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THE COUNCIL OF REGIONAL ARTS ASSOCIATIONS

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ADC 'Arts & The Districts'

relevant chapter - see 2.10 & 6.1

Chris

with compliments

chapter include Exhibition Payment Night, Festival for Arts, and Arts in Town
Areas.

2. THE WILDING REVIEW

2.1 In December 1988 Richard Luce, the Minister for the Arts, announced a review of the structure and organisation of support of the arts in England. In a Parliamentary written answer he said

"I believe that the time has come to review the existing structure in the light of recent changes and present developments ... The review will be primarily concerned with the structure of support, and the way in which the various parts of the system fit together. It will be conducted on the basis that the arm's length principle will continue to govern the allocation of money within a given total and the making of artistic judgements, and that a substantial amount of decision-making should continue to take place at the regional level".

The review is being conducted by Mr Richard Wilding, who retired at the end of 1988 as Head of the Office of Arts and Libraries.

2.2 Mr Luce set out his thoughts about the review at greater length in a letter to the Chairman of the Arts Council, Lord Rees-Mogg, whose term of office ends in March 1989, when he is to be succeeded by Mr Peter Palumbo. In this letter, the Minister reviews some of the major developments of the last five years - the growth in funding, the 'Glory of the Garden' strategy, the abolition of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan counties, the promotion of management, marketing and training, the significant growth of support for the arts in the private sector and by local authorities, and incentive funding - and argues that these have made it

"appropriate and timely to consider whether the existing arrangements and structure for the support and funding of the arts through the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations can be improved".

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE WILDING REVIEW AND OTHER POLICY ISSUES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In this final chapter, a number of policy issues not covered elsewhere in the report are examined. The most significant - and topical - of these is the Wilding Review which is taking place during the first half of 1989. This Review involves a fundamental reappraisal of the structure and funding of the Arts Council and the RAAs, which may have very significant implications for local authorities. The Association's formal response to the Review forms paragraphs 2.5 - 2.10 of this chapter. The other policy issues addressed in the chapter include Exhibition Payment Right, Percent for Art, and Arts in Rural Areas.

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"appropriate and timely to consider whether the existing arrangements and structure for the support and funding of the arts through the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations can be improved".

Mr Luce reaffirms the importance of devolution from the Arts Council to the regions, but questions whether the present level of devolution is the correct one. The main foci of the review are stated to be as follows:

(a) Accountability

... "under the present system, although officers of the (Arts) Council and the RAAs work closely together, the Associations are not directly accountable to the Arts Council for the ways in which they allocate and spend Council money within their regions and for the value which they get for it. I should like to examine whether a clearer relationship between the RAAs, the Arts Council and central government can be devised which involves agreed plans and objectives and correspondingly strengthened accountability for their use of voted money".

(b) Coherence of Funding Policy

This section addresses the situation in which in any region both the Arts Council and the RAA may be dealing separately with client bodies.

"Different Arts Council and RAA schemes for the support of individual artists cause confusion. The policies and priorities of the Arts Council and the RAA may differ, sometimes considerably. I should like to examine whether a revised system, which could include some readjustment of funding responsibilities, would encourage a greater coherence in the formulation and delivery of policies for the funding and development of the arts".

(c) Improved Structure and Procedures

The government reaffirms its belief in this section that the "effective handling of business" and the representation of interests do not necessarily mix easily. In the water and health 'industries', for example, government has recently further separated these two elements, with a proposal that district councils should no longer have representation on District Health Authorities, which could then become small boards, free to manage in a businesslike way. Mr Luce suggests that RAA meetings are attended by "very large numbers", to the detriment of considering long-term issues.

"I am looking for proposals on the function and membership of the bodies concerned which will make decisions easier to reach as well as tackling the issues of greater accountability and coherence".

(d) Administrative Economy

This section emphasises the need for "maximum efficiency and economy", and the Minister makes clear that one of the criteria by which he will judge any proposals for change will be the extent to which they produce "worthwhile savings in administrative costs".

(e) The Regional Structure

While stating that he has an open mind on the issue, Mr Luce raises the possibility of changes in the number, geographical area, and structure of the RAAs.

