A Culture Strategy for Scotland

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
https://beta.gov.scot/privacy/

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

☐ Individual

☒ Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

SURF – Scotland's Regeneration Forum

Phone number

0141 440 6393

Address

Orkney Street Enterprise Centre 18-20 Orkney Street, Glasgow

Postcode

G51 2BX

Email

derek@surf.scot

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

☒ Publish response with name

☐ Publish response only (without name)

☐ Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

☒ Yes

☐ No

SURF

Scotland's Regeneration Forum

SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice

SURF's Response to the Culture Strategy for Scotland Consultation

1.   Background

As Scotland's Regeneration Forum, SURF promotes cross-sector dialogue, shared learning and practical cooperation towards improved community regeneration policy and practice. SURF's focus is on the most productive processes and connections in support of the more successful and sustainable regeneration of Scotland's most disadvantaged communities.

The learning outcomes generated from 25 years of SURF's work indicates that successful regeneration is:

- rooted in the particular identity, culture, assets and connections of people and places;
- based on the meaningful involvement of the community of focus in both planning and delivery;
- a collaborative long-term process, which takes decades rather than months;
- a mechanism for appropriately linking local circumstances and assets to wider policies and resources.[v]

The first of those essential elements reflects the results of SURF's research, dialogue and a substantial body of evidence based on a wide range of practical examples from its nationwide networks. Much of this evidence been identified and promoted via two decades of the Scottish Government supported SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration.[vi]

The cultural dynamic of successful regeneration has been a longstanding feature of the SURF Awards process. SURF works closely with relevant national agencies including Creative Scotland, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund in Scotland in productively linking national cultural policy and resources with cultural assets and aspirations in local communities.

SURF's aim in doing so is to help maximise the added value created when cultural activities and venues are used to support and complement community regeneration aspirations for specific places and communities. That previously undervalued dynamic has come to the fore as a highly valuable counterweight to the degenerative effects of rootlessness in communities struggling with wider forces that are producing an increasingly atomised and unequal society.

SURF has explored those productive connections through: a 'Bridging Culture and Regeneration' seminar programme; the identification of successful initiatives via a dedicated 'Creative Regeneration' category, introduced in 2012, within the SURF Awards; and through collaborations with Creative

Scotland, one of our long-term key delivery partners, who share our interests in enhancing the links between the policy agendas for supporting the creative arts and place-based regeneration.

A SURF Manifesto for Community Regeneration was produced in advance of the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections to promote SURF network views on policy priorities. It argued that the role of cultural organisations as strategic partners in regeneration plans is generally underdeveloped in Scotland.[i]

SURF welcomed subsequent commitments by the Scottish Government to develop and deliver a new Cultural Strategy in the fifth session of the Scottish Parliament. The roots of the Cultural Strategy lie in the 2016 Scottish National Party Manifesto, which stated:

> *"We will develop Scotland's first ever culture strategy based on the principles of access, equity and excellence."* [ii]

Upon being re-elected as a minority Scottish Government administration following the 2016 Scottish Parliament election, the commencing of work on a National Culture Strategy was highlighted in the 2016-17 Programme for Government. It reported that the new Strategy would support wider Scottish Government ambitions for greater community empowerment and more inclusive economic growth:

> *"[The Strategy] will build on the existing strengths of the cultural and creative sector to... enhance the vital role of arts and culture in empowering communities... [and] encourage sustainable and inclusive growth."* [iii]

The development of the Strategy was informed by pre-consultation activity over the six months to December 2017. SURF made a formal contribution to this 'Culture Conversations' stakeholder engagement process, highlighting the value of community arts activities to communities with severe social and economic challenges, and documenting several challenges and opportunities around collaborative potential between creative arts and regeneration practitioners that the new Strategy could usefully address.[iv]

A three month formal consultation on the Culture Strategy was launched by the Scottish Government in June 2018. The following sections of this paper feature SURF responses to selected set questions.[v]

2.   The Scottish Government's Vision for Culture

Question: What is your view of the vision as set out in the strategy? What do you like or dislike or what would you change?

