

Jazz Services Response to Arts Council England Consultation of 17.04.10

- 1 Do you broadly agree with our analysis of achievements, challenges and opportunities contained within this paper and the supporting research? (yes) Are there other factors we should consider?

As an 'infrastructure' organisation for jazz information, touring, education etc. our comments are provided mainly from the perspective of the UK jazz scene. We agree about the importance of volunteers in sustaining our work and of partnerships in our future development projects.

We believe that a nettle which ACE must grasp is the imbalance of revenue funding between jazz and other forms of music, especially classical music. The music consultation paper highlights that 7.7% of adults attended a classical music event in 2006-07 and 5.6% a jazz event. This implies that the audience for jazz is more than 70% of that for classical music, yet the funding given by ACE to jazz is only a small fraction of that given to classical music. This is not necessarily a 'silo' argument, there are areas where the two forms of music are and should continue to work in partnership.

- 2 Do you share our vision for the arts? (yes) Do you have any other comments?

We agree with the vision, it is very much in line with what we - and other organisations we collaborate with - have been working towards during the last few years

- 3 What do you think are the most important things to focus on in order to ensure talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated?

The UK jazz scene has a fundamental paradox. Partly due to the improvements in jazz education and the quality of jazz provision in music colleges during the last few decades, the overall musical quality of UK jazz has rarely, if ever, been higher. Yet many musicians struggle to achieve recognition and become discouraged. Our research indicates that only a small proportion of jazz musicians earn more than the national average wage.

We believe that jazz, and probably other areas of the arts, need to focus on developing audiences, as much if not more than practitioners. There are many ways in which we are trying to do this, including use of technology and developing international connections to help UK artists gain recognition and work overseas.

- 4 What do you think are the most important things to focus on in order to ensure the arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled?

Arts leadership is usually a combination of artistic and business skills. However many arts organisations are quite small and cannot afford to have all the required skills in house. As well as professional development for arts practitioners, possible approaches include appointing - and using - trustees who have the required skills, and using resources available elsewhere in the charitable sector.

- 5 What do you think are the most important things to focus on in order to ensure more people value and enjoy the arts?

We agree with many of the points made in the consultation paper and are trying to achieve these objectives.

We have a specific concern about touring. We currently operate a touring support scheme which assists musicians in taking their work to various jazz venues across England. However budgetary constraints mean that we can only fund small-scale tours, there is no funding available for medium sized bands or more ambitious projects. This means there is reduced access, outside the major metropolitan areas, to established and international jazz musicians. We would welcome a re-think of ACE touring support to enable mid-range tours to take place.

- 6 What do you think are the most important things to focus on in order to ensure every child and young person has opportunities to experience the richness of the arts?

We fully agree with ACE's goal set out in the Music Consultation Paper. However we think it essential that achievement of these goals is well coordinated across the music sector; organisations such as ours simply don't have the resources required to do this justice by ourselves! There appear to be several excellent local initiatives, but the national picture is patchy and not particularly joined-up.

We also think it is essential that young people are given opportunities to listen to and understand music of all different genres, so they have the potential to be the audiences of the future even if they choose not to learn an instrument.

- 7 What do you think are the most important things to focus on in order to ensure the arts sector is sustainable, resilient and innovative?

In the current economic climate, it is likely that public funding for the arts will suffer, including local authorities as well as ACE. Further, the funding available from Trusts and Foundations is reducing given current trends in interest rates. Experience in the USA also suggests that corporate sponsorship declines in a recession. However it is fair to say that we have not witnessed any major falling off in attendances at jazz events.

Obviously we are working to improve our sources of revenue outside public funding, but this is a micro-level exercise, sometimes in competition with other arts organisations, and we think it is essential that ACE should focus on improving overall funding for the arts at a macro level.

- 8 Do you agree with our thinking regarding the future role the Arts Council will play in partnership with others? (yes) Do you have alternative ideas?

We strongly welcome ACE's approach of becoming a more proactive funder, provided this is a genuine two-way partnership and is realistic about what can be done within available resources.

- 9 Do you agree that more flexible funding mechanisms will be required to achieve our goals? (yes) Please tell us whether you think we are taking the right approach, or if there are other approaches we might take.

We agree in principle with more flexible funding mechanisms, especially the funding programme for development activities. We would expect that before a capital programme is introduced, discussions should take place re future lottery funding, especially as Olympics expenditure will decrease significantly after 2012.

- 10 What implications for artists and arts organisations should the Arts Council take account of if these proposals are developed further?

We strongly support the collaborative approach which ACE is proposing. Our only reservation is that we believe bureaucracy needs to be kept to a minimum. Clearly it is right that any organisation in receipt of public funding needs to be accountable, but a balance needs to be struck between demonstrating accountability and excessive bureaucracy. The overhead in demonstrating accountability can be a significant task for small organisations.