

# Film in Ireland

The Role of the Arts Council

1980



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Erika E King Associates  
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## CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	2
Executive Summary	3
Section 1: The Context	9
Section 2: Analysis of the Current Situation	19
Section 3: Conclusions and Recommendations	22
Appendices:	
Appendix 1: Opinions Expressed During the Consultation	29
Appendix 2: The Case Studies	38
Appendix 3: Bibliography	48
Appendix 4: List of People Consulted	50
Appendix 5: Terms of Reference	51

## **PREFACE**

This report was prepared in response to an invitation from the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon to undertake a strategic review of its role in the development and support of film in Ireland. The progress of the review was guided by a Steering Group chaired by Laura Magahy with Violette Merriman and Pat Murray. Mary Hyland, the Arts Council's Film and Communications Officer was responsible for the management of the project.

For Erika E King Associates, the two international case studies were undertaken by David Bruce, and Erika King undertook the research and writing of all material relating to Ireland.

The Council took the decision in May 1997 to instigate the strategic review with the focus on current Arts Council film policy and support, in the context of the presence of other policy players. It has been undertaken with a view to refining/redefining the role of the Council as an agency for the support and development of film as an artform.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. Section One: The Context

- 1.1 The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon was given the power to support film as one of the artforms within its remit by the 1973 Arts Act and it has had a continuous involvement in its development since that time.
- 1.2 The context of film in the State has changed radically from the time the Arts Council began supporting film and has accelerated rapidly since the Arts Plan came into effect in 1995 when the current objectives for film were set. The new context will strongly affect the future direction of this area of work in the Arts Council.
- 1.3 This review of the Arts Council's activities in support of film takes place in the context of a growing film sector with a number of Semi-State bodies working within a cohesive strategy to achieve progress.
- 1.4 Within this report, 'film' refers to feature films, shorts, documentaries, animation and children's films. It encompasses film, video and television productions, through the medium of both Irish and English. Film as an artform is an all inclusive, broadly defined and culturally diverse category, which flourishes at the intersection of the visual arts and independent film and video making.

### 2. Section Two: Analysis of the Current Situation

- 2.1 The Arts Council's current objectives were published in *The Arts Plan* and provide the framework for analysing the results of the present consultation exercise against the current situation. The published objectives were:
  - **to increase support to the Individual film-maker, in order to encourage innovation and experimentation within visually based work;**  
The consultation showed a lack of understanding among the film-making community of the Arts Council film and video awards, and how they relate to other short film schemes. This should be positively addressed through re-structuring of the awards and effective communication of their purpose, eligibility, assessment criteria and selection process.
  - **to support training initiatives in film;**  
The Arts Council's role in support for training should be extended to encourage mentoring activities but the scope should be narrowed to encourage and foster the talent which is most likely to benefit from the re-structured awards scheme.
  - **to provide adequate funding for film resource organisations;**  
It is important that there is a 'ladder of opportunity' for filmmakers. The film resource organisations have a role to play in running short film schemes which combine training and access to resources. These should be focused on entrant and first-time filmmakers and community groups. However, the role of the film resource centres in helping first-time filmmakers should be quite distinct from the Arts Council awards schemes which are for excellence and quality
  - **to support the provision of facilities for arthouse cinemas outside Dublin;**  
There is strong support for the Arts Council to develop a more strategic approach to encouraging a wider range of films (including films originating in Ireland) to be screened throughout the country. At present most audience development work outside Dublin comes through the film festivals and this must be extended to year-round provision. The way forward is for the Arts Council to set up a pilot Project Fund for Exhibition which should be evaluated as part of a wider examination to look at a range of options for strengthening provision. This longer-term study should be jointly commissioned with the Irish Film Board.

- **to consolidate film exhibition through funding of film festivals;**

Film festivals currently provide the only guaranteed showcases for indigenous film production. Finding and developing audiences and distribution are key issues facing the industry and it is essential that audiences have access to viewing a broad range of films throughout the country at all times of year. The Arts Council should only consider additional support to film festivals where it falls within the remit of the pilot Project Fund for Exhibition and the follow up evaluation and research should include reference to the role of film festivals.

- **to prioritise the development of the Irish Film Archive at the Film Institute of Ireland;**

The Arts Council has already been able to give capital support to the Archive and the consultation suggests that the Irish Film Archive requires a period of consolidation to help it focus its current and future direction.

- **to have special regard for the needs of children and young people in relation to film;**

The Arts Council will play a major role in the future of film in Ireland by supporting media education initiatives. The ultimate aim is to create appreciative audiences of the future by nurturing a greater understanding of the opportunities offered through film for young people both as a means of creative communication and as a potential career.

The Arts Council already offers important support to a range of successful initiatives. This needs to be consolidated and priority given to encouraging links between the Department of Education, schools, film organisations and local arts officers with the aim of encouraging implementation of the Education White Paper *Opportunities for Media Education*.

- **to co-operate with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Film Council in the promotion of North/South initiatives.**

There is a changed context for the promotion of film in Northern Ireland and North/South initiatives will be best pursued through initiatives involving young people and education and through collaboration over audience development, cinema exhibition initiatives and through continuing to invite filmmakers from Northern Ireland to apply for awards, investigating the possibility of co-production initiatives and through training e.g. future investigation of a possible Irish Film School being on a joint North/South basis.

### **3. Section Three: Summary of Recommendations**

3.1 It is appropriate for the next Arts Council film policy statement to address the issues raised in the consultation process. In particular:

- It is timely for the policy statement to be informed by the Strategic Development Plan 1997-2006 produced by STATCOM (the Committee of Irish State and Semi-State agencies, chaired by the Irish Film Board, charged with giving coherence to tackling all remaining obstacles to the full development of the film industry over time).
- A film action/operational plan should be developed that covers the remaining period of the first Arts Plan and which prepares for the next Arts Plan being presented.
- The Arts Council should involve STATCOM members in the implementation of the action plan where it is appropriate.

## 3.2 The Policy

### 3.2.1 Awards

The Arts Council Film and Video Awards should be re-organised into four strands:

- Artists' Film, Video and New Media Production Awards (re-organise existing support)
- Frameworks Awards should be continued
- Arts and Creative Documentaries Awards (new strand)
- Artists' Film Training and Mentoring Awards (re-organise existing support)

### 3.2.2 Residency

A new residency should be created for a Film/Video Artist in the community, which will be administered by the Local Arts Development Unit of the Arts Council. This will necessitate current community arts criteria being expanded to include best practice in film and video in the community.

### 3.2.3 Education

The Arts Council should take the lead in advocating film and related media education by:

- Encouraging new initiatives at primary and secondary level through creating links between the Film Institute of Ireland/Irish Film Centre (FII/IFC), local arts officers, Department of Education and schools.
- Where film organisations are applying to the Arts Council for funding, one or both of the following assessment criteria must be addressed:
  - the quality of the work and degree of commitment to increasing access, understanding and enjoyment of the moving image by young people;
  - the quality of the programme to involve young people in making film and videos.

The Arts Council should work with the National Training Committee to foster links between third level colleges to examine the needs for post-graduate courses in film production.

This will best be achieved by the Arts Council being represented on the National Training Committee.

### 3.2.4 Cinema Audience Development and Access

The Arts Council should incorporate into its audience-led strategies, a pilot Project Fund for Exhibition which will provide a wide range of cinema programming and audience development initiatives with particular emphasis on indigenous films throughout the State. The structure and criteria of the fund should be evaluated and should underpin a wider study to be undertaken jointly with the Irish Film Board to investigate a range of long term support options.

The support of STATCOM members in developing and undertaking this initiative should be sought.

### 3.2.5 Community Film and Video Development at Local Level

Responsibility for this area of work within the Arts Council should be transferred to the Council's Local Arts Development Unit. As well as administering the Film and Video Residency, activities would include:

- organising an open forum of organisations promoting film and video where they are brought into contact with a range of community arts groups and local arts officers;
- organising seminars for local arts officers to inform them of the potential of film and video as an aspect of local arts development,

### 3.2.6 Cross-Border Issues

Existing cross-border work should embrace the range of film work which the Arts Council Film Policy contains.

### 3.2.7 International Work

The Arts Council should continue to support the work of the Irish Film Archive in making prints of Irish film available overseas.

The Arts Council's activities in promoting and showcasing contemporary Irish artists should extend to the film and video artists it supports.

### 3.2.8 Critical Debate

The critical debate about film culture should be encouraged and support to magazines should be clearly delineated and specific criteria of assessment used for applications. Clarification of the role of the Film Institute of Ireland in the critical debate about film is an essential element in future developments.

### 3.2.9 Funded Organisations

Additional support for the FII/IFC should be directed towards sustainable developments outside Dublin in encouraging film and related media education, and audience development initiatives within the context of development plans.

Support to the Federation of Irish Film Societies should be reviewed as part of the process of establishing the proposed Project Fund for Exhibition in recommendation 3.2.4.

New funding criteria should be drawn up for support organisations which focus on their roles in developing education and participation, and in assisting entrant, first-time and community film and video makers. This should be separated from support which goes to magazines.

Additional Arts Council support for film festivals should be considered only where it falls within the remit of the pilot Project Fund for Exhibition in recommendation 3.2.4.

As part of the review of funding of film organisations, the potential for greater collaboration between the FII/IFC and Dublin Film Festival should be explored.

## 3.3 Strategic Issues

3.3.1 It is important that the Arts Council works towards having a full-time Film Officer to develop the policy statement, action plan and targets.

3.3.2 The Arts Council has a continuing role to play in the development of film training. This should come through membership of the National Film Training Committee, through encouraging mentoring initiatives and through entering discussions with the Northern Ireland Screen Commission about the establishment of an Irish Film School.

## 4. Appendix One: Views Expressed During the Consultation Exercise

4.1 Views were drawn from a broad range of filmmakers, representatives of film promotional and support organisations, academics, writers, staff and ex-staff of the Arts Council and representatives of the various semi-State bodies who have an involvement with film and are members of the committee STATCOM. Its membership comprises senior representatives from Bord Scannan na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board, RTÉ, Teilifís na Gaeilge, the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, Forbairt, IDA Ireland, An Bord Trachtála, FÁS, Odaras na Gaeltachta, Bord Fáilte, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and the Department of Education.



- 4.2 There is strong support for the Arts Council continuing and increasing its commitment to film as an artform and no-one expressed the view that this work was more appropriately done by another body.
- 4.3 It is considered to be beneficial to indigenous film making that a diverse range of supports for the encouragement of talent and production exists. However, there must be co-ordination amongst the various bodies involved.
- 4.4 The Arts Council has a role to play in advocating the importance of media education to the Department of Education in its implementation of its White Paper commitment to this area of work and in creating links between film organisations, schools and local arts development officers.
- 4.5 There is a need for cinema audience and exhibition development to take place outside Dublin, and the Arts Council is considered to be the best organisation to lead this process.
- 4.6 The Arts Council should aim to use the network of local authority arts officers to increase the contribution of film and video to arts development activities.
- 4.7 Recent Arts Council initiatives to increase understanding and feedback to applicants on funding matters are welcomed and should be expanded in future.
- 4.8 The Arts Council must be very clear in defining its role in film and must communicate its policies effectively.

## **5. Appendix Two: The Case Studies**

- 5.1 Australia and Scotland were chosen for the case studies because they share with Ireland and each other the experience of ambition in film culture and in belonging to the predominantly English-speaking cultures overwhelmed by the products of Hollywood. Their difficulty in establishing a clearly definable film identity that is both culturally and economically viable provide some lessons to Ireland.
- 5.2 Both countries have arts councils which have similarities to the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon. In Australia there is the Australia Council and in Scotland the Scottish Arts Council (SAC).
- 5.3 Beyond Hollywood, the Australian film industry is one of the few in the English-speaking world to have made a noticeable impact on world markets. The Australia Council's predecessor, the Australian Council for the Arts, called for a National Film School, a development corporation and funds for experimental projects in the 1960s, triggering a range of strategic interventions which included head-hunting the creator of the Australian Film and Television School from the world's then most famous film school in Poland.
- 5.4 Film does not, however, fall within the remit of the Australia Council which does not have a formal policy on the medium. It does accept a video or film component in a work or project so long as the eligibility requirements are met for the category of the submission as a whole. Such proposals are most likely to be received by specific funds under the Council such as the Community Cultural Development Fund, New Media Fund, or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Arts Board.
- 5.5 Film in the more conventional meaning is supported by either the Australian Film Finance Corporation or the Australian Film Commission. There is no ambiguity between the roles of the various official arts and film bodies at federal and State levels and the filmmakers themselves would appear to be clear about where to go for support.

- 5.6 The first message from Australia is that film culture and industry can thrive with a range of different bodies supporting its diverse aspects, provided there is clarity of remit. The second message is that there is an inextricable link between film culture and film commerce. The publicly-supported activities in training, production, distribution and exhibition have been crucial in developing the film economy of Australia, because only by the provision of opportunities for young people to develop their interest and talent will the future be secure.
- 5.7 The story of film in Scotland is in sharp contrast to Australia's. Scotland has not achieved critical mass in its level of film production although that is in the process of changing since production finance from the National Lottery came on stream in the past three years. Scotland has a strong track record of supporting media education and film exhibition initiatives and it has a network of film theatres which provides automatic showcasing year round for indigenous production. Media education is well established in Scottish schools and there are good links to the film theatres to encourage the appreciation and understanding of film culture.
- 5.8 The Scottish Arts Council does not have film as one of the artforms which is included in its remit. However, it has been involved in a range of film support initiatives starting in 1980. It has tended to approach film through the strategic needs of other artforms such as literature and visual arts.
- 5.9 SAC is currently at the forefront of supporting mainstream film production in its capacity as distributor of National Lottery funds to the arts (which includes film production). It is estimated that in the seven years up to 2002, the Lottery will have invested approximately £20m in film production in Scotland. From mid-1998, changes in Lottery regulations will allow SAC to take a strategic approach to its Lottery funding activities.
- 5.10 Another dissimilarity between Scotland and Ireland is the existence in Scotland of a single agency to promote all aspects of film industry and culture which came about in April 1997. It is too early in the development of Scottish Screen to draw particular messages from the experience. However, the notion of a 'one-stop shop' has not been particularly well received by the filmmakers in Scotland who are in favour of diverse sources of support for different aspects of film.

