

## Arts and Culture

# Evaluation of the Cultural Pathfinder Programme in Scotland

EKOS

The Cultural Pathfinder Programme in Scotland was developed by the then Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government) as a way of supporting local authorities and their partners to explore ways of widening access to, and participation in, cultural activities across diverse communities. It supported 13 projects across Scotland and was intended to generate useful learning that could be shared across the local authority, Community Planning Partnerships and cultural sectors to inform future planning and delivery. In order to help capture this learning, the Scottish Government commissioned EKOS to conduct an independent evaluation of the Programme, focussed on strategic assessment of its impacts and of the lessons that could be applied to future planning processes. The evaluation included case study analyses of the 13 Pathfinder projects, supplemented by interviews with key partners and stakeholders.

## Main Findings

- The Programme supported a very diverse range of projects across Scotland, and explored a range of different methods for engaging communities in articulating their aspirations for culture and translating these into future planning activities.
- In total, it was estimated that the projects reached up to 1% of Scotland's population, gathering valuable information and feedback about community aspirations for culture. In particular, the Programme engaged a range of groups known to be under-represented in cultural participation.
- Projects developed and tested a wide-range of community consultation methods, and provided clear demonstration of the potential of well-designed and facilitated creative processes to allow people from often marginalised groups to express their views.
- The extent to which the projects achieved a significant and sustainable influence on local planning activities was variable, although those projects that succeeded in this respect typically did so through strong strategic intent, effective and senior level support and committed project management.
- The success of projects in engaging wider partners and Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in planning for cultural provision was variable, with some notable and significant achievements in areas such as Fife, the Western Isles, Perth and Kinross and Edinburgh. In these projects, the role of structures (existing or new) was important, as was the degree of commitment and senior level support.
- The quality and extent of evaluation at a project-level was inconsistent, despite the support provided by the Scottish Government through the Pathfinder Evaluation Toolkit and guidance and advice from analytical staff. There is room for improvement here, particularly if the cultural sector is to be able to demonstrate its wider role to CPPs and articulate its potential contribution in the context of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs).
- The Programme highlighted issues with varying levels of priority attached to culture in local authorities and CPPs, and demonstrated clearly that one size will not fit all. Successful cross-partner and cross-service planning for culture must be developed in line with local circumstances and priorities.

## Introduction

This report outlines the key findings of an independent evaluation of the Cultural Pathfinder Programme in Scotland.

The Programme was developed by the then Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government), and provided funding to local authorities and CPPs to enable them to explore new ways of encouraging participation in cultural activities and informing or influencing planning processes.

The Programme had three broad aims:

- to encourage participation in cultural activities amongst under-represented groups;
- to develop effective means of community consultation to inform the development of plans for cultural provision; and
- to explore planning methods for cultural provision and develop partnerships and links to Community Planning processes.

Thirteen projects were funded, of which 12 were managed by local authorities (one was managed by Scotland's Learning Partnership).

The projects varied considerably in terms of their ambition, scale and approach. While some targeted widespread consultation to gather information about community needs and aspirations for cultural provision, others adopted more practical programmes of cultural participation and engagement. All aspired to engage CPPs and promote the value of culture within a wider planning context.

In line with the Programme's intention to produce useful learning, projects were required to submit an evaluation plan and interim and final reports to the Scottish Government to account for their achievements and impacts.

### Aims of the Evaluation

The key objectives of this evaluation were to:

- conduct a case study analysis of each project;
- examine the processes supporting the programme;
- analyse the final outputs and outcomes of the Programme;
- highlight key lessons and good practice;
- assess the additionality of the Programme; and
- provide a view on the legacies of the Programme.

Throughout, the main focus of the evaluation was on identifying useful learning to inform and enhance future policy and practice.

## Study Method

The study method combined a desk-based review of the information supplied by projects with a broad programme of fieldwork. The method comprised the following tasks:

- desk review of materials supplied by the projects (applications, evaluation plans, interim and final reports, as available);
- 62 depth interviews with Pathfinder managers, local authority and CPP partners and national stakeholders;
- case study analysis of each project drawing both on the desk review and the consultation outputs; and
- final review and analysis, including a workshop with Pathfinder managers and production of the final report and case studies.

## Findings

The main findings of the evaluation are structured around the three broad aims for the Programme. The overall conclusion is that the Programme performed well against its first two aims, with achievement of the third more mixed.

### Participation

It was estimated that the 13 projects engaged up to 1% of Scotland's population, and reached a cross-section of groups known to be experiencing barriers to cultural participation or the range of cultural activities available. This included children/young people, older people, black and minority ethnic communities, people living in deprived neighbourhoods, people with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

The case studies highlighted a number of lessons with regards to encouraging participation by marginalised groups and/or excluded communities, as follows:

- informality and a non-judgemental approach allows participants to find their own cultural interests and helps sustain participation;
- allowing communities to inform and shape cultural provision, albeit within defined boundaries and frameworks, builds ownership and commitment;
- the means of creative engagement are important, and tailoring provision to the needs of different groups requires flexibility;
- place is important, and taking culture out of traditional venues and into local community settings was effective in encouraging participation in many projects;

- embedding cultural activity in the community helps build familiarity and trust and can overcome some of the known barriers to participation;
- the skills and personal qualities of those involved in the delivery of cultural activities are crucial – both creative practitioners and project managers played pivotal roles in this respect;
- working with existing groups, partners and representatives within communities facilitates access and helps build trust and participation;
- targeting directly specific barriers to cultural participation (eg transport, cost) can be a useful way of engaging people in new activities; and
- the Pathfinder Programme also provided useful learning about the role of culture as a medium of engaging the community in civic processes.