The vision rightly highlights the social, economic and historical importance of culture to contemporary Scotland. It articulates the value of the creative arts and heritage to many important areas of everyday life, from community empowerment and mental wellbeing to education and tourism. It acknowledges the fundamental and challenging ambition of making good quality cultural opportunities available for all.

These assertions could be usefully supported by evidence in the form of brief examples of good practice and imaginative responses. SURF can provide numerous examples of positive impacts in the development and delivery cultural activities in Scotland's most deprived communities. Some of these are cited in section three of this consultation response.

Considerations of place are relatively weakly referenced in the vision text. A statement acknowledging the value of cultural features and opportunities to place-based Scottish Government targets, such as improving people's perceptions of their neighbourhood, would be a welcome addition. A later section of

the consultation paper makes the following important point, which could usefully be strengthened by a reference in the vision:

"Culture… creates distinct identities for communities – making them attractive to live in, work in, study in, invest in and visit" [v]

SURF agrees, and shares the Scottish Government's desire to see more places that people want to live in, and which nourish the quality of life for everyone within their sphere of influence. We agree that arts, culture and heritage are an important part of everyone's way of life, at all levels of society across Scotland.

Appreciation of the wider operating context is vital for an adequately realistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities that can help or hinder the strategy. Currently, this section makes no reference to reduced public expenditure across Scotland and the UK and the disproportionate impact on people and enterprises living and working in already disadvantaged places. Clearly, that reality creates a much more challenging operating context for the strategy. Again, this is highlighted later in the consultation paper, but not in the vision.

It is a question of concern for many in the SURF network as to how achievable the broad aim of the vision – "to embed and elevate culture's position across society" – is in the context of a small and reducing share of local and national government budgets being invested in support of accessible and participatory cultural activity.[v]

If culture is to fulfil its potential in support of wider physical, social and economic regeneration aims, there is a need for support in identifying and coordinating authentic cultural assets and aspirations at the local level. Most local authorities in Scotland have shed valuable arts and culture related posts since the 2008 financial crash and resulting austerity-related policy and budget decisions.

These posts played a key role in ensuring that culture played its productive part in the local mix of regeneration responses, from development of the built environment to supporting community cohesion and the health and wellbeing agenda. The vision should acknowledge this reality and elaborate on how the aims can realistically be achieved without the local support network that has existed in the recent past.

3.   Monitoring and Impact

Question: The final culture strategy will highlight where individuals, communities, and organisations are already working towards the vision, ambition and aims of the strategy. Please provide details of any examples of good work and best practice, from Scotland or internationally, that you think could be included in the final strategy. We are interested in a range of different approaches.

At the community level, community arts groups provide appropriate and accessible opportunities for people to build networks, confidence, skills, social connections by sharing knowledge and providing activities based on local heritage and assets.

These activities also contribute to significant increases in social cohesion, pride of place, employability prospects and mental wellbeing, as demonstrated by winners of the SURF Awards' 'Creative Regeneration' category, such as North Edinburgh Arts, The Portal (Govan, Glasgow), RIG Arts (Greenock) & The Stove Network (Dumfries).[vi]

The SURF Awards are delivered by SURF in partnership with the Scottish Government, and the 'Creative Regeneration' category is supported by Creative Scotland. SURF has produced full profiles of 18

initiatives that have been shortlisted for the 'Creative Regeneration' SURF Award since the category was introduced in 2012. These profiles are available on the SURF website.[vi]

At a larger scale, 'City of Culture' bidding processes and the development of major cultural attractions such as the Dundee V&A Museum, Glasgow's Emirates Arena and Riverside Museum, Falkirk's Kelpies, and Perth Theatre have been successfully used to attract major public & private investments in wider physical regeneration masterplans.

The combination of those growing local and national shared cultural enterprises reflect an enhanced awareness of the potential of culture to sustain identities and share common values.

Question: What can you or your organisation do to support the vision, aims, ambitions and actions of the strategy?

Participative artistic and cultural activity have a vital role in supporting more successful and sustainable responses to social, physical and economic problems in poor communities across Scotland. As Scotland's Regeneration Forum, SURF works through its cross-sector networks to enhance shared understanding and cooperative action aimed at enhancing the mutually beneficial links between the culture and place-based regeneration policy agendas.