## SECTION ONE: THE CONTEXT

1. During 1997, David Puttnam published a book entitled *The Undeclared Warm* which he described the battle for control of this century's most powerful medium which has raged between Europe and the United States since the beginnings of cinema 100 years ago. In it he states, "A hundred years after its invention, cinema has established itself as one of the most powerful and effective means of communication we have, not just to entertain ourselves, but to express ourselves. The appeal of the movies is universal. Its stars provide mirrors in which we can see a heightened reflection of our own lives and dreams. Its stories can open a window, through which we see and understand the lives of others. Cinema has become part of our sense of identity, as individuals and as nations. And, located as it is at the heart of a rapidly expanding range of moving image media, it has now acquired an economic importance which we cannot afford to ignore".
2. In 1995, the European Community ran an audio-visual trade deficit with the United States of some \$6.3 billion, a 15% increase on the previous year. On present trends it could grow to \$10 billion by the turn of the century. There are however, positive signs with European films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Trainspotting* and *The Full Monty* making substantial impact in the global marketplace. The conclusion David Puttnam makes is that there can be no question of the European countries abandoning the struggle to keep their audio-visual industries viable. Rather we will be emphasising the marketing, distribution and audiences' development and awareness of our filmmakers.
3. Since 1993 there has been a significant improvement in the key performance indicators associated with the Irish film and television industry. Within this report, 'film' refers to feature films, shorts, documentaries, animation and children's films. It encompasses film, video and television production, through the medium of both Irish and English. Film as an artform is an all inclusive, broadly defined and culturally diverse category, which flourishes at the intersection of the visual arts and independent film and video making.

For example there has been an increase in:

- the number of film and independent TV projects produced in Ireland;
- the economic performance of film in terms of:
  - total production budget size;
  - level of expenditure in the Irish economy;
  - number of people employed and the full-time equivalent jobs generated;
- the ability of the industry to raise finance abroad thereby increasing the leverage between foreign and indigenous finance;
- the size of Irish cinema-going audiences and the number of Irish films obtaining release in cinemas and on video and being screened on television;
- the number of Irish personnel pursuing further training either by means of traineeships or more formal training programmes and courses.

The real progress made in the last four-year period is encapsulated in the data in Tables 1A and 1B.

**Table 1A: Key Performance Indicators (Industrial)**

Performance Indicators	1993	1994	1995	3 Year
				Average
Number of productions <sup>(1)</sup>	12	13	22	15.6
Value of Productions (IR£m)	50.5	133.1 <sup>(2)</sup>	100.1	94.6
Foreign funds raised (IR£m)	36.7	82.3	45.1	54.7
Foreign funds as a % of production funding	73%	62%	45%	58%
Expenditure in Ireland (IR£m)	30.6	57.0	64.1	50.6
Irish expenditure as a % of production funding	61%	43%	64%	53%
Gross numbers employed on projects (IBEC)	4,191	13,858	17,890	11,980
Irish Employment FTE jobs on projects (IBEC)	480	1,291	1,266	1,012

Source: *The Economic Impact of Film Production in Ireland -1995*

Note 1: number of productions (feature film, major TV dramas, independent TV productions and animation projects) are sourced from the IBEC report 'The Economic Impact of Film Production in Ireland'.

Note 2: reflects the very significant budget associated with *Braveheart* which was filmed in Ireland and highlights the need for a Screen Commission to proactively attract such films to Ireland.

**Table 1B: Awards and Critical Acclaim to Irish Films**

Film	Awards
<i>High Boot Benny</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner of the Prize of Discovery Aubange Film Festival (1994)</li> <li>▪ Best young actor prize for Marc O'Shea Beziars Film Festival (1994)</li> </ul>
<i>Guiltrip</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner of the Best Screenplay Award Thessaloniki Film Festival (1995)</li> <li>▪ Winner of Youth Jury Best Film, Best Actor Award for Andrew Connelly and Best Actress Award for Jasmine Russell Amiens Film Festival (1995)</li> </ul>
<i>Ailsa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner of the Permio Euskal Media New Director prize San Sebastian Film Festival (1994)</li> <li>▪ Best Television Series Biarritz Television Festival 1995</li> </ul>
<i>Korea</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Runner up in the Audience Prize Seattle Film Festival (1995)</li> <li>▪ Winner Best Film Copenhagen Film Festival (1995)</li> <li>▪ Winner Special Jury Award Amiens Film Festival (1995)</li> </ul>
<i>The Hanging Gale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Best commissioned score for Shaun Davey Ivor Novello award (1996) - British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors (BASCA)</li> </ul>
<i>35 Aside</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner Grand Prix du Jury 'Best Short Film', Prix du Public 'Best Short Film', Prix du Festival (1996)Jeunesse 'Best Short Film': Angers International Film</li> <li>▪ Winner Golden Conch 'Best Short Film', Winner Golden Plaque 'Best New Director': Bombay International Film Festival (1996)</li> <li>▪ Winner grand Prix du Jury 'Best Film', Winner Prix du Public 'Best Film', Canal Plus Prize: Clermont Ferrand International Film Festival (1996)</li> <li>▪ Winner Best New Director: Celtic Film and Television Festival (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>Joe My Friend</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner of the Blue Bear Award - best film for a young audience: Berlin Film Festival (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>Nothing Personal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner of the best supporting actor award for Ian Hart: Venice Film Festival (1995)</li> </ul>

continued on next page

**Table 1B: Continued**

<b>Film</b>	<b>Awards</b>
<i>81</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Best short film: Cinema Jove, International Film Festival Valencia (1996)</li> <li>▪ Best Irish short film: Cork International Film Festival (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>Some Mother's Son</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner of the Granada Bernstein Award for best gala film: Edinburgh Film Festival (1996)</li> <li>▪ Winner of the Audience Award: San Sebastian Film Festival (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>The Moon on My Back</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winner of Le Nombre d'Or Award for Best Director: Amsterdam International Widescreen Festival (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>Dear Daughter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Third place certificate for creative excellence in Documentary: US International Film and Video Festival (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>The Boy from Mercury</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Film Journalists Prize, Film Distributor's Association of Italy Prize and Runner up in the Jury Prize: Giffoni Children's Film Festival (1996)</li> <li>▪ Special Commendation - Youth Category: Prix Europa (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>Trojan Eddie</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Joint Winner of the Best Film Award: San Sebastian Film Festival (1996)</li> </ul>
<i>Michael Collins</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Golden Lion Award (Best Film) - Venice</li> <li>▪ Golden Globe Nomination (Best Actor)</li> </ul>

4. This tremendous growth in activity, and the energy which is behind it, is the result of the collaborative work of a significant number of organisations who have a role and an interest in the development of film. The present review of the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon's activities in support of film must therefore take as a starting point a clear view of the various organisations and their respective roles.
5. The context within which the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon operates is defined by the 1973 Arts Act. This specifically added film to the list of artforms which the Arts Council is charged with developing. The Arts Council's core functions are to support the creation and dissemination of the work of Irish artists in all creative disciplines, and to promote the maximum possible public access to, and participation in, the contemporary arts.
6. The operating environment in which the Arts Council discharges its responsibilities for film has undergone radical transformations since the 1973 Arts Act. The first Irish Film Board/Bord Scannan na hEireann was established in 1980; it was replaced in 1987 by a tax- based incentive for corporate investment in Irish film projects. In 1992 the Special Working Group on the Film Production Industry presented its report to the Taoiseach. This led in 1993 to the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannan na hEireann, the enactment of new broadcasting legislation and of significant tax concessions. In 1996 the new Teiliffs na Gaelige service was established. Most recently, the National Training Committee for Film and Television has been established to implement new training strategies for the industry and in 1997, the establishment of the Screen Commission of Ireland, to facilitate offshore and indigenous production companies, was announced. The role of the Screen Commission will be to attract inward investment through encouraging and facilitating the location of feature films in the Republic of Ireland. The Screen Commission will be set up as a committee of the Film Board under the framework of the Film Board Act 1980 and the Film Board (Amendment) Bill 1993.

7. In presenting the Irish Film Board (Amendment) Bill 1993, the then Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, Michael D. Higgins, T.D. informed the Dail that he foresaw no change whatsoever in the role of An Chomhairle Ealaíon in relation to film and film making, notwithstanding the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board. He assured the House that the emphasis on the cultural significance of film making both under the Arts Act, 1973 and the Irish Film Board Act 1980, would facilitate the achievement of an adequate balance between the cultural, as well as the commercial aspects of film making.
8. Following its re-establishment, the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannan na hEireann, set up STATCOM in collaboration with the Government. It is a committee of Irish State and semi- State agencies, chaired by the Film Board, charged with giving coherence to tackling all remaining obstacles to the full development of the industry over time. STATCOM is formally constituted as a committee of the Irish Film Board. The key areas STATCOM addresses include training, facilities, investment, marketing and distribution. Its work to date has included the initiation of the National Film and Television Training Committee to implement the strategies proposed by the STATCOM Report, an analysis of the facilities infrastructure, and the preparation of plans for a Screen Commission. Its membership comprises senior representatives from RTÉ, the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, Forbairt, IDA Ireland, An Bord Trachtala, FÁS, Údárás na Gaeltachta, Bord Fáilte, Teilifis na Gaeilge, the Department of Education and Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.

Table 2 below summarises State and Semi-State spending on developing the industry during 1997.

**Table 2: Estimated Spend on Irish Film Industry, 1997**

Organisation	£IR	
Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands	11,283,000	Note 1
Irish Film Board/Bord Scannan na hEireann	3,400,000	
Forbairt	288,000	
An Bord Trachtala/Irish Trade Board		Note 2
RTÉ	8,600,000	Note 3
Bord Fáilte		Note 4
FÁS	373,000	Note 5
Teilifis na Gaeilge	7,500,000	Note 6
IDA Ireland	-	
Údárás na Gaeltachta	815,000	
The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon	797,000	

*Note 1: This represents tax revenues forgone as a result of 'Section 35' exemption.*

*Note 2: The Irish Trade Board does not have a specific budget for the film industry. In 1997 they had a total allocation of £3,750,000 to assist companies in the international services sector (software, consultancy, media and construction services) to increase their export activities.*

*Note 3: This represents 325 hours of programming commissioned from Irish producers in 1997.*

*Note 4: The Irish Tourist Board does not have a specific budget for film funding per se, but undertakes activities related to filming, and much of the activity involves services in kind. At a rough estimate this would run to five figure £IR.*

*Note 5: This represents the FÁS contribution to the National Training Committee (Screen Training Ireland).*

*Note 6: This represents the total budget for acquisition and commissioning of programmes transmitted in the Irish language.*

The 'dramatis personae' are, therefore:

- The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon

The Arts Council, as the development agency for the arts in Ireland, has gone through a period of tremendous growth during the time that has elapsed since the 1973 Arts Act. The context of current operations is framed by *The Arts Plan*, which was prepared by the Arts Council in 1994, and adopted by Government in 1995. The result of *The Arts Plan* was a substantial uplift in the resources made available to the Arts Council to develop its work.

The keynotes of *The Arts Plan* are that, strategically, the Arts Council has set out to promote quality and innovation in all aspects of the practice of the arts and to encourage genuine participation in the arts. *The Arts Plan* contains four broad elements:

- support of excellence in the arts, and the creation and dissemination of new work;
- infrastructure and other support for the development of new audiences for the arts;
- partnership with other agencies;
- improving its own promotions and operations.

Support for film since it was included in the Arts Council remit in 1973 has evolved relative to the activities of other bodies engaged in the field. The initiation in 1977 of the Arts Council annual script award was of major significance in encouraging indigenous film production. Among the films which came about through script awards were Bob Quinn's *Poteen* (1978), Neville Presho's *Desecration* (1981), Joe Comerford's *Traveller* (1982), Kieran Mickey's *Exposure* (1978) and Joe Comerford's *Reefer and the Model* (1983).

The abolition of the Film Board in June 1987 with the introduction of an associated tax incentive based system of support for film production companies led to the Government announcement that the Arts Council would be responsible for future funding of film. This led to widespread condemnation of the Board's abolition from all quarters by native and foreign filmmakers and a powerful lobby for its restoration which was achieved in 1993.

At various times the Arts Council has had a full-time Film Officer and a filmmaker has been a member of the Arts Council.

In 1994 the Arts Council allocated £482,000 to film from a total budget of £13,303,000. In 1997 £797,000 was allocated to film from a total budget of £20,834,000 (Table 3 overleaf gives more details of Arts Council expenditure).

**Table 3: The Arts Council Film Grants, 1997**

<b>Film Grants</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Awards</b>		10,000
<b>Resource and Support Organisations</b>		
Film Institute of Ireland	343,500	
Film Base Ltd.	69,300	
Galway Film Resource	52,700	
Anamu Animation Base	2,500	
CAVERN Ltd. Cork	7,000	
<b>Total</b>		<b>475,000</b>
<b>Festivals and Exhibitions</b>		
Cork Film Festival	40,400	
Federation of Irish Film	57,300	
Dublin Film Festival	25,400	
Galway Film Fleadh	25,000	
Limerick Irish Film Festival	1,000	
<b>Total</b>		<b>149,100</b>
<b>Film and Video Awards</b>		<b>99,100</b>
<b>Education/Young People</b>		
Cork Film Festival Ltd.	7,000	
Junior Dublin Film Festival	20,000	
Junior Galway Film Festival	3,000	
Young Irish Film Makers	14,000	
<b>Total</b>		<b>44,000</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		<b>19,800</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>797,000</b>

The specific objectives, which the Arts Council identified for film in the Arts Plan, were:

- to increase support to the individual filmmaker, in order to encourage innovation and experimentation within the artform;
- to support training initiatives in film;
- to provide adequate funding for film resource organisations;
- to consolidate film exhibition through funding of film festivals;
- to support the provision of facilities for arthouse cinemas outside Dublin;
- to prioritise the development of the Irish Film Archive at the Film Institute of Ireland;
- to have special regard for the needs of children and young people in relation to film;
- to co-operate with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Film Council in the promotion of North/South initiatives.

