

REPORT TO: ARTS & HERITAGE COMMITTEE – 15 MAY 2000

REPORT ON: PROPOSED SCOTTISH NATIONAL THEATRE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF ARTS AND HERITAGE

REPORT NO: 254-2000

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines proposals for the development of a Scottish National Theatre and considers support for its potential location in Dundee.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- 2.1 Supports the proposal to develop the Scottish National Theatre.
- 2.2 Supports and remits the Director of Arts and Heritage to explore further, the potential location of the Scottish National Theatre administrative base in Dundee.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Scottish Parliament's Education, Culture and Sports Committee's first report, 2000, indicated support for the establishment of the Scottish National Theatre on the basis that there would be adequate, additional funding for the arts, and that the scheme would not be detrimental to the existing infrastructure. The Federation of Scottish Theatre which is actively promoting the establishment of the Scottish National Theatre have insisted that any new organisation must be funded by new money to the arts from government.

There are no financial implications for Dundee City Council as a result of this report.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The establishment of the Scottish National Theatre administrative base in Dundee will have a positive environmental, social and economic impact on the city.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposals to create the Scottish National Theatre would create employment which would be progressed in accordance with equal opportunities policies.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Cultural Strategy

- 6.1.1 The Scottish Executive is currently consulting prior to producing a National Cultural Strategy. One issue raised within the consultation has been the establishment of the Scottish National Theatre. The Scottish Parliament's Education, Culture and Sport Committee's first report, 2000, concluded that, despite Scotland having a stronger tradition in drama than it does in classical music, opera or ballet, the national companies do not include a theatre company. The Committee found wide agreement on the case for some form of national theatre and that this is a major gap in the profile of Scottish national cultural organisations. It concluded that the National Theatre would express an important part of Scottish cultural inheritance and would enhance Scotland's cultural identity both nationally and internationally.

6.2 Scottish National Theatre Proposal

6.2.1 There are a number of potential benefits of establishing the Scottish National Theatre:-

- It would assist in retaining in Scotland, or attracting to Scotland, the best Scottish actors, technicians and producers by offering work and by enhancing the status and quality of Scottish theatre
- It would help to preserve, develop and promote the Scottish repertoire including Scots and Gaelic
- It would stimulate new Scottish playwriting through commissions and residencies
- It would facilitate touring nationally and internationally
- It would allow the staging of large scale productions that are home-grown rather than imported
- It would enable new productions to be revived and toured after their initial run
- It would provide a focus for education and community development work
- It would deliver economic and tourism benefits

6.2.2 The model proposed for the Scottish National Theatre would be for an independent, commissioning body which would work in a similar way to the Edinburgh International Festival. It would have a remit to commission work from theatre, artists and companies at all scales and disciplines. This work would make a Scottish National Theatre Season which would be toured throughout Scotland.

6.2.3 The Scottish National Theatre would commission individual theatre artists as well as established theatre organisations based in Scotland and would be pro-active in seeking new creative alliances and putting together projects with producers.

6.2.4 The proposed Scottish National Theatre would be an independent organisation (probably a limited company with charitable status). The Board would be made up of various stakeholders with a small and flexible core structure. Key personnel could include the Artistic Director/General Manager, International Ambassador and marketing personnel. The new organisation would build on and support existing infrastructure of theatre in Scotland.

6.3 Location of the Scottish National Theatre

6.3.1 Whilst the proposal for the Scottish National Theatre is to establish a commissioning body rather than a building, clearly the commissioning body will require to be located somewhere. The location has yet to be resolved with the Education, Culture and Sport Committee's first report making no recommendation although the Federation of Scottish Theatre have established a working group to produce a detailed proposal which it intends to present to the Scottish Arts Council and the Scottish Executive shortly.

6.3.2 All of the current, nationally funded companies are located in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The Scottish Parliament's Education, Culture and Sport Committee's first report, 2000, concluded that the Scottish National Theatre should impact across Scotland, not just Edinburgh and Glasgow. There is a clear opportunity to signal this desire by locating the Scottish National Theatre administrative base outwith Edinburgh and Glasgow.

6.3.3 There are a number of reasons that would support the location of the Scottish National Theatre administrative headquarters being located in Dundee:-

- Scotland's third city currently has none of the national companies
- Dundee's growing cultural profile would provide an attractive and vibrant base for Scottish National Theatre, able to attract personnel of the highest, creative ambition
- Dundee provides a central location which would enhance the sense of ownership throughout Scotland
- The presence of Dundee Rep with Scotland's only full-time ensemble company, would also provide a potential model for the Scottish National Theatre
- The potential to examine co-location with Dundee Rep could provide for administrative savings/benefits

It is proposed that the Director of Arts and Heritage further explore the potential for the location of the Scottish National Theatre administrative base in Dundee with the Scottish Executive, Scottish Arts Council and the Federation of Scottish Theatre.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Support Services, the Director of Finance and Dundee Rep has been consulted on the contents of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The Scottish Parliament Education, Culture and Sport Committee's First Report 2000
- 8.2 The Federation of Scottish Theatre, Frequently Asked Questions Bulletin, 2000

Director of Arts and Heritage _____ Date _____