- 2.4 The Association has been consulted formally about the matters raised in the Minister's letter to Lord Rees-Mogg, and paragraphs 2.5 to 2.10 below represent the ADC's formal response to Mr Wilding.
- 2.5 The ADC welcomes the decision of the Arts Minister to commission a review of the structure and organisation for support of the arts in England. It is, however, noted with some concern that there is not a single mention of local authority support for the arts in either the press release announcing the review or in the Minister's letter to the Chairman of the Arts Council. At a time when local government is recognised as providing the most important single source of financial support for the arts, as well as being responsible directly or indirectly for the greater part of grass roots service delivery, it is difficult to see how central government funding can be considered in isolation. It is hoped that Richard Wilding will have due regard for the vital role played by local authorities in this field.
- 2.6 It must be stressed that the Association would fiercely oppose any reduction in the degree of devolution to the regions. Despite the Minister's statement that "a substantial amount of decision-making should continue to take place at the regional level", it is clear that there is a tension between the conflicting claims of regional devolution and central accountability. Accountability is clearly important both in respect of the Arts Council itself and of the RAAs, and the Association is not opposed to moves to strengthen RAA accountability, but this can and should be done in ways which do not result in a major re-centralisation of arts funding. If the latter were to occur, the maintenance of regional vitality and individuality which has characterised the work of the RAAs would be lost.
- 2.7 In respect of 'coherence' of arts funding, it may well be of benefit to the arts in general if the priorities of the RAAs and the Arts Council differ from time to time. Regional needs will inevitably vary significantly throughout the country, and a rigidly uniform response might well stifle arts development. The Association is, however, attracted by Lord Rees-Mogg's concept of a 'single system' which would involve the Arts Council and the RAAs working closer together whilst maintaining their independence. This should not be seen as a takeover in either direction but would inevitably involve more devolution to the RAAs with increased regional representation throughout the Arts Council's committee structure, and possibly with the RAA Chairmen serving as members of the Arts Council.
- 2.8 The Association notes the intention to examine the number and geographical areas of regional bodies and accepts that any new funding and organisational structure is likely to involve a reduction in the number of RAAs from the existing twelve. In this regard, the importance of the partnership between district councils and RAAs cannot be overemphasised. While there may well

be a good case for arts funding in such areas as London and Merseyside to be administered within a wider regional context, a wholesale reduction in the number of Regional Arts Associations would severely restrict accessibility by district councils to the advisory support services which form the cornerstone of the working partnership at grass roots level. The ADC would therefore consider any proposal to cut the number of RAAs to six, which has been advocated in some quarters, as being unacceptable.

- 2.9 The Association has some sympathy with the Minister's argument about RAA meetings being attended by "very large numbers". Similar bodies, such as Regional Councils for Sport & Recreation and Regional Tourist Boards, have voluntarily addressed the same issue, and some have been restructured to provide a combination of a small executive committee and a larger, more representative forum. It may be appropriate to encourage RAAs to consider something similar, but it should be done on a voluntary basis. The Association does not believe that it would be appropriate for the government to insist on the kind of 'small board' managerialist approach which it has forced on health and water authorities in recent years, particularly as such 'rationalisations' tend to exclude or marginalise local authorities who are essential working partners of the RAAs and whose contribution needs to be fully recognised and protected.

- 2.10 Finally, in the present arts funding climate, the Association sees absolutely no logic in the maintenance of a separate Crafts Council and the need for the continued existence of the British Film Institute must also be questioned. Consequently the ADC strongly advocates the amalgamation of the Arts Council and the Crafts Council, which despite the grass roots nature of craft work has done little to address regional needs. Much the same can be said of the BFI although it is accepted that the film industry may be able to deploy some persuasive arguments in favour of its retention.

3. PERCENT FOR ART

- 3.1 In March 1988 the Arts Council approved a proposal to support and give wide publicity to the 'Percent for Art' approach to raising additional funds for the visual arts. The campaign complements the Arts Council's initiative on Urban Renaissance, described in Chapter 4.

3.2 Percent for Art is

"the means by which a proportion of capital expenditure on the construction of a new building or building refurbishment is devoted to the provision of works of art, craft or decoration in that building or its environments".