In June 1997 the Arts Council carried out a review of the plan and found that a number of the targets had been achieved or substantially addressed to date.

Particular progress was reported on training matters: film resource organisations, particularly those outside Dublin had received substantial increases in funding in order to consolidate their activities; funding of film and video awards had increased significantly between 1995-97; film festivals had received substantial increases; film spending on children and young people had risen with a number of innovative children's programmes being supported; the Irish Film Archive had received a substantial capital grant assisting it to move into a major phase of development.



- **Bord Scannan na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board**

Under the Irish Film Board Act of 1980, the Board was established to assist and encourage the development of a film industry in the State. It has been functioning in its present form since it was re-established in 1993. The Film Board is the only semi state body which has the cause of developing film as its single task. It is therefore ideally placed to be involved in collaborative initiatives with other bodies within Ireland and the rest of the World.

The Board provides loans and equity investment to independent Irish filmmakers to assist in the development and production of Irish films. The Board also acts to improve the marketing, sales and distribution of Irish films and to promote training and development in all areas of film making. Employment of Irish film workers and the use of ancillary Irish services is a vital factor in the Board's consideration of applications. It also administers a joint project to support animation in association with the Arts Council and RTÉ

The Board assists a number of films in development and provides production loans for eight to ten films each year. It also aims to increase audiences for Irish films and to raise public awareness of the cultural, social and economic benefits of vibrant film making activity in Ireland.

- **RTÉ (Radio Teilifís Éireann)**

RTÉ is Ireland's national public service broadcasting organisation, funded through licence fee and commercial revenues. As well as providing broadcast services its work also extends to nurturing talent in the film and television industries and to supporting live arts activities.

It operates two free-to-air (viewers do not have to pay subscriptions) television services, five free-to-air radio services and provides a wide range of information and entertainment programmes, in addition to news and current affairs. Through its Independent Programming Unit, RTÉ currently commissions around 300 hours of programming per year from independent producers. This includes support to a number of short film initiatives where the ultimate aim is encouraging and nurturing new ideas and talent.

- **Teilifís na Gaeilge**

Teilifís na Gaeilge, which is run under the control of RTÉ is the Irish language publisher/broadcaster. It commenced transmissions in November 1996, and broadcasts for over four hours each day. It functions as a publisher/broadcaster, sourcing its programmes from the independent production sector and from RTÉ.

- **The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands**

This is the Government Department with overall responsibility for the development of policy in relation to the film and television industry in Ireland. This responsibility is part of the wider remit of supporting all aspects of heritage, arts and the Irish language. As such it oversees the work of both the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board.

It has responsibility for the certification of qualifying films i.e. films that can avail of Section 35 finance. A tax deduction - called Section 35 Relief - is available to Irish individuals and corporate investors who buy shares in Irish film production companies. Because 80% of the amount invested may be written off for tax purposes, the investor looks for the return on the net cost, having regard to the tax relief secured, rather than on the full amount invested. This usually results in a contribution of up to 11% of the budget.

- **FÁS**

FÁS is Ireland's national training and employment authority. During 1994 and 1995, FÁS on behalf of STATCOM carried out a major project on the training needs of the independent film and television industry. The skills-bases investigated were production, direction, scriptwriting, camera/lighting, and sound production, sound post-production, picture post-production, production design and set craft.

The outcome of this groundbreaking study was the establishment of a National Training Committee for Film and Television known as Screen Training Ireland, which is currently implementing and updating an extensive training programme for the film and television industry

- **The Department of Education**

The Department of Education is responsible for the administration of public education, primary post-primary and special education. State subsidies for universities and 3rd level colleges are channelled through the Department.

The mission of the Department of Education is to ensure the provision of a comprehensive, cost-effective and accessible education system of the highest quality as measured by international standards, which will:

- enable individuals to develop their full potential as persons and to participate fully as citizens in society;
- contribute to social and economic development.

- **Údarás na Gaeltachta**

Údarás is the Irish Government Authority for the economic, social and cultural development of the Irish-speaking regions.

Its strategy includes the creation of communication industries in the Gaeltacht including audio-visual, telecommunication, and IT services.

Údarás can provide a range of incentives to new and established film and television production and post-production companies.

- **Forbairt (State Services to Irish Industry)**

Forbairt was established by the Government to facilitate the development of Irish business and to provide a range of science and technology services and programmes for enterprise in Ireland. The Forbairt client base is extensive, covering a wide range of business sectors and comprising companies of all sizes. In the continued development of Ireland's industrial base, Forbairt is committed to a strategy which will sustain the vibrant level of new, high potential start up companies. Typical projects in the media sector are in film and television post-production facilities, animation and music recording studios.

- **An Bord Trachtála: The Irish Trade Board**

The Irish Trade Board provides marketing support services and financial incentives to assist companies to achieve export growth. It organises sectoral representation at major international film/television markets and works with individual companies in developing and implementing planned export-marketing activities.

- **IDA Ireland**

A number of film production companies particularly in the area of animation have been successful in receiving IDA assistance in setting up in Ireland.

The IDA has traditionally been interested in companies with substantial physical plant that actually manufacture a product in the industrial sense. The stop-start nature of many film production companies has always been difficult for them to grasp although there is now much more openness to film companies who knock on their door

The IDA markets Ireland as an attractive location for overseas investment through its network of offices abroad, emphasising the stability and growing competitiveness of the Irish economy, the favourable tax system, the financial incentives and the educated workforce.

- **Bord Fáilte Éireann: The Irish Tourist Board**

Bord Fáilte focuses on the professional marketing of Irish tourism on the international stage. It ensures that all activity in these areas is clearly market-led and involves the selling of a portfolio of Ireland's attractions through its world-wide office network.

This network provides a knowledge bank of Irish landscapes, location and accommodation that is of particular use to offshore companies shooting in Ireland.

- **MEDIA II**

The MEDIA Desk Ireland provides information and advice on the MEDIA II programme of the EU Commission, and on related European initiatives through organising seminars and workshops, individual consultancy, newsletters and other services. MEDIA II, a support programme for the European film industry, running to the year 2000, will be concentrated in three areas - training, development and distribution. A budget of £250 million is committed to this investment programme. MEDIA Antenna Galway provides similar support systems and this brief includes the Irish language film and television community

9. Apart from the public agencies listed above and their activities, two other important factors have a bearing on the present state and future prospects of film in Ireland. One which is significant in relation to this study is the Department of Education's 1996 White Paper on Education, Charting Our Education Future, and the associated document, Implementing the Agenda for Change.
10. The philosophical rationale for the role of the State in education is informed by a number of principles one of which is:  
  
... the articulation, nationally, of a statement of broad educational aims, which focus on nurturing the holistic development of the individual and promoting the social and economic welfare of society, including the provision and renewal of the skills and competencies necessary for the development of our economy and society (P4 of the White Paper).
11. Film has been given a priority as an area of economic activity which has important potential for future growth and the many initiatives being taken by the various State and semi-State bodies indicate the seriousness with which it is taken. The opportunity therefore arises for media education to have importance in linking economic and social skills as well as being embraced by the specially arts-based rationale.

12. In the White Paper the Government affirms the centrality of the arts within educational policy and provision, particularly during compulsory schooling. Media studies are part of the revised curriculum for arts and crafts at primary level. The Junior Curriculum contains film studies and there is an option in the Leaving Certificate in English for film studies.
13. Another very important development in 1997 was the election of a new Government. Earliest indications are that the new administration will not reverse the decisive and affirmative film policies of the previous Government. A new Film Bill upping the level of funding to the Film Board to £4 million in 1998 was enacted in November 1997. Such developments as the establishment of the Screen Commission of Ireland are to go ahead. It is therefore assumed for the purposes of this review that film in the broad context of Irish society will continue to enjoy Government recognition as a significant feature of public policy for the arts, for media and broadcasting and for economic and social development.

## SECTION 2: ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

1. Evaluation of the broad spectrum of opinions, which were expressed during the consultation exercise, can best be approached by analysis against the specific objectives which the Arts Council identified for film in *The Arts Plan*:

*Plan*:

- to increase support to the individual filmmaker, in order to encourage innovation and experimentation within the artform;
- to support training initiatives in film;
- to provide adequate funding for film resource organisations;
- to support the provision of facilities for arthouse cinema outside Dublin;
- to consolidate film exhibition through funding of film festivals;
- to prioritise the development of the Irish Film Archive at the Film Institute of Ireland;
- to have special regard for the needs of children and young people in relation to film;
- to co-operate with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Film Council in the promotion of North/South initiatives.

### 1.1 To increase support to the individual filmmaker, in order to encourage Innovation and experimentation within the artform;

The current situation is that the Arts Council runs an awards scheme over two rounds a year Applicants can apply to one of three strands:

- Experimental
- Short innovative drama
- Community

A panel of experts is brought together to assess the applications, and details of successful applicants are subsequently publicised in *Art Matters*, the Arts Council's information bulletin.

There is a lack of understanding in the film community about what the Arts Council awards are about: this is partly due to the fact that a number of other short film schemes have become available in Ireland since the Arts Council last reviewed this area of its work. The respondents divided into those who wanted the Arts Council to define its scheme in terms of what other short film schemes did not do, and those who defined it positively in terms of the kind of work which it should be supporting. These points of view are not mutually exclusive. There is a need for the Arts Council to make a positive commitment to the kind of work it intends to support; to ensure that it stands in a clear and logical relationship to the other short film schemes in Ireland; and to communicate this clearly to the filmmakers .

### 1.2 To support training initiatives In film;

The views expressed on training in film in Ireland show that it is an important issue but that it is now being tackled through the activities of the National Training Committee. Much of the work which remained to be done when the Arts Council first set its objective in this area has now been achieved or is being taken forward by other organisations. However, it is important that the Arts Council continues to maintain an overview and this can be achieved by representation on the National Training Committee.

Beyond the strict definition of formal training there is still a need to create opportunities for filmmakers to develop their talent through other kinds of development. The case study from Australia points to the value of encouraging mentoring of emergent and developing talent. The context in which the Arts Council should shift its emphasis from support for training initiatives to support for mentoring comes through the awards scheme and the need to foster talent in this area. Scriptwriting is an obvious area where the Arts Council can offer

support but in the longer, term support should also go to theatre directors, visual artists and composers seeking to work collaboratively in film.

**1.3 To provide adequate funding for film resource organisations;**

There is need for a 'ladder of opportunity' for the support of film making talent in Ireland. The film resource organisations offer one of the first rungs up the ladder through their short film schemes, which combine with training, and use of resources. This is of particular value to emergent and first-time filmmakers. This is not clearly understood and confusion exists as to whether this first rung should be provided by the Arts Council's awards scheme direct or whether it should come indirectly from the Arts Council through its support of the organisations such as Galway Film Centre and Film Base.

It should not be assumed that the Arts Council Awards exist primarily to support first-time filmmakers. Whilst awards may on occasions go to first-time filmmakers, the film resource organisations should be encouraged to focus on this area of work and to develop it in a way that relates their activities to the formal training structures for film in Ireland.

**1.4 To support the provision of facilities for arthouse cinema outside Dublin;**

At present the Arts Council's support for the provision is limited to the support it gives to the film festivals. The consultation exercise has come out strongly in favour of a more strategic approach being taken to this area of work. The case study on Scotland illustrates one model of how a cohesive, cost-effective network could be addressed but it is not necessarily the only option which the Arts Council should be considering. The establishment, on a pilot basis, of a Project Fund for Exhibition is required. The pilot to be evaluated, together with further research which should be jointly commissioned with the Film Board.

**1.5 To consolidate film exhibition through funding of film festivals;**

One of the key issues facing the film industry in Ireland today is how to develop films which have an audience. The consultation process has clearly demonstrated that an important aspect of this is creating opportunities for indigenous films to be enjoyed by audiences throughout Ireland. The film festivals, which the Arts Council supports, are currently the guaranteed places where this work can connect with its audience. However, the need to develop audiences for film in Ireland can only be partially met by film festivals and it is imperative that the Arts Council address the wider issue of audience development throughout the State on a year round basis. Any further support to film festivals will only be appropriate where it falls within the pilot Project Fund for Exhibition.

**1.6 To prioritise the development of the Irish Film Archive at the Film Institute of Ireland;**

The Arts Council has already provided capital funding to assist the Irish Film Archive and it is emerging from a difficult period with a clear view of where it needs to go. The Arts Council needs to consolidate its support for the work of the Archive within the context of its wider support for the Film Institute of Ireland without any major change in emphasis.

**1.7 To have special regard for the needs of children and young people in relation to film;**

The current situation is that the Arts Council supports the educational work of the Film Institute of Ireland and an element of support for film festivals and resource centres goes to support educational work. The Arts Council also funds a number of initiatives which are specifically aimed at involving young people in film either as audiences or participants. The consultation shows that this is an area of work which is appreciated, but a great deal more needs to be done.

It is essential that the Arts Council encourages the Department of Education and schools to maximise the potential of media education as part of the wider implementation of the White Paper on Education. There is a recognition that through wide access to media education

young people can be encouraged to appreciate films made in Ireland as well as allowing them to explore their own potential to work creatively with the media. There is an important role for the Arts Council in encouraging the Irish film industry of the future, through education, for both audiences and practitioners.

**1.8 To co-operate with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Film Council in the promotion of North/South initiatives;**

There are changes in context with regard to how film is dealt with in Northern Ireland now, which will affect the future of how the Arts Council approaches cross-border initiatives. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has in the past year devolved all of its interests in film to the Northern Ireland Screen Commission. It in turn has forged some links with the Irish Film Board. In past times, the two Arts Councils have collaborated over such things as film publications but it does not appear from the consultation that this is now relevant. It is however important to continue the policy of inviting filmmakers from Northern Ireland to apply for awards.

