

maiden voyage

Maiden Voyage

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Melanie McGinnis
Economic Policy Unit
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27 November 2007

Dear Melanie McGinnis

Re: Response to Draft Budget 2008-2011

I am writing to urge the Executive to increase the amount of funding allocated to the arts in the draft Budget. It is an accepted principle in other places in the world that arts and cultural activity are vital components in social, economic and cultural regeneration, yet their contribution to building a new Northern Ireland is not adequately reflected in the proposed budget.

Maiden Voyage is one of only two professional dance companies in Northern Ireland and provides opportunities for audiences and participants to engage with dance as an artform and as an activity that has many benefits including improved physical health and well-being. Dance has a powerful effect on people's lives and we want to see the physical, mental, emotional and social benefits of dance being extended to more people.

We know that this is a tight spending round, but the proposed allocation for the arts falls desperately short of DCAL's request, based on the Arts Council's assessment of need, for an additional £26 million over the three year period. In the grand scheme of the Executive budget, this tiny amount for the arts could deliver so much throughout the region.

If the allocation is not increased, the arts in Northern Ireland will continue for the foreseeable future to be consigned to the bottom of the league table of funding in

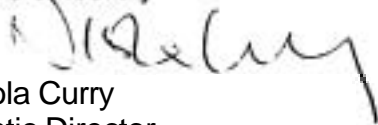
the UK and Republic of Ireland. Surely the people of Northern Ireland deserve the same cultural entitlements as our neighbours on these islands.

The importance of financial stability for artists and arts organisations cannot be underestimated. This budget will leave many people working in the arts facing immediate difficulties. Their future is, at best, uncertain, and confidence is at an all time low. Without meaningful investment, it will not be possible for the arts to contribute fully to vital wider agendas and PfG priorities, such as health, social inclusion and education, or to capitalise fully on the great economic potential of cultural tourism and the Creative Industries.

Financial stability or increased investment would mean renewed confidence, leading to more ambitious work and greater impact on NI's economic prosperity, employment for dance artists and collaborators, improved contribution to building a healthier society and generate greater community cohesion through participatory projects.

The arts impact on so many aspects of our lives, and should be something to celebrate, not stifle. I hope that the final budget will result in the level of public investment that will enable the arts to make their vital contribution to building a better, more dynamic and competitive Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Curry', written over the typed name below.

Nicola Curry
Artistic Director