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Scotland's Traditional Music and Song as Cultural, Social, and Economic Assets

Ian Russell

The notion of a country's traditional performance culture as an asset implies not only that it might be useful and valuable to the people of a nation, but also that its intrinsic value might in some way be realised as 'capital' or 'property'. Following established practices in Korea[1] and Japan,[2] I would argue that if we equate 'culture' with 'asset', we must conceive its value in cultural and social terms, as well as the economic benefits it might bring to a community, group, or individuals. In this paper I want to examine the rationale behind this statement, exploring some of the various ways that Scotland's traditional music is presented and represented, performed and communicated, marketed and promoted, received and understood, as an expression of distinct identity at local, regional, national, and trans-national levels. For Scotland, 2009 is a particularly pertinent time to undertake such a review, being the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, Scotland's greatest song writer, which is being celebrated in a nationwide initiative to attract international visitors of Scots ancestry, with the hooks of the bard, genealogy, whisky, golf, great minds and innovations, and culture and heritage, including clan gatherings.[3]

Traditional/folk music, including song, falls within a definition of culture that UNESCO has categorised as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' (ICH),[4] and which complements human rights instruments. The main tenets of this Convention are:

– the recognition of and respect for diversity;
– the importance of trans-generational transmission;

[1] Roald Maliangkay, 'Choosing the Right Folk: The Appointment of "Human Cultural Properties" in Korea', in Ian Russell and David Atkinson (eds), *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation* (Aberdeen 2004), 95–107.

[2] Satoru Hyoki, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan: Systems, Schemes and Activities', National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo, 2007, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00177-EN.pdf, accessed 7 July 2009.

[3] See Homecoming Scotland, http://www.homecomingscotland.com/default.html, accessed 7 July 2009.

[4] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/, accessed 7 July 2009.

– the identification of a dynamic element – the constant recreation in multiple forms or variations of items of heritage through performance, in response to context from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

Above all else, ICH tells us who we are (our identity) and where we have come from (our cultural tradition). This heritage is defined as 'intangible' because it is not evidenced primarily by material culture, for example, architecture, paintings, sculpture, or published literature, but mainly through oral traditions that are stored in the mind and enacted through the body. There is a clear understanding that the ICH under discussion, with its focus on communities, groups, and individuals, is essentially grassroots and vernacular in expression,[5] in contradistinction to institutionalised high arts, such as opera, ballet, and chamber music. An essential feature of the UNESCO Convention is to give recognition, and hence status, to individual manifestations of ICH through the construction of national and regional inventories.[6] In this process of naming and listing assets or properties there is inevitably an acceptance that the continued practice or existence of certain assets may be endangered, fragile, or threatened by the effects of globalisation, whereas others may be vibrant, resilient, adaptive, and responsive.

One of the essential aspects of this process of producing an inventory is that of 'representativeness',[7] as it relates to assets or human agency. This operates in several ways. For example, a repertoire of songs associated with a certain activity may be identified (such as songs for 'waulking' or fulling cloth from the Outer Hebrides), but this does not exclude other similar repertoires of work songs (such as songs for hand-mowing grass with a scythe or sickle), or individual songs that may form part of this repertory. Hence there is no sense of completeness or exclusivity to the inventory. 'Representativeness' also allows for the identification of exceptional individuals, groups, or communities who carry this knowledge, and their recognition is as esteemed 'tradition bearers'.

The UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, as drawn up in Paris, 17 October 2003, at the time of writing has

[5] See, for example, 'Annex 2: Summary of suggestions made by the Committee on Agenda item 7', Istanbul, Turkey, 2–5 November 2008, and extracts from the Convention (Articles 13, 14 and 15), http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/4COM-VisibilityQuestionnaire.doc, p. 3, accessed 9 July 2009.

[6] *The Convention for the Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Article 12, 17 October 2003, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00022, accessed 9 July 2009.

[7] Ibid., Article 16.