New areas of collaboration include encouraging formal links between the Northern Ireland children's film festival, Cinemagic and the young people's film festivals in the South. There is also potential benefit where the Arts Council is considering developing film exhibition initiatives outside Dublin to examine ways in which the Queen's Theatre Belfast might be networked into collaborative ventures. Co-production initiatives must be encouraged and examining a joint venture with Northern Ireland should strengthen any future consideration of establishing an Irish Film School.

## **SECTION 3: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The format of the conclusions relates as much as possible to topics raised during consultation and the attempt to answer two key questions, 'What should the Arts Council be doing in support of film?'; and 'How should it be doing it?'

### **1.1 The Arts Council: Strategic Issues**

- 1.1.1 It is essential that the Arts Council develop a new film policy statement. This will establish specific aims, an action plan, and timescales for their achievement. It is postulated that substantial progress on all of the following recommendations can be achieved within the life of the next Arts Plan.
- 1.1.2 The new film policy and related plans need to be widely publicised to eliminate any misunderstanding about the degree of commitment the Arts Council has to film and its particular locus in regard to the medium.
- 1.1.3 STATCOM is currently working on its own strategic overview of the obstacles to the full development of film in the State, and it is necessary for the Arts Council to work on the development of its own new film policy with an awareness of the general film concerns in other agencies so that absolute clarity is established. The Arts Council must also have a role in the 'Think Tank', soon to be established by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.
- 1.1.4 The Arts Council should use the STATCOM forum to advocate its film policies and to encourage other bodies to assist in pursuing Arts Council initiatives.

### **1.2 The Arts Council: Film and Video Awards**

- 1.2.1 It is recommended that the Arts Council re-organise its Film and Video Awards into four strands:

- Artists' Film, Video and New Media Production Awards
- Frameworks Awards
- Arts and Creative Documentaries Awards
- Artists' Film Training and Mentoring Awards

#### **Artists' Film, Video and New Media Production Awards**

**Purpose:** the purpose of the Production Awards would be to encourage a range of high quality visually based and artistically challenging works which are innovative in method and formal in approach and which engage with and extend current debates in film and related new media as artforms.

**Scope:** the grants would be for the production of single-screen film and electronic media artworks, which would be achieve distribution and exhibition in cinemas, galleries and other spaces.

Funds would be available for development and production costs and, in certain circumstances, completion.

There would be no requirement regarding which format would be employed but it is unlikely that work on VHS or S-VHS would be of sufficient quality to receive an award. It is therefore more likely for work to be on 16mm, BetaSP or a similar format.



Eligibility: the scheme would be open to established and emergent artists who work with film and related media who are resident in Ireland. Full-time students or those who are likely to become students during the production period of the proposed project would not be eligible.

The awards could include the costs of the production of the project, fees to the artist and other key personnel, and the cost of a distribution print.

Criteria for Assessment:

- the creativity and originality of the proposed project;
- the technical and artistic quality of past works submitted as part of the application;
- the financial viability of the proposed project and the likelihood of its being realised for the budget and in the time schedule outlined in the application;
- the possibilities of its receiving distribution once completed.

Application Requirements:

- a summary/treatment of not more than two sides of A4;
- a budget;
- a production schedule;
- a script, or additional artwork, if appropriate;
- one VHS tape with examples of previous work that best support the application.

What the awards would not be: they would not be for feature films, drama or documentary (although projects may contain elements of either) community or education projects; the recording of events or performance; installation work; or film and video intended primarily for use as part of a live performance

Maximum Grant: £10,000.

### **Frameworks Awards**

It is recommended that the Arts Council continue to collaborate with the Irish Film Board and RTÉ on the Frameworks Scheme as it is currently running.

### **Arts and Creative Documentaries Awards**

It is recommended that the Arts Council enter into discussions with the Irish Film Board, RTÉ, Teilifís na Gaeilge, BBC Northern Ireland and Ulster Television to negotiate the establishment of a new scheme.

Purpose: the purpose of Arts and Creative Documentaries Awards would be to encourage the production of innovative documentaries on the theme of the arts and artists and other related subjects which make a highly creative use of the documentary form. It is anticipated that artists from artforms other than film would be integral to the creative processes of making the films. Works using the Irish language would be particularly welcome.

Scope: the scope of the scheme, eligibility, criteria for assessment and application requirements would be developed in association with the relevant partners.

### **Artists' Film Training and Mentoring Awards**

Purpose: the purpose of the awards would be to offer training and mentoring opportunities to established and emergent artists who work with film and related media who are resident in Ireland.

Eligibility the eligibility for Film Training and Mentoring Awards would be focused on developing skills amongst individuals who are most likely to apply to the new Arts Council Film, Video and New Media Production Awards (film and related media artists). These would include scriptwriters, visual artists and composers. Producers, directors, scriptwriters and people seeking training in technical areas of film are eligible for bursaries from the National Training Committee. In certain instances these people may identify wider study opportunities or seek personal development opportunities to develop their talent. However, reference should be made to the National Training Committee to avoid duplication. This would be achieved by the Arts Council being represented on the National Training Committee.

### **1.3 The Arts Council: Project-Based Awards**

#### **1.3.1 Artists Film and Video: Exhibition and Access**

It is recommended that the Arts Council establish a new scheme to encourage activities that widen access to, and broaden the appreciation of film, video and new media art by artists resident in Ireland. Support could be available to commission and tour new work, to tour existing work and for festivals and special screenings of work by artists.

Support should be offered primarily in recognition of the additional expenses associated with the production and exhibition of moving image work and it is expected that the Arts Council's contribution would be at least part matched from other sources.

Proposals for tours and festivals should include at least two showings outside Dublin.

### **1.4 The Arts Council: Residencies**

#### **1.4.1 Film/Video Artist in the Community**

It is recommended that the Arts Council offer an annual grant to enable artists and community groups to work together to develop and produce a community film or video.

Purpose: to encourage filmmakers to work in a community arts context and to develop films and video which are likely to attract production funding and distribution.

The application should come jointly from the artist and the community group. The award would be subject to Arts Council approval of the artist once selected.

It would be essential that both the artist and the community group can demonstrate that both have been involved in the process of shaping the project from the earliest stages and the result will be of some long-term benefit to the community

The award should be directed towards the process of developing a film/video project and it is likely that other sources of production finance would be necessary

Scope: there would be no restriction on the subject or duration of the proposed productions. However proposals would be assessed on the basis of:

- the originality of the proposed subject;
- the skills of the artist in working in a community setting;
- the viability of the project in terms of budget and timescale;
- the likelihood that the project, once developed, would attract production funding and distribution.

It is recommended that this scheme be administered by the Local Arts Development Unit of the Arts Council and that opportunities for film and video makers to be associated with other community arts initiatives be promoted and developed.

## **1.5 The Arts Council: Media Education**

It is recommended that the Arts Council assume an important role in advocating the value and importance of young people learning to appreciate, understand and participate in film and related media.

Media studies offers an ideal opportunity for upskilling in education in the State, and the Arts Council should advocate to teacher training authorities the importance of in-service training, grass roots teacher support and related publications. This would be realised through the Arts Council combining its role as funder of the Film Institute of Ireland education activities with its network of local arts officers to create links between the Department of Education, schools, the local arts officers network and the expertise of the FII/IFC. The aim would be to create new initiatives at local level throughout Ireland by encouraging co-operation at primary and secondary levels.

Funding applications from film organisations should be assessed according to the following criteria:

- the quality of the work and degree of commitment to increasing access, understanding and enjoyment of the moving image by young people;
- the quality of the programme to involve young people in making films and videos.

The Arts Council should work with the National Training Committee to foster links between the third level colleges and the film industry. A particular focus should be on whether there is a need for post-graduate courses in filmmaking and if this could be pursued through a consortium of third level colleges. Where consideration is being given to establishing an Irish Film School the proposal will be strengthened by pursuing it jointly with agencies in Northern Ireland.

## **1.6 The Arts Council: Cinema Audience Development and Access**

The Arts Council has a leading role to play in ensuring that people throughout Ireland have regular opportunities for enjoying a wider range of films than is currently possible through existing commercial cinemas.

It is recommended that the Arts Council create a Project Fund for Exhibition and invite organisations and consortia to submit bids for support.

The aims of the fund would be to ensure that:

- a wide choice of world cinema is available on a regular basis throughout Ireland;
- indigenous films are showcased in an appropriate context;
- the quality of cinema experience is of the highest technical and comfort standards for audiences;
- audience development and marketing strategies are implemented.

The fund should be set up initially on a pilot basis supporting a number of demonstration projects which would be evaluated before the scheme is extended.

The selection of demonstration projects should aim for

- equitable geographic spread
- even distribution across centres of population
- the likelihood of projects becoming self supporting over time.
- high quality of content and management

Two different kinds of demonstration grant should be available:

- initiatives which bring cinema provision to communities where there is no provision at present. These would be centred on communities with a population base of 10,000 within a 10 mile radius;
- initiatives which substantially increase the range and number of films which are available in communities where there is a restricted provision for cinema viewing. This would be focused on the university towns.

The Arts Council should limit its subsidy per seat occupied to a maximum of 50p.

Organisations that would be appropriate to make application to the fund include arts centres, the Irish Federation of Film Societies, independent cinema operators, festivals and the Film Institute of Ireland. It is likely that a cinemobile could emerge as one of the options and the various interested parties should be encouraged to develop proposals and to put them to the Arts Council.

Possible alternative sources of funding could come through the county enterprise boards.

It is recommended that the evaluation of the demonstration projects form a key component in a comprehensive study of the state of national screen culture. It should be undertaken jointly with the Irish Film Board.

Purpose: to examine the various options for creating cost-effective circuits/networks, co-ventures or consortia to widen choice for cinema audiences throughout Ireland.

Scope: the scope would include:

- an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of all the existing players with a direct interest in the Arts Council's policy aims in this area;
- assessment of the success or otherwise of previous initiatives;
- market research;
- examination of patterns of film availability;
- consideration of censorship issues;
- mapping and establishment of touring/screenings patterns (full-time/part-time operations/art centres etc.);
- an audit of existing venues, their suitability and their equipment;
- comparison of existing national provision with cinema networks in other countries;
- assessment of capital and revenue costs;
- identification of potential sources of funding for capital and revenue start up costs;
- examination of the possibilities for shared administration/marketing/co-ordination services.

### **1.7 The Arts Council: Community Film and Video Development at Local Level**

Social development through the arts is one of the priority areas identified by the Arts Council in *The Arts Plan*. Its recent re-structuring will strengthen its effectiveness in cross- arts development activities. Independent research has identified film and video as having the potential to play a significant part in taking forward the Arts Council's development work in widening access and participation in the arts throughout Ireland at local levels. As the embodiment of all the arts it is the ultimate cross-artform activity

It is recommended that the Arts Council's Local Arts Development Unit organise an open forum for all organisations promoting film and video in the community where they can be brought into contact with a range of community arts groups and local arts officers. This will be in addition to taking responsibility for running the Community Film and Video Artist residency.

The aim of the forum would be to encourage community groups to use film and video in developing community arts initiatives and to keep the film and video organisations aware of the Arts Council's wider work in fostering the arts at local level.

It is recommended that for funding applications from support organisations, work in community development through film and video be assessed using assessment criteria rooted in community arts practice. These would include consideration of:

- the degree of involvement members of the community have in shaping and managing the programme;
- the skills of leaders in community development work;
- the likely long-term benefits to the community that will result;
- the quality of the process being offered (rather than the specific end result).

### **1.8 The Arts Council: Film and the Irish Language**

It is recommended that the Arts Council ensure that the awards encourage the use of the Irish language, thus embracing the opportunities available through the Teilifis na Gaeilge (TnaG) and its interest in taking an inclusive view of encouraging English-speaking artists to work in Irish. A recent report by Odaras indicated that the audio visual sector is currently sustaining 300 jobs in the Gaeltacht.

It is also recommended that media education developments should include Irish language work. This would be of particular importance where teaching packs and materials are being developed.

### **1.9 The Arts Council: Cross-Border Issues**

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has recently devolved its film interests to the Northern Ireland Screen Commission which in turn has forged links with the Irish Film Board. The only context in which the possibilities of cross-border collaboration were mentioned during the consultation process was in promoting the Irish language, although the Arts Council Film and Video Awards are already open to filmmakers in Northern Ireland.

It is recommended that the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon seeks ways in which its existing cross-border work could expand to the specific areas of film which are within its remit.

One possible area would be the study suggested above in 1.6, with particular reference to Cinema Audience Development and Access. Northern Ireland has a well-established subsidised cinema in the Queen's Theatre, Belfast which offers the potential of collaboration in developing future cinema networks. Co-production initiatives should be encouraged and any consideration of a future Irish Film School needs to be looked at in collaboration with agencies in Northern Ireland.

### **1.10 The Arts Council: International Work**

The Irish Film Archive already offers a service to foreign festivals for prints of certain Irish films. This is a service which is appreciated by the film-making community, and it is recommended that the Arts Council continue to support this work. This is in addition to the role which the Cultural Relations Committee of The Department of Foreign Affairs already has in providing funding to artists to take their work abroad for showcasing.

It is recommended that the Arts Council continue to make Artflights available to filmmakers. These are clearly well used. However, the workings of Artflights should be

kept under review to make sure that there is no duplication of support with other agencies such as the Irish Trade Board and the National Training Committee.

It is recommended that in other international initiatives, the Arts Council include its film interests where appropriate with initiatives ranging across the other artforms. In particular its support of film and video artists should be included when the arts in Ireland are to be showcased abroad.

### **1.11 The Arts Council: Critical Debate**

The fostering of critical debate on film in Ireland is a responsibility shared between the Irish Film Board, the Arts Council and the Film Institute of Ireland. The Arts Council currently supports the debate through the indirect support it gives to two film magazines, published by Film Base and the Galway Film Resource Centre. In future, it is recommended that support to these organisations earmarks how much money is designated to the publications and what the money is for. As the Arts Council develops its new policy based on the new awards scheme, education initiatives and audience development, it must develop specific assessment criteria, which encourage debate on these particular issues.

