic projects. Communication would be improved and the opportunity would exist to begin to develop positive partnerships.

Overall recommendations

3.79. Therefore the overall recommendations for action include:

Culture

- making culture a strategic priority of local community plans
- investment in sector bodies to support the voluntary sector

Voluntary cultural sector – national level

- further research to map the sector including a specific methodology to include black and minority ethnic cultural groups
- collation and promotion of existing data
- creation of a single portal and supporting resource

- development of a collective advocacy programme
- specific funding opportunities to support development in isolated communities
- creation of medium term funding opportunities with consistent and simplified processes
- provision of cultural experiences in school and at various targeted life stages
- creation of pathways including development of schools as community hubs

Voluntary cultural sector – local level

- local cross cultural mapping including venue audit
- creation of voluntary sector cultural development officers
- provision of training opportunities
- subsidy of venue costs
- local promotion and advocacy programmes

Conclusion

3.80.   The voluntary cultural sector makes a significant contribution to culture in Scotland. Within individual communities the sector provides a diverse range of cultural opportunities which help sustain Scotland's culture and communities. The sector contains a wealth of experience, expertise and capacity which is evident in the scale of activity, the many successes in terms of quality and development and the aspirations to develop further.

3.81.   However the sector is facing serious challenges in particular those relating to financial sustainability and the ongoing renewal of members, audiences and committee members.

3.82.   In recognition of the contribution made to Scotland's culture, investment should be made into the sector to address some of the identified problems. Voluntary groups can make a small investment go a long way.