## Community Consultation

The means of consultation varied significantly across the supported projects, and ranged from more traditional methods (eg surveys, public meetings) to creative approaches (eg drama, film and other creative processes). Some projects also targeted entire communities while others focussed on specific groups.

Across the Programme, there were examples of good practice in relation to effective community consultation. In particular, the evidence suggests that well-designed and facilitated creative processes can help engage people from often marginalised groups, providing them with the confidence to make their voices heard.

## Planning for culture and Community Planning

With respect to the third aim of the Programme, the achievement of the Pathfinder projects was more variable. Those projects that were most successful in achieving wider strategic engagement and in developing stronger links into Community Planning processes and structures shared important characteristics:

- they were strategic in their intent from the outset, and sought early engagement with key partners and maintained this throughout;
- commitment and leadership were evident at different levels, from delivery and project management to senior level support;
- they were able to build on existing partnerships in which there was either a willingness to engage with culture, or a sufficiently experienced and influential team making the case to the wider partners;

- culture was defined in broad terms, and not just as arts development;
- there was a clear demonstration and articulation to partners of the wider role of culture and the broader outcomes it could help to deliver; and
- there was recognition of the need to work with or develop appropriate structures to facilitate partnership working and engage wider Community Planning processes.

However, a number of contextual factors limited the strategic impacts of some of the Pathfinder projects and hampered engagement with CPPs. These included:

- variable status and profile of culture across the CPPs – some Pathfinder projects faced a very difficult task in engaging CPPs in discussions about culture;
- lack of clear structures for engaging partners and communicating with CPPs and/or lack of mature or well-developed CPPs in certain areas; and
- varied levels of priority attached to culture within local authorities, making it difficult to secure commitment to take forward the outputs of Pathfinder work.

While it is still too early to assess the extent to which the work of every Pathfinder project will influence future planning, the evidence suggests that plans to build on the outputs were being considered in most projects.

## Legacies

The Programme was designed to be strategic, and the aspiration was that projects would create a strategic legacy that would support and enhance cultural provision in each of the Pathfinder areas. However, not all projects were successful in developing longer-term mechanisms for productive strategic engagement with partners on issues relating to culture.

Nevertheless, important legacies of the Programme include:

- new partnership structures with responsibility for developing the interface with CPPs and driving forward cultural strategy in Fife, the Western Isles and potentially in Perth and Kinross;
- recognition of culture within the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) in Fife, and substantial additional investment in culture in the region by the local authority;
- a new cultural mapping project to inform a refreshed cultural strategy in Perth and Kinross (influenced by the Pathfinder);

- interest in the development of a National Theatre of Scotland for older people (arising from the project managed by Scotland's Learning Partnership, SLP);
- improved connections between cultural organisations and communities in both Dundee and Dumfries and Galloway;
- a new Cultural Pledge for Edinburgh and wider partner commitment to taking this forward through strong links with Community Planning and the SOA;
- a legacy fund of £125,000 for the Highland Promise;
- increased profile for culture in all participating authorities;
- strong cross-service links, new partnerships and increased profile for culture-led regeneration in Clackmannanshire; and
- the creation of a substantial bank of knowledge about the value of cultural participation, ways to achieve it through effective consultation, and the role of culture across a broad range of policy areas.

### Additionality

The level of additionality achieved by the Programme was strong. Of the 13 projects supported, eight would not have happened at all without Pathfinder funding. Furthermore, while work may have taken place in some shape or form in the remaining five cases, the Pathfinder Programme enabled delivery on a larger scale and/or to a higher standard of quality.

### Management Issues

The evaluation found management at the Programme-level to be transparent, robust and supportive.

Although management at project-level was also generally sound, the quality of project evaluation work was more variable. In particular, there was room for improvement in the planning, delivery and reporting of evaluation, despite the support provided by the Scottish Government in this area.

This is an important area for further development. If culture is to successfully engage a wider range of partners, it must be able to demonstrate its impacts in a way that is clear, robust and credible.

## Overall Assessment

The Cultural Pathfinder Programme was a useful and productive exercise that explored a range of approaches to community engagement and planning for culture. It has largely achieved its aims and, in addition to the impacts and legacies of the projects, it has identified important lessons about how to engage communities and planning partners in culture.

In wider policy terms, the Pathfinder experience should prove valuable. The Scottish Government is clear that its role is not to dictate to local authorities about how budgets should be spent, but rather it has agreed outcomes to be delivered, as articulated through the SOAs.

As the SOAs are agreed with CPPs from 2009/10, it is important that the cultural sector in its broadest sense is able to engage productively with this process, demonstrating clearly its potential contribution to identified outcomes. The Pathfinder Programme has provided much in the way of useful learning about how this engagement might proceed.

This document, along with "Evaluation of the Cultural Pathfinder Programme in Scotland" the full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, or would like further copies of this research findings summary document or the full research report, please contact us at [socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or on 0131-244 7560.



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