### **1.12 The Arts Council: Funded Organisations**

The following recommendations relate directly to the organisations in receipt of financial support from the Arts Council.

The FII/IFC is now emerging from a period of difficulty and is currently examining its own way ahead. The Arts Council has already invested a great deal in getting the FII/IFC into its current stable position and it should now support its advance in a clearly sustainable way

The FII/IFC should be fully involved in the initiatives to develop media education and to look at possibilities for developing cinema provision outside Dublin. However, any significant expansion in its activities would be on the basis of carefully worked out development plans with mutually agreed targets and measures.

It would be mutually advantageous to both organisations, if the Dublin Film Festival and FII/IFC look at collaborative ventures, such as sharing resources and administrative costs.

New funding criteria should be drawn up for support organisations which focus on their roles in developing education and participation, and in assisting entrant, first-time and community film and video makers. This would be separated from support which goes to the magazines.

The Federation of Film Societies has recently completed a feasibility study into its own future viability in the light of the decreasing availability of its operating format, 16mm. This is a problem facing film societies world-wide. The creation of the proposed Project Fund for Exhibition will give an ideal opportunity to the Federation to be a player in the future of cinema exhibition in the State.

It is recommended that a closer examination of funding support for film festivals be considered after the Project Fund for Exhibition initiatives recommended in 1.6 are established. In the meantime the Arts Council will only consider additional support to film festivals as part of the pilot Project Fund for Exhibition. The evaluation of the pilot and additional research will make reference to the role of film festivals.

### **1.13 The Arts Council: Implementation of Proposed Recommendations**

Successful implementation all of the above recommendations would require a high level of commitment from the Arts Council. However, their achievement would be welcomed at all levels of the film community.

It is an inevitable conclusion of this report that if the Arts Council adopts a new film policy and gives it the necessary profile, then working towards the appointment of a full-time Film Officer for the duration of the next Arts Council is important. This arrangement should be reviewed at the end of the next Arts Plan when many of the new initiatives will be up and running and the workload may lessen on Arts Council staff. The duties of the Film Officer include:

- developing and implementing the new film policy;
- promoting and developing the new film awards;
- working with the Arts Council's Local Arts Development Unit to provide specialist expertise in community film and video developments;
- managing and implementing the establishment of a pilot Project Fund for Exhibition and its longer term evaluation, and the commissioning of additional research jointly with the Film Board;
- facilitating the media education development programme;
- revising funding arrangements with applicant organisations to align with new film policy and giving feedback;
- organising and attending events to promote Arts Council film activities.

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Opinions expressed during the consultation**

1. This section consists of a summary of opinions gathered as part of the review process during July, August and September 1997 by Erika King. The views were taken using a number of methods. Over a four-day period at the Galway Film Fleadh, a series of seventeen one-hour interviews was conducted involving at least twenty-one people. They included the editors of Ireland's two film magazines, representatives of various film festivals, Film Institute of Ireland, film support organisations and members of STATCOM. STATCOM is a committee of State and Semi-State agencies dealing with Irish film, established under the 1993 Film Board (Amendment) Act and chaired by the Film Board. Its membership comprises senior representatives from RTÉ, TnaG, the Arts Council, Forbairt, IDA Ireland, An Bord Trachtala, FÁS, Údárás na Gaeltachta, Bord Fáilte, the Department of Education and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.
2. The second phase of interviews took place over a two-week period in August in Dublin and Kilkenny where a further thirty one-hour interviews took place with other members of STATCOM, organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding, film writers, academics, Arts Council members, staff and ex-staff. This was augmented by telephone consultation and other follow-up contacts.
3. At the end of August a short questionnaire was sent to approximately 400 filmmakers throughout Ireland inviting their views on the specific issue of the Arts Council's Film and Video Awards. The response rate was 10% and this was followed up with an open forum held in Cork during the Cork International Film Festival in October. The views expressed have all influenced the conclusions and recommendations contained in Section Three.

4. The format of all the interviews was the same. The interviewee was given the opportunity to give their views around four topics:
  - the key issues facing the development of film in Ireland today;
  - the agencies which should be addressing the issues and how;
  - film-related activities which the Arts Council is currently undertaking which could be done differently, or in collaboration with another organisation;
  - film-related activities which the Arts Council should be doing but which it currently is not.

For organisations in receipt of financial support from the Arts Council there was an additional topic:

- areas of support (other than finance) with which the Arts Council could assist.
5. The summary of views which follows has also been structured around the topics that were raised by the interviewees themselves. One issue, on which there was universal agreement was that the Arts Council should and must continue its involvement with film as an artform. This is most clearly appreciated and valued. There was no interest in transferring the Arts Council's film responsibilities to another organisation and the preferred option was to see it develop alongside the other arts which the Arts Council support, but for it to have a higher recognition and status than is currently the case.
  6. The questionnaire to filmmakers and the open forum was structured around the following questions:
    - Is it appropriate for the Arts Council to operate a Film and Video Awards Scheme?
    - What should the awards be for?
    - Should priority go to particular categories of film or filmmakers?
    - What should the assessment criteria be?
    - What should the assessment process be?
    - What suggestions can be made for ways in which Arts Council awards could be made more relevant to the needs of filmmakers in Ireland?

## 7. Summary of Views From Film Community: Policy Issues For The Arts Council

### 7.1 Production Awards

By far the most frequently mentioned issue from the film organisations group was the future and importance of the Arts Council's awards. There was strong approval for there being diverse sources of film funding in Ireland.

This topic produced a wide range of comments including:

- The Arts Council should develop the art of film;
- The Irish Film Board takes on the economic realities of film production so the Arts Council should take on the cultural agenda. (This was also expressed as 'the Irish Film Board makes investments; the Arts Council should give non-repayable prizes'. And: 'the Board is required to balance risk with reality, but the Arts Council need not have this restriction. The Arts Council should support projects which are culturally justifiable but are not economically viable.');
- The Arts Council should fund work which does not match the support criteria of the short film schemes run by The Irish Film Board, TnaG, RT6, Film Base and Galway Film Centre;
- The Arts Council should support the research and development end of film making and encourage risk taking.



Several people advocated that the Arts Council should adopt a similar approach to the Arts Council of England's Film and Video Department but modified to the Irish context.

There were specific suggestions about the kind of work which the awards should support, such as:

- time-based and site-specific work;
- new media and multi-media work;
- non-narrative/non-script/visually based work;
- 'works which break the moulds of convention';
- documentaries about artists;
- 'creative' documentaries;
- 'non-mainstream voices from the margins';
- experimental animation.

Suggestions were made about the kind of artists who should be supported by the Arts Council, for example:

- those engaging in experimental work particularly those working outside Dublin;
- those requiring support at the script stage;
- entrant and first-time filmmakers;
- people with film projects budgeted between £5k-£10k.

It was felt that:

- applicants should be assessed on whether they have the potential and commitment to achieve what they are setting out to do;
- they should be assessed on the basis of previous work but applicants 'should not need a degree - just a portfolio';
- assessment should be based on the quality, originality and innovation of ideas coming forward;
- Arts Council awards should encourage risk taking;
- animators should be supported as artists during the time between Ballyfermot College and Frameworks;
- the Arts Council should be pro-active in the way it runs its awards to advocate the area of work it is supporting and encourage good quality applications;
- the selection process should be transparent and feedback should be given particularly to unsuccessful applicants;
- some respondents would like the Arts Council to offer filmmakers support during the process of making their films;
- the Arts Council could organise screenings of supported films.

However, respondents felt that the Arts Council should not be too prescriptive about the kind of work it supports, and that a bit of overlap with the Film Board is not harmful to this part of the sector. This came across as suggesting that the Arts Council be flexible in the way it structures and runs its awards scheme.

Every member of STATCOM commented on the film and video awards. Their views, which were substantially in agreement, included:

- that the Arts Council should clarify its role in film production;
- that its focus should complement the work of the Irish Film Board and should be developed in association with RTÉ;
- that awards should encourage filmmakers working in Irish;
- that the Arts Council should not get into the multi-funding of projects with other agencies;
- that the Arts Council should encourage artists working in multi-media and convergent technologies;

- that the profile of the Arts Council awards should be improved so that winners are given greater prestige for their achievement;
- that the Arts Council should encourage the making of films/videos about artists in association with the Irish Film Board, RTÉ and TnaG.

There was strong support for diversity of film funding in Ireland and no objections were raised to the Arts Council having a scheme of its own. Where there is a tendency to overlap in remit, co-ventures should be undertaken with the Irish Film Board, RTÉ and TnaG.

## 7.2 Media Education

From the film organisations group (twenty-one interviews), a third of people consulted drew particular attention to the need for developing film education in Ireland. The consensus was that media education is seriously under-developed and that the Arts Council should be taking the lead in advancing it.

Opinions about what strategies the Arts Council should pursue included:

- that it should have an advocacy role with the education authorities and educationalists;
- that it should support the process of developing media education without becoming involved in the end result;
- that it should support 'filmmakers-in-schools' initiatives similar to the programmes which exist in other art-forms;
- that it should establish an education fund to which projects could apply

Other interviewees thought that work in media education should be taken forward by the Film Institute of Ireland in the form of in-service training for teachers and developing educational materials.

From thirteen STATCOM interviews the following views were expressed:

- that the new Government White Paper on Education makes a commitment to developing media education;
- that the Department of Education sees the best way forward as being through local co-operation;
- that the Arts Council has a role in creating that co-operation through using its networks.

Other STATCOM members suggested that the Arts Council has a locus in:

- exciting children's imaginations at all levels;
- making sure that the White Paper commitments are implemented;
- maintaining a strategic overview of co-operation between arts centres, local arts officers and FII/IFC;
- in-service and teacher training in film studies;
- local networking;
- encouraging youth groups to work with film and video;
- fostering greater dialogue at third level colleges where there is a need for developing tolerance and listening between education and the film industry;
- bringing together third level colleges to explore possible collaborations in offering post-graduate courses (de facto Irish Film School).

## 7.3 Film Institute of Ireland/Irish Film Centre

Thirteen of the people interviewed from the Film organisations group gave a view about the future contribution of the FII/IFC in taking forward the cause of film culture in Ireland. Some

felt that the problems of the FII have now been tackled and that it is therefore no longer a major concern to the Arts Council. All other interviewees expressed the view in various ways that the FII/IFC is identified too much with Dublin, and indeed Temple Bar, and that it needs to become a resource throughout Ireland.

Several people expressed the view that the FII should take on a national role in promoting media education. However, the point was made that if it is to take on such a role, then a clear distinction would have to be made between the IFC, which would focus on the Temple Bar operation, and the FII which should take forward the national remit.

Both the IFC and the Dublin Film Festival would benefit if the two organisations had much closer links.

It was also felt that there is a real synergy between the FII's education, archive, library and exhibition work but that the situation now needs to be moved on.

Three people made specific mention of the Archive. One felt it should be independent so that it could take up a national remit; the other two also thought it could take up a national remit but without being separate to FII/IFC (which is believed to be an unrealistic proposition).

From STATCOM:

- the Arts Council should foster and sustain the Archive function;
- the FII should assume a more national role in association with film societies to widen access to film exhibition throughout Ireland;
- the IFC could become the hub of a national cinema exhibition circuit;
- the FII could help to get media education moving in primary and secondary level education as part of an Arts Council-led initiative also involving the Department of Education and local arts officers;
- any expansion of FII/IFC's work outside Temple Bar should be within the context of a proper development plan and the Arts Council should set clear targets and measures for its implementation.

#### 7.4 Audience Development

Fourteen of the people interviewed from the film organisations group raised the issue of giving more opportunities to people throughout Ireland to enjoy a wider range of films.

Several respondents were concerned that audiences in Ireland should be able to see Irish films on a regular basis. A number of people thought that provision should not be limited to Irish films but should extend to European, American independent and world cinema (i.e. everything other than mainstream Hollywood). They also expressed the view that there should be a network of exhibition provision for films in the same way as there are networks in theatre.

Some very specific suggestions were made about how this might be realised. These included:

- forming a consortium between the IFC/Irish Film Board/ the Arts Council to promote a French-style cinemobile;
- forming a consortium of film societies/IFC and local authorities to promote access to films outside Dublin;
- liaising with the Independent Cinema Owners to explore ways of developing access;
- one very precise suggestion was that there should be a network, which draws in the towns of Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and Sligo with a central servicing core to arrange distribution and liaise with the censors.

Among STATCOM members there was a strongly expressed view that the Arts Council has a role in increasing the opportunities for people in Ireland to see indigenous films.

There was support for the creation of some kind of circuit/network which could include:

- arts centres
- film societies
- mobile cinema

The circuit would operate year round but not necessarily full-time. It would offer central planning and co-ordination. The Arts Council was to be encouraged to undertake a feasibility study into all aspects of this issue.

There was also believed to be a role for the Arts Council in persuading the commercial cinemas to show indigenous films.

Interviewees were reluctant to talk in terms of 'arthouse' cinema which they felt had 'the wrong connotations'.

## 7.5 Film Festivals

Five respondents from the film organisations group mentioned the Arts Council's support for film festivals.

There was consensus on the point that the Arts Council re-prioritise its funding of festivals and rationalise it by setting clear funding objectives and linking funding to their achievement. There was also an implication that the Arts Council was supporting enough film festivals and it should be strategic in what it supports.

Festivals were only mentioned by one STATCOM member and this was to suggest that the Arts Council undertake a review of its film festival support and direct it towards festivals that offer networking opportunities and a showcase to young talent in Ireland.

## 7.6 Film Societies

Four respondents from the film organisations group drew attention to the film societies. The views expressed were that:

- film societies play an essential role in widening access to film culture in Ireland;
- film societies have the long-term potential to help with distribution in Ireland of indigenous films;
- they should link up with the IFC to develop public access outside Dublin;
- the idea of moving into 35mm is impractical and too expensive to be realised.

## 7.7 Critical Writing and Debate

Nine respondents from the film organisations group addressed the need for a critical debate about film in Ireland and all thought it was appropriate for the Arts Council to be involved in stimulating this debate. They felt that:

- the ongoing debate which is normal in theatre circles should also take place in the film making community and it should be encouraged by the Arts Council;
- there is a need for filmmakers in Ireland to ask why they are making films. Is it because they want to make money; as cultural expression; or as film for film's sake?
- artists in Ireland have a tendency to be inward looking and the film theorists are 'out of touch'.