In working with others to identify and challenge the drivers of poverty and inequality as the main drivers of degeneration, SURF promotes – and actively supports – the use of creative, cultural approaches enhance community cohesion and enterprise.

SURF's unique network enables it to intelligently and appropriately link such cultural dimensions to the widely shared aspirations for more sustainable communities based on inclusive economies and participative social and democratic activity. In doing so, it is able to provide contemporary examples of the interaction of local challenges and assets with regional and national policies and resources. These examples include infrastructure investment, public service improvement, strengthening local democracy, supporting community empowerment and asset transfer, social enterprise development and town centre regeneration.

SURF's diverse activities programme will continue to explore what shared interests and mutually supportive aims could be more closely and productively connected between policy and practice in place-based regeneration, and the new cultural strategy.

Question: What do you think success for the strategy will look like?

The strategy, once delivered, should demonstrate meaningful progress towards the vision. Additional challenges and opportunities identified by the SURF network, which the strategy could usefully show impact in addressing, include:

- Some areas of public policy and service, such as primary school education, are relatively enthusiastic about culture, others less so. The aims and operation of all public institutions can benefit from active engagement with cultural activity.

- Cultural poverty and geo-demographic disconnections are still not being adequately recognised or addressed in policy-making and resource investments.

- Notwithstanding some good examples, we could generally make more, and more creative use of existing cultural assets, such as libraries, cinemas and museums.

- Scotland can always learn from international exemplars in cultural regeneration.

- Finally, more needs to be done to challenge those who view culture as a 'pleasant' but ultimately superficial aspect of modern Scotland. SURF has worked hard to make this argument, including to significant practitioners in fields associated with the economic policy and the built

environment. Those efforts remain a fundamental component of our shared efforts towards better outcomes in inclusive economic growth, education, health & wellbeing, social justice and place-making.

Question: How do you think this strategy might impact upon people on low incomes, people living in deprived areas, people in material deprivation, people with no/low wealth and people from different socio-economic backgrounds?

SURF event discussions have highlighted the 'invisible barriers' that prevent people from deprived neighbourhoods from visiting and engaging with conventional cultural institutions. It is an unfortunate reality that a significant gulf has developed between the custodians of culture and the greater mass of people in many of Scotland's towns and cities.

The wider long-term context of deindustrialisation has contributed to a considerable loss of work-based identity, social community connections and local cultural venues. To some degree, recent developments including the 2014 Referendum on Scottish Independence has given a boost to the reconsideration of local as well as national culture.

SURF is well aware that the business of reinventing place purpose and developing sustainable local economies is a difficult and challenging one. The Scottish Government, Creative Scotland and other protagonists have the opportunity to meaningfully emphasise the importance of culture as medium of participation, social cohesion and rediscovering tangible and intangible assets on which appropriate, productive and sustainable futures can be built in Scotland's socially and economically challenged places.

End of Response; references follow

Andy Milne, Chief Executive
Derek Rankine, Policy and Participation Manager
September 2018

4.   References

[i] Milne, A. & Rankine, D., 2016, *Planning Ahead for Regeneration: SURF's 2016 Manifesto for Community Regeneration*, Glasgow: SURF. Available at: https://www.surf.scot/projects/2016-manifesto/

[ii] Scottish National Party, 2016, *Manifesto 2016: Stronger for Scotland*, Glasgow; Saltire Print. Available at: https://www.snp.org/manifesto_2016

[iii] The Scottish Government, 2016, *A Plan for Scotland: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2016-17*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government/APS Group Scotland. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00505210.pdf

[iv] Rankine, D., 2017, *SURF's Response to the Scottish Government's Cultural Strategy Consultation*, Glasgow: SURF. Available at: https://www.surf.scot/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/SURF-Response-to-the-Scottish-Government-Cultural-Strategy.pdf

[v] The Scottish Government, 2018, *A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Draft for Consultation*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government/APS Group Scotland. Available at: https://consult.gov.scot/culture-tourism-and-major-events/culture-strategy/user_uploads/sct05186154381.pdf

[vi] Profiles of all initiatives highlighted in the annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration are available on the SURF website: https://www.surf.scot/surf-awards/awards-by-year/