In the same way that many of the initiatives in business sponsorship currently being adopted in this country have their origins in the United States, Percent for Art is a well-tried technique there too. It has been incorporated into the legislation of 21 of the states in the U.S. and into the bye-laws of 81 cities.

- 3.3 Local authorities play a key role in Percent for Art, because of their planning functions, and involvement in economic development. What normally happens is that, following encouragement by the planning authority, a property developer assigns an agreed proportion of the costs of development to a commissioning body, which engages in some degree of public consultation before deciding how to use the money.
- 3.4 Percent for Art is just beginning to attract support in the UK: a number of local authorities have committed themselves to the principle (eg. Lewisham, Oxfordshire County Council and Edinburgh) while Birmingham City Council has committed one percent of the £90 million cost of the Birmingham International Convention Centre Building and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra concert hall for art, and has appointed an independent commissioning agency to handle it.
- 3.5 The Arts Council, recognising the government's antipathy to the imposition of controls on developers and business more generally, has decided not to press for statutory backing for Percent for Art. Ironically, the United States - so often looked to as the model of free enterprise capitalism - has numerous examples of states and cities which have given statutory backing to the scheme, starting with the city of Philadelphia in 1958.
- 3.6 How, then, can Percent for Art be made to work if not by statutory means? Any attempt by a local authority to make Percent for Art a condition of planning permission would be open to challenge in the courts, on the ground that it is not a 'material consideration' for development. The Arts Council has, however, obtained a Counsel's Opinion (from Robert Carnwath QC) which argues that while the promotion of art as such is not a proper function of planning control, local authorities are able, in exercising their planning functions, to
- "take into account the contribution which the creative arts can make to the external appearance of buildings, and to the physical environment generally".
- Carnwath makes much of the analogy of landscaping conditions imposed as an element of planning permissions.
- 3.7 Carnwath also argues that if a local authority wishes to encourage a more positive approach to the inclusion of works of art, it would be sensible for the Local Plan to make reference to this, and he suggests the following wording:
- "The local planning authority will in appropriate cases encourage the provision of new works of art as part of schemes of development and in determining an application for planning permission will have regard to the contribution made by any such works to the appearance of the scheme and to the amenities of the area".
- 3.8 The Association believes that Percent for Art is a valuable initiative which should improve the quality of the built environment, and supports the Arts

Council's view that it can only be done through encouragement, backed up by the inclusion of appropriately worded endorsements within local plans.

4. EXHIBITION PAYMENT RIGHT

4.1 Exhibition Payment Right (EPR) is the name of an initiative promoted by the Arts Council and the RAAs on behalf of the 35,000 or so professional artists working in Britain.

4.2 The philosophy which underlies EPR is that artists should be paid for services which they provide for the public. In the words of Sir Roy Strong,

"It is only fair that museums, galleries and art centres should pay living artists a fee when their works are exhibited in public".

4.3 A scheme already exists whereby a number of museums, galleries and arts centres pay a fee to artists when they exhibit their work, and this scheme has the support of the RAAs. There are, however, many public exhibition venues where no fee is paid. The current rate of £100 for an exhibition of one person's work was fixed nearly a decade ago.

4.4 Those who advocate EPR point to the less generous treatment received by artists as compared with many other workers in the cultural industries. Choreographers, composers and other creative artists are paid for their work, through fees and royalties, and, in recent years, writers have received payment under the Public Lending Right (PLR) scheme, which has statutory backing, whenever the public borrows their books from a public library. It is argued, by analogy, that exhibitions of artists' works can be considered as a 'rental' of work, or as the equivalent of a 'performance' for public enjoyment.

4.5 There was considerable sympathy for the principles underlying EPR when it was discussed by the Association's Tourism and Leisure Committee in 1988. The reservations which were expressed focussed mainly on the possibility of sales arising from the exhibition of an artist's work: some members of the Committee felt that where the exhibition involved the sale of works, EPR was inappropriate, whereas an exhibition of work known in advance to be not for sale would have a much stronger case.

4.6 The Association has not taken an overall view about whether EPR should be extended, or increased in value, believing that it is properly a matter for individual districts, and for discussion among districts at RAA level, but would be interested in the reactions of member districts to the scheme and the case put forward in favour of its extension.