There was an eagerness to keep the debate alive, particularly on the distinction between a 'national cinema' and an 'indigenous film industry'.

One member of STATCOM raised this particular matter, expressing the view that Ireland is at a very creative stage at the moment and that film is seen to be contributing to this process. This requires a debate about film's place in society just as there is a debate in other artforms. "There is room for more debate and the Arts Council should support it taking place.'

#### 7.8 Community Film and Video

Six respondents from the film organisations group called on the Arts Council to review its interventions with film and video as an aspect of social development. Views expressed were that:

- community film and video is very underdeveloped and its potential should be taken forward by the Arts Council;
- the Arts Council should create an open forum for organisations promoting film and video in the community;
- the Arts Council should establish a community fund which projects could bid to.

Three respondents thought that community video awards should be transferred into the Local Arts Development unit of the Arts Council and assessed according to the criteria which apply to community arts.

Only one member from STATCOM mentioned this topic and it was to confirm that developing film and video has a role in community arts in Ireland and should be located in that part of the Arts Council's interests. However, it was felt that Film Base should be assuming a training role in this area and could provide community groups with resources and help.

#### 7.9 Film at Local Level

Four respondents from the film organisations group thought that the network of local authority arts officers could be very useful for promoting access to film culture at local level. Suggestions included:

- local arts officers could be very helpful with education, community and outreach activities through promotion and access;
- local arts officers could act as advocates of film and video to local authorities;
- there is potential in developing networks at local level to improve access to film and video;
- there is a need for local arts officers to be educated, focused and given entrepreneurial skills.

Two members of STATCOM mentioned the development of film at local level and this was to suggest that local arts officers have an important role to play in getting a wide range of film activities going at local level.

#### 7.10 Film and the Irish Language

Two respondents from the film organisations group mentioned the need for the Arts Council to encourage films to be made in Irish and for media education to be undertaken in Irish.

Four STATCOM members encouraged the Arts Council to 'get behind the Irish language'. The agencies with a direct interest in fostering film making in Irish take an inclusive view of English-speaking artists wanting to work in Irish. They think that the Arts Council has an advocacy role with the artists it supports in encouraging this kind of cross-language fertilisation.

The view was expressed that film awards and media education initiatives should be as open to Irish language initiatives as they are for English language projects. There was also a suggestion that the Arts Council might pursue these initiatives in association with their counterparts in Northern Ireland.

#### 7.11 Cross-Artform Activities

Three members of the film organisations group said that there was support for the notion that since film is the embodiment of all artforms, the Arts Council is in an ideal position to encourage cross-fertilisation between filmmakers and the other arts.

#### 7.12 Scholarships and Artflights

There was high approval from the film organisations group of the Arts Council's Artflights and scholarships being available to filmmakers. Particular support came from the Media Desk and the Media Antenna Galway. The scholarships, however, should be clearly differentiated from travel awards on offer from the National Training Committee.

There was a feeling among STATCOM members that the Arts Council should not have a role in training for the film industry and that provision of Artflights, which are welcomed, should complement the FÁS bursaries. Any training scholarships from the Arts Council should go to artist filmmakers to undertake training at institutions such as the Royal College of Art or the Art Institute of Chicago.

#### 7.13 Capital and Other Forms of Financial Support

Two community workshops mentioned the need for assistance with purchasing capital equipment and one person identified the need to offer assistance for directors to develop their talent.

### **8. Summary of Views From Film Community: Strategic Issues For The Arts Council**

The following suggestions from the Film organisations group relate to the strategic issues and 'softer' activities that the Arts Council could do to support film.

#### 8.1 Networking

There is an awareness that other artforms which the Arts Council supports have well-developed touring networks/circuits and venues. Respondents would like to see film have its own network. Related to this, there is a view that there is mutual suspicion between many film organisations (for a variety of reasons) but that the Arts Council is well placed to address the problem by fostering links (for which it was felt there was a strong need) across the sector.

#### 8.2 Advocacy

Respondents would like to see the Arts Council advocating the cultural side of film with local authorities, as well as with other State and Semi-State bodies particularly as it relates to young people's work. They feel that the Arts Council's involvement could give legitimacy to these areas of work.

### 8.3 Transparency

Half of all respondents wanted more feedback and information about the Arts Council's film policies and activities. They thought that:

- the Arts Council should take film seriously and be seen to be committed to the medium;
- the Arts Council's policies should cover local/national and international levels;
- the Arts Council should have a member who was there specifically to speak on behalf of film;
- the Arts Council should have a full-time Film Officer with the remit to support production activities; develop new initiatives; executive produce supported films; network; present policy and improve the profile of the Arts Council's film work;
- supported films should be showcased in the Arts Council's gallery;
- the Arts Council should make clear exactly what funding is available and what activities it is intending to support.

There was a positive reaction to the series of funding workshops which the Arts Council organised in late 1997, and the suggestion was made several times that the Arts Council should organise open forums on its film policies, possibly using existing events and networks.

Four STATCOM members were unsure what the Arts Council's locus on film was.

There was strong support for STATCOM having a coherent strategy and the Arts Council being part of that strategy

Two members stated that the Arts Council should be proactive and not coy in pursuit of its film policies. They felt that there was a tendency for the Arts Council to put money into film but not to get involved and therefore not to get any of the credit.

It was suggested that the Arts Council should network more with the other agencies in STATCOM to achieve its objectives and encourage them to put money in and ensure they get the credit.

One member stated that once the Screen Commission of Ireland comes on stream there will be a need for absolute clarity between the role of the Arts Council, Irish Film Board and Screen Commission of Ireland.

Three members expressed the view that the next Arts Council should have a member who represented the interests of film.

One member recommended that the Arts Council should have a full-time Film Officer who would sit on STATCOM.

## Appendix 2

### The case studies : Scotland and Australia

#### 1. Introduction

In considering film policy for the Arts Council of Ireland, it is useful to examine the experience of other countries as they have developed their own cultural policies in relation to film. This study briefly examines two such national experiences.

Scotland and Australia could hardly be more unlike in physical characteristics, political structures and in many other ways, but they share with Ireland and each other the experience of ambition in film culture and in belonging to the predominantly English-speaking cultures overwhelmed by the products of Hollywood. Their difficulty in establishing a clearly definable film identity that is both culturally and economically viable may provide some lessons.

#### 2. Scotland

Scotland has a close affinity to Ireland in terms of size (78,500 sq. km. to Ireland's 70,000 sq. km.), population (5 million to 3.5 million) and culture. Although formerly an independent country, Scotland is now part of the United Kingdom retaining certain distinctions in such areas as the law, education and religion.

In 1997, following the election of a new British government, it has been decided that the already largely devolved administrative structure for Scotland should now be matched politically with the establishment of a Scottish Parliament (the first since the Treaty of Union in 1707). Cultural affairs have always been at least partly a matter determined within Scotland but it is only since the break-up of ACGB into separate bodies for England, Wales and Scotland that overall cultural policy in Scotland has had the possibility of a much-needed general coherence.

#### 2.1 Historical Context

Scotland's film history has been 'uneven' at best. Individual Scots have contributed importantly to various aspects of the moving image media. John Grierson was 'the father of the documentary'; his protege, Norman McLaren, was one of the most influential animators;

Alexander Mackendrick, Sean Connery and many other Scots have made significant international marks as directors and performers, and in other disciplines. Scots have been major movie and television bosses since the invention of the media. John Logie Baird was one (if maybe not 'the') inventor of television.

These achievements have this in common however, that virtually all of them were gained outside of Scotland. Scotland may have had an honourable track record as a producer of documentaries but in the big time of feature film making, and in terms of film as an expression of its culture, Scotland has been posted missing - at least until recent years. Now, up to a dozen Scottish films per annum, or at least films largely based in Scotland, have been made. The comparable Irish figure is about ten per year.

Scotland has at best been a location. In a situation readily recognisable in Ireland, Scottish landscape and culture has been used by incoming companies and producers, many of whom have had little connection with, and less understanding of, the society and culture they were seeking to portray Perhaps the most famous recent instance of this sort of activity was in the immensely successful and historically almost wholly inaccurate *Braveheart* (1995) which although about one of the great Scottish heroes was filmed mainly in Ireland with Scottish hills imported by computer.



Despite this, or maybe in reaction to it, the development of screen culture has always been strong in Scotland. Scots were prominent in creating the British Film Institute (BFI) in the early 1930s; they were particularly strong in setting up and sustaining the film society movement; media education in its modern form was largely pioneered in Scotland; the regional film theatre movement was enthusiastically embraced so that the attendance figures are proportionately much greater than south of the border; the first UK film archive outside London, the Scottish Film Archive, was founded in 1976; and structures to promote vocational training, screen writing, screen locations and other aspects of film culture and industry were developed.

Central to much of these development was the Scottish Film Council (SFC). Originally set up, in 1934 as a 'regional' committee of the BFI it quickly became autonomous, devoting its energies mainly to the service of education while sustaining an interest in film culture, particularly through the film society movement. Its association with formal and informal education in Scotland (for many years it ran the Scottish Central Film Library - said to be the largest 16mm educational film library in Europe) led to its transformation in 1976 into the Scottish Council for Educational Technology, within which the original name, and a statutory committee with staff, was retained for purely film cultural matters. In 1990, SFC gained, or regained, full autonomy as a 'non-departmental public body' grant-aided directly by government through the Scottish Office. By 1994 its grant was over £1 million.

The largest single element in SFC's budget was in support of Regional Film Theatres. As already mentioned, the RFTs represent a significantly larger part of the exhibition sector in Scotland than their equivalents south of the border (nearly 30% of UK admissions from a population of 10% of the UK). This is attributable to two factors: SFC's important policy decision in the late 1960s to put most of its meagre resources into audience-related activity; and the obvious gap in the provision of 'arthouse' cinema in Scotland (there were only two for the entire country).

The result was the creation of arguably the two most successful RFTs in the UK (Glasgow Film Theatre and Filmhouse, Edinburgh) with a network of smaller or part-time venues in Inverness, Dundee, Stirling, Dumfries and Kirkcaldy. Only one theatre (in Irvine) proved unviable. The average annual total admissions for Scottish RFTs is about 400,000 with Edinburgh and Glasgow accounting for three-quarters. Current major developments in Dundee and Aberdeen will provide these cities with multi-screen RFTs very shortly.

In addition to the RFTs, SFC supported film festivals, particularly Edinburgh, the film society movement, and the establishment of community cinemas and mobile cinemas in rural areas. Concentration on exhibition provision proved very important for a small country with little indigenous film making in that it guaranteed outlets for such production as there was and created an informed audience seeing world cinema including, not least, the local filmmakers themselves.

Scottish success in the promotion of media education stemmed from the combination of national and grass roots enthusiasm for the idea of creating a media literate society. By introducing media studies in primary and secondary education with the full participation of teachers, administrators and academics, a momentum was developed over the past twenty years that ensured that media education was not merely the province of a few teachers of English or art but had the backing of a substantial part of the system as a whole, and even became part of the formal examination structure.

The Scottish Film Council was a key player in the movement by providing a focus and back-up for the wide range of activities that constitute media education. In doing so it occupied a unique position in curriculum development in Scotland since all other subject disciplines were the province of specific education agencies within the Curriculum Development Service.

Most of the energy, however, was derived from classroom teachers many of whom were members of the Association for Media Education in Scotland (AMES) who generated much of their own teaching materials through groups at school, local and regional level. In addition, SFC, in collaboration with AMES and the Curriculum Development agencies sponsored by the Scottish Office Education Department, produced major packages for national and worldwide sale.

From 1990, SFC was also largely responsible for creating other separate agencies including Scottish Screen Locations (1995-96 grant income, £91,500) and Scottish Broadcast and Film Training (£155,000 plus £170,000 commercial funding) which together with the Scottish Film Production Fund (£415,000 plus £250,000) became consolidated as a new body Scottish Screen (see below) in 1997.

Production funding supported by public finance in Scotland also has a tortuous history. The body set up in 1954 to promote Scotland through documentaries, the Films of Scotland Committee, never received government subsidy, depending entirely on sponsorship and its ability to sell its products as cinema shorts. However in 1980, the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) set up its own film committee and in doing so created a spectacular double anomaly

As part of the ACGB, SAC had no remit for film. It did, however, have a need to encourage film to be made in the service of the other arts, including moving image elements in artists' work, and, in that cause, had already collaborated with the by now defunct Films of Scotland Committee, producing high quality documentaries on arts subjects such as painting and architecture. SAC now argued that since literature was one of the arts it was bound to support, it could therefore engage with fiction film making, and on the basis of that logic, its new committee contributed funding to Mike Radford's film, *Another Time, Another Place* (1983).

The other obvious anomaly was that while SAC was supporting feature film production having no real remit to do so, the body charged with the promotion of film, the Scottish Film Council, could not fund film production because it did not have any money, having chosen instead to fund regional film theatres, the Scottish Film Archive, media education and other activities. This untenable situation was resolved even before Radford's film was released when joint action by SAC and SFC resulted in the government agreeing to support a new Scottish Film Production Fund (SFPF), to be run by SFC and financed partly from SAC'S existing film allocation and partly by new money. It first met in 1982. SAC continued to contribute to the funding of SFPF until 1993 but otherwise focused on artists using moving images. In 1997, SFPF became part of the new agency Scottish Screen.

In 1995, SAC re-entered the mainstream film scene as a distributor of Lottery funds for, among everything else, film. By this time, however, a major change had occurred in Scottish film making in that truly indigenous feature film production had become an occasional reality. The origins of this situation lay in the extraordinary determination of Bill Forsyth who with *That Sinking Feeling* (1979) and Gregory's *G'r/* (1980) proved the possibility that story films, funded to some extent locally, on essentially domestic Scottish subjects with no trace of tartanry, could draw audiences all around the world. The growth in confidence and funding since that time has seen a transformation. The possibility of a credible and sustainable film industry in Scotland is no longer as improbable as it was a relatively few years ago.

Historically, the debate about what sort of film production Scotland should try to develop dates from at least the post war period when an abortive attempt was made to set up a 'National Film Studio'. One of its declared aims was to counter the image of Scotland purveyed by Hollywood and London. At the latter end of the 'Films of Scotland' period in the 1960s and 1970s, Scotland's independent filmmakers banded together under the banner of 'Film Bang' and 'Cinema in a Small Country' to argue for more resources. In an echo of that movement, the independents and their supporters launched 'Scottish Stand' at the 1997 Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Over the years, the fundamental issues have remained much the same - the lack of money and who has control of what there is. The difference now is one of scale. Whereas previously the argument was largely hypothetical in that there was virtually no money anyway, with the coming of the Lottery and local production funds there are now relatively substantial sums available, and where once the debate was about whether it was possible to construct a 'poor' Scottish Film industry (as advocated by the critic Colin McArthur) it is now more a question of ensuring an equitable share for the indigenous filmmakers. There are therefore inevitable arguments about the definition of 'Scottish' as applied to films and filmmakers, about public money going to expatriates who 'return' to claim it, as opposed to those who never left home, or to companies that use Scotland as no more than a location, and so on. The matter will be compounded by the introduction of tax breaks, but at least the debate has acquired very welcome substance.

## 2.2 Structures

As the section above reveals, the history of Scotland's film culture is complex. Only in 1997, with the creation of Scottish Screen could it be claimed that order was finally being brought to the situation. In fact, not least because of the new role of the Scottish Arts Council as a Lottery funder, anomalies remain.

Scottish Screen was conceived as a 'one-stop' agency with a remit covering all aspects of film in Scotland. It is therefore as much a promotional organisation for the making, distribution and exhibition of film, as a cultural body encouraging its enjoyment, study and preservation. As noted, it therefore embraces the former entities Scottish Screen Locations, Scottish Broadcast and Film Training, the Scottish Film Production Fund and the Scottish Film Council. The Film Council component includes responsibility for the Scottish Film Archive, media education, and the funding of exhibition outlets including the Glasgow Film Theatre, Edinburgh Filmhouse, regional film theatres throughout the country, mobile cinema, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, video and film workshops, the film society movement, and numerous other clients and projects.

Scottish Screen's own structures are currently being evolved but it is expected that 'development' and 'marketing' will comprise major divisions within the system and that the development of infrastructure for commercial film making, including the establishing of film studios, will be a high priority concern for the new organisation. Some concern has been expressed that with attention concentrated on the commercial dimension of film making and an increasingly close relationship with the television industry, the specifically cultural issues to do with film may be marginalised.

The perceived danger is that the less glamorous activities - those not immediately associated with production - might have their financial and political support reduced. In fact, to diminish or compromise the work of, for example, the RFTs would be counterproductive not least since they provide the only sure outlet for almost all indigenous products, the number of native films likely to make it to the commercial screens being very small. Indeed, the RFTs role as central to Scottish film culture is not in doubt and the likelihood is that they will not be adversely affected by the current changes.

Apart from 'industry' organisations such as BAFTA Scotland, and the Producers' Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT), there are local agencies in support of production, including the Glasgow Film Fund (1995-96 budget, £344,410) and Edinburgh and Lothian Screen Industries Office (£175,000).

A crucial body with a special sector as its concern is the Gaelic Television Committee (Comataidh Telebhisein Gaidlig). Formed in 1991 as a result of a cleverly organised campaign by Comunn na Gaidlig it was based on the precedent of S4C (Welsh Channel Four). In 1993 it received £9.5m from the Scottish Office. In 1995-96 this was reduced to

£8.7m. Although cinema does not fall within its remit, it has backed two feature films, -As an *Eilean* (1993) and *Main Mhor* (1994) as well as the short film scheme 'Geur Ghearr'. Its influence both as a funder and a source of energy and backer of original work and new talent has been considerable.

Only one other agency now has a significant bearing on film culture in Scotland. It is, however, a very major player, if not by its own choice. The Scottish Arts Council, in common with the Arts Council of England and other bodies, has been charged with the disbursement of funds from the National Lottery Governments having decided that all arts funding should be via the Arts Councils, and that film comes within that category, has therefore obliged SAC to fulfil that function in relation to Scotland, despite the fact that SAC has no film expertise - an echo of the situation nearly twenty years ago. SAC has therefore used the Scottish Film Production Fund and now Scottish Screen to provide the guidance necessary to arrive at judgements on film matters ranging from capital projects, such as regional film theatre refurbishment, to feature film awards of up to £1 million. Thus £10 million was awarded in 1996, half of it to film productions and the rest to a mixture of building and other projects.

In 1997, a review of the system has been undertaken by SAC to ensure that it is discharging its duty as well as possible as a Lottery disburser in respect of film. At the same time, concerns are growing that the amount of Lottery money available for film, as for the other arts, will almost certainly diminish significantly in the next few years so that it must be worrying if the film industry, or film culture in general, is in the process of becoming over dependent on Lottery cash. Nonetheless, it remains the case that SAC as a body with no formal remit for film has now a most important, indeed crucial, role in the furtherance of film culture in Scotland.

At another level, SAC maintains its long-standing interest in moving image media in the context of work by artists which incorporates film, video or multimedia. In a position similar to that of the Australia Council (see 3.2, pp 45-46), the criteria used to determine suitability for grant funding are those which apply to the particular project as a whole, irrespective of the specific medium.

### 2.3 New Media and Moving Image Art

As explained above, SAC has no remit for 'film' other than in the context of the National Lottery. However an increasing number of visual artists, particularly those at the leading edge of new work and employing new techniques, choose to work with moving images in ways that are often remote from conventional film making but are entirely valid in their own terms. This immediately raises the question of definition which is central to dealing with these issues. Traditionally, film was essentially a narrative medium, whether in fiction or documentary, and therefore (as noted above) more closely allied with literature than with the visual arts. With increasingly accessible new technologies, particularly video but latterly computer-based systems, the opportunity for creative artists to express themselves using images that moved, that could be manipulated, increased exponentially.

Moreover, many of these artists worked deliberately against the conventions of 'normal' film making. Although filmmakers had always had experimenters among their ranks (Bunuel's collaboration with Salvador Dali, for example), they still expected their work to be screened to an audience in a cinema. Now, many artists see the natural outlet for their work as the gallery rather than the cinema and even those who wish their work to be presented to a seated audience in a dark room do so within the context of video workshops, festivals or similar events.

Even the expression 'video artist' is no longer acceptable to many who use moving image technology. They prefer to describe themselves as 'artists who use video (or whatever)

medium). Similarly, the expression 'creative film, video and new media' is gaining in currency (although filmmakers might argue that their art was always creative, anyway). However, the idea of such a portmanteau expression is that it covers artists' film and video, non-mainstream film, film and video installations, new technology and cross-over with other media such as music and dance. Again, questions arise as to the definition of 'mainstream' film which might well cause debate in some quarters.

The net effect of all this is that it has become extremely difficult to categorise a great deal of contemporary and experimental work as either film or non-film. It is usually possible to identify work as moving image but if the moving image component is only one element in the experience, the doubt is there as to which agency is the most appropriate to deal with the funding of the artist. Evidence of this problem, in relation to SAC, comes in that they find it extremely difficult to quantify work in this area, either in terms of artists using moving images or the amount spent in grants to such artists, because all visual art schemes and support mechanisms for individual artists are open to those who choose to express themselves through film, video or new media. They also support venues which promote such work.

The problems of definition are not confined to SAC. Scottish Screen, as the promoter of a number of schemes to encourage new talent ('First Reels', 'Tartan Shorts', 'Prime Cuts', 'Geur Ghearr' etc.) also has an interest in the experimental use of moving images. It may be that its approach is more 'conventional' in that it seeks to develop new talent for the mainstream of film and television production, but with its responsibility for the workshop sector and film culture as a whole it has to take an interest in these matters.

Significantly, SAC and Scottish Screen have recently combined to commission research on these very issues with a view to resolving the dilemmas of definition and responsibility. One possible outcome is the creation of a new agency, jointly funded by both bodies, to concern itself exclusively with 'moving image art'.

#### 2.4 Messages from Scotland

Perhaps the conclusion reached by examining the past and present of film in Scotland is not very different from that in relation to Australia, namely that clarity of remit, intention, structure and purpose is essential if creative energy is to be given its full rein and opportunity. The tortuous history of Scottish film agencies has finally resulted in the apparently straightforward solution of having a single body responsible for everything to do with film. However, there remains the need for strategic alliances with other agencies, such as the broadcasters including the CTG, at one level, and with non-film cultural institutions and other interests. The situation also continues to display an important anomaly in that the SAC is the biggest continuing public feature film funder in Scotland, despite having no conventional remit to deal with the medium.

Apart from the Lottery, issue, SAC's involvement in moving image work is clearly to do with the particular intentions of individual artists and as such this position might not seem problematic. Even so, SAC has recently joined with Scottish Screen to explore the whole area of funding the 'creative' use of film, video and multi-media, and a report on the subject is in preparation at the present time.

Tax concessions, such as those now introduced by the new British government may well have a beneficial effect on the industry, at least in the short run, but it will be necessary to monitor closely the impact on the nature and quality of work produced under these new circumstances. In this as many other instances, there is always the danger that what works well for the majority, London-based, media organisations may not be appropriate for Scotland.

On the broader front, however, what Scotland can demonstrate is that it is possible for a small country on the western fringes of Europe, with only partial autonomy, to develop a film

culture which in due course becomes a reflection of itself, both in terms of film production and in policies towards film exhibition, media education, archiving, training etc.. The crucial messages, therefore, may be as much to do with self-confidence and clarity of vision as with politics and finance.

### 3. Australia

As ever in considering any aspect of Australian life and culture, the first thing to grasp is the size of the country. For all that its population is only 18 million (Ireland, 3.5 million), its vastness is such that it is easier to think of it as a small continent rather than a country. It covers 3 million square miles (7.6 million sq. km.) as opposed to Ireland's 27,000 square miles (70,000 sq. km.).

Related to scale is a federal political structure which leaves individual States and territories with a great deal of discretion in cultural affairs and therefore the possibility of significant discrepancies in the way that art and film is supported and promoted in different parts of the nation. Not surprisingly then, equivalence to Irish or other countries' agencies and practices is not always easy to detect but the underlying needs and ambitions are in some ways very similar.

#### 3.1 Historical Context

Beyond Hollywood, the Australian film industry is one of the few in the English-speaking world to have made a noticeable impact on world markets, even though compared to American output its products have been very few in number. Australia produces up to about twenty of its own films a year, as well as 'hosting' a variable number of incoming productions. The variety of its films has been a significant factor in its success, including essentially commercial products like the *Mad Max* movies and *Crocodile Dundee* as well as the more arthouse films such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and the less easily categorised *Strictly Ballroom*, *Muriel's Wedding*, *Shine*, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and many others. Perhaps the key is that there is a range and critical mass in Australian production which has not been achieved in many other English-speaking countries.

There was always a strong documentary tradition in Australia which reached its height in 1945 when a National Film Board was set up to promote Australia through documentary and educational films. Feature films, however, were also made from the earliest days, the growth of a domestic film industry being attributed to the period of the First World War when film supplies from other countries were cut off and such directors as Raymond Longford (*The Sentimental Bloke* (1920)) became major figures. However, although some level of feature film production was always sustained, it declined in the twenties and thirties as Hollywood took control of world markets.

The revival of Australian film dates from the 1960s. A 1964 report advocated tax concessions and loans for filmmakers and in 1969, the then Australian Council for the Arts called for a National Film School, a Development Corporation (which became the current Australian Film Commission) and funds for experimental projects. Individual States began to invest in film from the early 1970s, setting up corporations to develop and fund the film industry in their own territories.

Crucially, federal tax concessions were introduced in 1978. The '10BA scheme allowed producers to claim 150% of an investment in film as an income tax deduction and pay only 50% on profits. Although the initial impact was very beneficial, particularly in encouraging production in volume, it had its drawbacks, not least in encouraging the making of films that were never given (and did not deserve) distribution. '10BA concessions subsequently declined to fairly meaningless levels, and a more selective and effective regime of production support was developed with funding through the Film Finance Corporation and the individual State systems.

### 3.2 Structures

Because of the federal nature of Australia, precise comparisons with arts funding structures in smaller countries are not entirely easy. However, since many of the organisations are modelled on European, particularly British, institutions there are some remarkable similarities including the frequent incidence of the words 'Council' and 'Institute'.

The national arts body is the Australia Council, a federal government statutory authority established in 1975 to encourage the arts in Australia. Its structure and functions were based on those of the then Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB). Its areas of responsibility include Aboriginal arts, community arts, crafts, design arts, literature, music, theatre, and the visual arts. Its budget in 1996 was A\$72.9million from which it made 2,105 grants. It has a permanent staff of 115.

The Council's work is guided by two (familiar) principles. One is the 'arms length' principle keeping the agency at the appropriate distance from government. The other is that of 'peer assessment'. There are 198 "peers" who guide and determine the Council's grant-making processes.

As was the case with ACGB, film does not fall within the remit of the Australia Council which therefore does not have a formal policy on the medium. However, as moving images are increasingly part of the submissions to it, the Council will accept a video or film component in a work or project so long as the eligibility requirements are met for the category of the submission as a whole. Such proposals are most likely to be received by specific funds under the Council such as the Community Cultural Development Fund, New Media Fund, or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Arts Board.

In 1996, the New Media Fund made 38 grants to the total value of A\$1.36million. The underlying idea was to establish 'strategic relationships' between new media artists and innovative technology organisations such as, for example, agencies specialising in astronomical photography, underwater documentary film making, software development, imaging and video production, industrial heritage and microscopy. So, A\$60,000 was given to the television channel SBSTV to commission sound artists, digital artists and others to work with filmmakers to create a television series on the theme of Future Perfect; a filmmaker was given money to create a CD-Rom; the Sydney Museum, Melbourne's 'Living Museum of the West' and other organisations participate with video and other artists in special projects; Peter Barry and Associates, lighting designers of Queensland provided a six-month residency for an artist developing a 45-minute site-specific work using sound, projected film and lasers.