5. ARTS IN RURAL AREAS

5.1 Reference has been made on many occasions throughout this report to the fact that a large number of the Association's member districts are predominantly rural in character, with scattered populations, and only small urban centres. The importance which this report - particularly in Chapter 5 on the Performing Arts - has attached to touring, as a means by which

professional performances of high quality can be seen by people living away from the larger urban centres, is an indication of the Association's concern for the importance of the arts in the more rural parts of England and Wales.

- 5.2 The ADC has warmly welcomed, therefore, the research project undertaken in recent months on arts in rural areas by Sally Stote, a regional officer of the Arts Council, and looks forward to its publication later this year. The Association has been consulted on the project, and has given some assistance. Other bodies which have played an important role include the Rural Development Commission; the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO); the RAAs; and ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England).
- 5.3 The aims of the research are to collect information on arts initiatives taken in rural areas in the 1980s in order to identify examples of good practice, including the use of village halls; to produce a booklet, or a video, aimed at rural communities, parish councils and local arts groups in rural areas, giving guidance and suggesting ways in which they can become involved in and support the arts; and to suggest ways in which the Arts Council might be able to develop and support this area of work.
- 5.4 The early indications from this valuable research project confirm what this report has already suggested: that the arts are flourishing in rural areas, with a rich variety of projects and partnerships. There are many good examples of village hall touring (eg. in Lincolnshire, Humberside, Hampshire, Somerset and Warwickshire); some excellent theatre companies working mainly in rural areas (eg. Durham Theatre Company, Orchard Theatre Company, Forest Forge, Welfare State Bus, Proteus, and Pentabus); imaginative use of artists (eg. artists at Grisedale in Cumbria, a village hall mural project at Hellafield in Yorkshire); archive and heritage initiatives (eg. the Beaford Photographic Archive, and others in Yorkshire and East Anglia, involving the collection of old films showing a traditional way of life); arts projects emphasising the involvement of village communities, such as that at Howden in Humberside, which started as a one-off event (a community play) but grew into a well-established programme of arts activities, and at Bentham in Yorkshire, which now boasts an annual pantomime, a community newspaper and a poetry festival; and a whole range of other projects and venues, from storytellers in South Herefordshire, community arts teams (eg. Mobile Arts in Wiltshire), to some first-class arts centres catering for rural populations (eg. Beaford in Devon, Wells-next-the-Sea in Norfolk, and the Brewery at Kendal).
- 5.5 Partnership in the arts has been a theme running through this report: nowhere is it more important than in rural areas, where scarce resources need to be pooled and shared for the community's benefit. Sally Stote's research has certainly emphasised the significance of partnership between district councils, Rural Community Councils, parish councils, county councils, the Rural Development Commission, Regional Tourist Boards, the Countryside Commission, the Forestry Commission, WEA and extra-mural departments, the Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation, and, of course, the Regional Arts Association.

- 5.6 Other important issues emerging from the study include the need for resources (eg. portable staging, lighting and sound equipment) to be easily available to borrow or hire; the need to develop arts activities involving young people, as part of a strategy of encouraging them to stay in the area (the Arts Council is already involved in such an initiative through joint funding of an arts development officer with Youth Centres UK); and the problem of transport in rural areas (see above, Chapter 5, paragraph 5.7).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Association

- * welcomes the Wilding Review as an important and timely examination of arts funding and the structure of arts organisations.
- * notes with concern the lack of any mention of the importance of local authority funding in the publicity and correspondence relating to the Review.
- * recommends strongly that there is no reduction in devolution to the regions, while accepting that a tighter form of accountability between the RAAs and the Arts Council is desirable.
- * recommends also that any change in the number and boundaries of RAAs be handled with the greatest sensitivity, and that the minimum number of RAAs following any reorganisation should be no less than eight.
- * recommends that RAAs consider their internal structure and methods of working in order to see whether more streamlined decision-making processes can be introduced without significant loss of representation.
- * recommends that the Crafts Council be merged with the Arts Council, and that the separate existence of the British Film Institute be examined closely.
- * urges member district councils to give consideration to the Percent for Art scheme and the principle of Exhibition Payment Right
- * draws attention to the richness and diversity of arts provision and arts initiatives in rural areas.