As far as 'film' in the more conventional meaning is concerned, in practice, according to the Council's Senior Policy Officer in the Funding Division, there are no problems in this area, the reason being that film funding structures in Australia are well-defined, and that filmmakers know clearly where best to take and advance their projects. They recognise that the Australia Council is not remitted or geared to deal with them.

Feature film funding in Australia is now backed by the Film Finance Corporation. Founded in 1989 in what its Chairman describes as 'the chaotic and dysfunctional latter days of the 10BA tax shelter', its mission is 'to realise the Commonwealth's film policy objectives of ensuring that the Australian film industry contributes to the sharpening of Australian cultural identity and projects diverse images of Australia locally and overseas'.

On the basis of A\$50 million from the federal government, in 1995-96 AFFC was able to invest A\$84.4m in 68 new projects with a total budget of A\$155m including 14 feature films with a total budget of A\$69m. AFFC recoupment on investment amounted to A\$25m in 1994-95 (the year of both *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert* and *Muriel's Wedding*) and expected a return of about A\$22m in 1995-96.

In terms of film culture, the central body is the Australian Film Commission whose current grant from the federal government is A\$17.8 million. In addition to its international role in the promotion and distribution of Australian films, it funds film cultural activity through its "Industry and Cultural Development" (ICD) Branch, grant-aiding two national organisations, the Australian Film Institute (AFI) to which it gives A\$586,000 and AFI Distribution (AFID) A\$217,000 (see below). Apart from production, which it defines as 'film, video or computer based', it sees the sector as comprising entry-level training, publications, screenings, seminars, festivals, conferences and exhibitions.

In October 1996, the AFC published a National Survey of Screen Culture Activity Among its key findings were that ICD assistance accounted for a quarter of the sector's income, often serving as seed funding and leverage for money from other sources, but that increasingly the sector was generating its own income; that screen culture organisations play an important role in developing careers and skills; that significant numbers of people (c.4,500) were employed by the sector; that audience development was strong; that the circulation of periodicals had increased by 28% from 1990 to 1994; that the screen culture sector was very successful in generating its own publicity. In summary, there was wide public and private support for screen culture organisations and a high demand for their services and activities within the community

Between 1990 and 1994 the total granted by AFC ICD was A\$15.34m while the total generated by the sector as a whole, itself, was A\$60.33m. In early 1997, a review of federal assistance to the film industry (the 'Gonski Report'), recommended that while support should continue for the AFC and AFFC, the funding of screen culture should be cut from A\$2.9m per annum, shared by 40 organisations, to A\$1m, the idea being in part that the burden of such support should be shifted from federal to State level. In the event, this draconian measure was not enacted but the proposal served to underline the fragility of film culture funding at federal level.

ICD supports the 'high risk activity' of exhibiting Australian, ground breaking, or non-commercial programmes by underwriting particular screenings. In production, its client organisations produced about 2000 films between 1990 and 1994. The benefit of public subsidy was in the screen culture sector's ability actively to nurture emerging talent. The Australian Film Institute is the national film culture organisation. Its origins were in the strong film society movement. It is a membership-based body founded in the 1950s and has over 7,500 subscribers. Its aim is to promote knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of the art of film amongst Australian filmmakers and audiences, with particular emphasis on Australian film. Its concerns cover all aspects of the moving image: film, television, video, multimedia, production, distribution, education, research and publishing.

The AFI's activities include running the annual AFI Awards, the Australian Film Festival, research and information services, film exhibition including national tours of film events, mounting retrospectives, a 'national cinemathèque' in the seven capital cities, and the publication of 'The Moving Image' magazine.

AFI Distribution is a major non-theatrical distributor of Australian shorts and documentaries with a catalogue of over 1,000 titles of which 84% are Australian made. Between 1991 and 1995 AFID received A\$1.6m in grant from AFC ICD of which 60% was paid on to the filmmakers in returns. The total rental income for the period was A\$2.6m i.e. 161% return on AFC's investment.

Membership of film organisations at local (State) level accounts for about 30% on top of AFI membership so that over 10,000 people can be said to belong to film organisations in Australia. 'Media Resources Centres' are increasingly supported by AFC ICD throughout the country



Another important institution is the Australian Film Television and Radio School. Founded in 1973 as simply the Australian Film and Television School', it was set up after three distinguished figures in the Australian media, Philip Adams, Barry Jones and Peter Coleman had conducted a fact finding mission to Europe. As a result, the School's first director was Professor Jerzy Toeplitz (1973-79) previously the head of the world's most famous film school at Lodz in Poland.

### 3.3 Messages from Australia

Australians are justifiably proud of the progress made in all aspects of audio-visual culture during the last twenty years. Whether measured in terms of Oscars won, soap operas exported, returns on public and private investment, or critical acclaim at home and abroad, there is no doubt that the country has achieved an enviable reputation. As is evident, screen cultural activity, from production through distribution and exhibition, is an essential component in developing all aspects of film in Australia.

Clearly, the degree and nature of public intervention has been crucial in shaping success and the present situation has been arrived at not without major difficulties. Setting aside the 'tyranny of distance' which affects all Australian issues, the relationship between federal and State legislation, structures and institutions, not to mention rivalries between capitals, has sometimes made the process of development fairly fraught.

Despite these hindrances, Australian film culture, as a sector of activity, continues to grow and, most importantly, seems to have achieved a considerable degree of clarity in the roles of the various agencies who work in the field. For instance, in its evidence to the Gonski Report, the API said it 'does not experience any duplication between Commonwealth (i.e. federal) support mechanisms'. Likewise, the remark of the Australia Council Officer, quoted above, to the effect that anyone engaged in film making in Australia would know exactly which institution to approach to meet their particular needs or aspirations, is very significant. Achieving clarity of function and role can only have been possible by means of good communication between all the agencies concerned, at all levels. The second message is to confirm the inextricable link between film culture and film commerce. In fact, the two are increasingly indistinguishable. The publicly supported activities in training, production, distribution and exhibition have been crucial in developing the film economy of Australia, because only by the provision of opportunity for young people to develop their interest and talent will the future be secure.

Keeping a sense of scale and proportion, monitoring the health of the film scene seems to be something that the Australian system does well. For example, the National Survey of Screen Culture Activity referred to in 2.2.2 above, appears to have been a most useful exercise and one which it might well be worth emulating.

Finally, it is interesting to notice that in historical terms Australia could be said to have been through very much the same kind of development as Ireland is currently experiencing. Without wishing to oversimplify the position, it is true to point out that, for example, Australia's introduction of tax concessions - the '10BA scheme - occurred about a decade before the equivalent Irish measure. Ireland is therefore in a position to benefit from the Australian experience and should keep a close eye on what is happening on the other side of the planet.

Although Australians have developed their film industry very much within their own terms of reference, they have also set out deliberately to gain from the experience of other countries. A case in point is how they created their National Film School even to the extent of head-hunting the principal of the world's most prestigious film training institution to be their first director.

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## Appendix 4

### List of People Consulted

Miriam Alien	<i>Director, Galway Film Fleadh</i>
Seamus Byrne	<i>Producer</i>
David Collins	<i>Producer</i>
Pat Collins	<i>Editor, Film West</i>
Susan Coughlan	<i>Community Arts, Arts Centres And Festivals Officer, The Arts Council</i>
Patricia Curtin	<i>Director, Programme Development, FÁS</i>
Luke Dodd	<i>Irish Film Archive</i>
Phelim Donlon	<i>Drama Officer, The Arts Council</i>
Leia Doolan	<i>Former Chair, Irish Film Board and Founder of</i>
Clare Duignan	<i>Head of Independent Production Unit, RTE</i>
Brian Ferran	<i>Director, Arts Council of Northern Ireland</i>
Paul Freaney	<i>Lecturer, Dun Laoghaire College of Art And Design</i>
Brenda Gannon	<i>Administrator, Irish Federation of Film Societies</i>
Brian Garvan	<i>Manager, International Services Division, IDA, Ireland</i>
Luke Gibbons	<i>Film Academic</i>
Philip Gray	<i>Administrator, Film Base</i>
Helen Guerin	<i>CAVERN (Cork Audio Visual Education and Realisation Network)</i>
Mick Hannigan	<i>Director, Cork International Film Festival (also KINO arthouse cinema Cork)</i>
Rebecca Hossack	<i>Australian High Commission, London</i>
Jenny Hudson	<i>Australian Film Commission, London</i>
Michael Kenna	<i>Marketing Advisor, International Services Department, Irish Trade Board</i>
Fiona Kilkelly	<i>Administrator, Junior Galway Film Fleadh</i>
Mary Lyons	<i>Screen Training Ireland</i>
Billy Madden	<i>Limerick's Third Irish Film Festival</i>
Brenda Madden	<i>Limerick's Third Irish Film Festival</i>
Louis Marcus	<i>Chair, Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board</i>
David McConnell	<i>Finance Officer, The Arts Council</i>
Patricia Moore	<i>Administrator, Young Irish Film Makers</i>
Bill Morrison	<i>Senior Publicity and Photographic Officer, Irish Tourist Board</i>
Declan Murphy	<i>Manager International Services, Forbairt.</i>
Eleanor Ni Bhrian	<i>Principal Officer, Third Level Section, Dept of Education</i>
Eibhlin Ni Mhunghaile	<i>MEDIA Antenna, Galway</i>
Padhraic O'Ciardhra	<i>Editor, Development and Information, Teilifís na Gaeilge</i>
Ann O'Connell	<i>Director Business Strategy, Coopers and Lybrand</i>
Kieran O'Connor	<i>CAVERN (Cork Audio Visual Education and Realisation Network)</i>
Tony O'Connor	<i>Screen Training Ireland</i>
Siobhan O'Donoghue	<i>MEDIA DESK</i>

Chris O'Grady	<i>Principle Officer, National Monuments and Historic Properties</i>
Aine O'Halloran	<i>Artistic Director/Manager, Dublin Film Festival</i>
Terry O'Laoghaire	<i>Údárás na Gaeltachta</i>
Linda O'Sullivan	<i>Limerick's Third Irish Film Festival</i>
Sheila Pratschke	<i>Manager, Film Institute of Ireland/Irish Film Centre</i>
Patricia Quinn	<i>Director, The Arts Council</i>
Alan Robinson	<i>Administrator, Junior Dublin Film Festival</i>
Kevin Rockett	<i>Film Historian and writer</i>
Clare Scally	<i>Former Manager, Galway Film Centre</i>
Ted Sheehy	<i>Editor, Film Ireland</i>
Rod Stoneman	<i>Chief Executive, Bord Scannan na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board</i>
David Stratton	<i>Film Critic and Historian, Sydney</i>
Richard Taylor	<i>Director, Northern Ireland Film Council/Screen Commission</i>
Presanna Vasudevan	<i>Australian Film Commission, London</i>
Carolyn Watts	<i>Australia Council</i>
Steve Woods	<i>Anamu Animation Base</i>

## **Appendix 5**

### **The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon: Strategic review of film activities**

#### **Terms of reference**

1. Introduction  
The Arts Council is the development agency for the arts in Ireland. Its remit within film is to support and develop the art of film and to support the filmmaker as artist.
2. Strategic Review  
The Council has recently taken a decision to instigate a strategic review of its role in film, with the focus on current Arts Council film policy and support, in the context of the presence of other policy players. This is being undertaken with a view to refining/redefining the role of the Council in film as an agency for the support and development of film as an artform.
3. Environment  
The film environment within which the Arts Council operates has undergone rapid changes in recent years, with a great many more supports now available to film, filmmakers and the emerging Irish film industry. The Council has responded to these changes but, as the arts development agency, it is vital that it do more than just respond. It is intended that the outcome of this review will enable the Council to adopt an active position in establishing and articulating its very specific remit.
4. Areas to be considered  
It is proposed that the strategic review involve consideration of a number of areas, all in the context of the public policy environment generally governing support for film in Ireland. The areas identified are:

- **The range of supports offered by the Arts Council**  
The Council currently provides support for exhibition, education/ training and film making.
  - **Film and Video awards as a tool for the development of the artform and for the support of the filmmaker as artist**  
The Council allocates £125,000 approx. per annum directly to the filmmaker. This is directed at developing new talent, encouraging experimental/abstract/multi-media work and supporting animation.
  - **The role of the Arts Council in community film and video**  
The Council supports community film and video through its film and video awards.
  - **The nature and work of film organisations currently funded and the effectiveness of those funded organisations in meeting their remit**  
The Council funds twelve film organisations. These include the Film Institute of Ireland, four film festivals, one young filmmakers organisation and two junior film festivals, three film support organisations and the Federation of Irish Film Societies.
  - **The resources (human and financial) assigned to film by the Council**  
The film portfolio is carried as a part-time brief by an officer who also acts as the Council's Communications Officer. She is supported by a secretary who also acts as secretary to the Visual Arts Section. The spend on film in 1997 is £798,000.
  - **Film partnerships and their value**  
The Council co-operates with other film support agencies on specific initiatives and is a member of STATCOM, a statutory committee which has representation from all of the statutory agencies with a film remit.
  - **The range and nature of supports in other comparable countries**  
An examination of film support in one/two other comparable countries would provide valuable information on models of practice.
5. Approach  
It is proposed that qualitative and quantitative research will be central to the review process which will also involve consultation with support agencies, funded organisations, individual filmmakers, film academics and experts and interested individuals. It is further proposed that a report be produced and following consideration of it a range of recommendations be made by Council as to how it will address film for the remainder of the current Arts Plan period (to December 1999).
  6. Timeframe  
The review should ideally be completed by October 1997.
  7. Steering Group  
A small steering committee of Arts Council members has been established, chaired by Laura Magahy
  8. Consultant  
An external consultant will be appointed to carry out the work as outlined. He/ she will work in association with the Film Officer and report to the Steering Group.
  9. Budget  
To be agreed in consultation with the appointed consultant.