114 countries[8] which have ratified, accepted, or approved its instruments. Regrettably neither the UK nor Ireland has as yet chosen to sign up to this convention. However, the devolved Scottish and Welsh governments, as well as Yorkshire in England, have taken preliminary steps and set in motion pilot studies. In the case of Scotland this has fallen to the Scottish Arts Council and the Scottish Museums Council, who commissioned Professors Alison McCleery and Alistair McCleery of Napier University, Edinburgh, to undertake a preliminary study, which has been taken forward to an AHRC-funded data gathering exercise (£363,485).[9]

The statement of the Convention that ICH 'provides people with a sense of identity and continuity and its safeguarding promotes, sustains, and develops cultural diversity and human creativity',[10] contrasts somewhat with the UK take on how the Convention might benefit British society with its concern for social integration, 'furthering identity, values and social inclusion, social cohesion and cultural/human creativity'.[11] Similarly, the Scottish initiative at Napier foregrounds inclusiveness and diversity, and resonates with the Scottish Government's commitment 'to serve all the people of Scotland, regardless of a person's race, religion, culture, ethnicity or other background'.[12]

According to the Convention, ICH is manifested in five domains:

1) Oral traditions and expressions;
2) Performing arts (such as traditional music, dance, and theatre);
3) Social practices, rituals, and festive events;
4) Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
5) Traditional craftsmanship.

The traditional music of Scotland clearly falls mainly but not exclusively within the first three of these domains. For North-East Scotland notable assets include the fishermen's flute bands that have both sacred and secular tunes in

[8] See http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00024, accessed 1 September 2009.

[9] Scottish Centre for the Book, *Intangible Cultural Heritage Scotland Newsletter*, no. 1, January 2009, http://www.napier.ac.uk/randkt/rktcentres/scob/Projects/Documents/1.pdf, accessed 9 July 2009. See also 'UK and UNESCO: Challenges and Opportunities' conference briefing, Panel 12, 16 June 2006, University of Nottingham, http://www.unesco.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Conf%20Briefing/IH.pdf, accessed 9 July 2009.

[10] UNESCO, 'Intangible Heritage', http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=8944&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

[11] 'UK and UNESCO: Challenges and Opportunities' conference briefing.

[12] Scottish Government, 'Race Equality' Statement 18934, 7 April 2005, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/18934, accessed 12 July 2009.

their repertoire,[13] the North-East fiddle style with its strong up-driven bow,[14] the singing of traditional ballads ('muckle sangs') as practised by (Gypsy) Travellers,[15] and the bothy ballad tradition of occupational songs associated with the agricultural hinterland.[16]

The purpose of this introduction has been to demonstrate that there is an international consensus that traditional culture/heritage including music and song are vital assets that need to be recognised, detailed, assessed, celebrated, and safeguarded for the future in the interests of diversity. ICH or living heritage 'is the mainspring of our cultural diversity and its maintenance a guarantee for continuing creativity'.[17] In this next section I will consider some of the principal manners in which these assets are realised and exploited in a Scottish context.

Traditional music in Scotland is manifested in many different ways. These range from domestic contexts, through educational projects and workshops, clubs and societies, to community initiatives, concerts and festivals, and broadcasting, recording, and downloading from the internet. Here I will focus on the public performance events, because these are the areas in which it is most easy to observe and record impact, including participant information, ticket sales, sponsorship, and so on.

In a recent study by Lesley Stevenson[18] she identified several different types of traditional music festivals, ranging from the commercial urban-based events such as Celtic Connections, to the 'not for profit' events, notably those organised by the TMSA, which are based in more rural locations, for example the festivals at Keith, Kirriemuir, and Auchtermuchty.[19] She also noted a number of events organised by entrepreneurs who had insider

[13] Ian Russell, 'Flute Bands and their Annual Walks in North-East Scotland: Music, Tradition, and Community', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 15 (2002–3), 99–111.

[14] Katherine Campbell, 'Paul Anderson–Styles, learning tunes and composing', *The Fiddle Tradition of North-East Scotland*, Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 2001, http://www.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/fiddle/paulstyles.htm, accessed 12 July 2009.

[15] James Porter and Herschel Gower, *Jeannie Robertson: Emergent Singer, Transformative Voice* (East Linton, 1995).

[16] Ian Russell, 'Competing with Ballads (and Whisky?): The Construction, Celebration, and Commercialisation of North-East Scottish Identity', *Folk Music Journal*, 9 (2007), 170–91.

[17] UNESCO, 'What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?', http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002, accessed 12 July 2009.

[18] Lesley Stevenson, *'Scotland the Real': The Representation of Traditional Music in Scottish Tourism* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 2005).

[19] The Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland (TMSA), http://www.tmsa.org.uk/, accessed 20 June 2009.

knowledge of the traditional music scene, and were practitioner-based, such as Speyfest at Fochabers.[20] Some of these provide a wide variety of entertainment; others are of a more specialist nature, for example the Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie[21] or the Edinburgh International Harp Festival.[22] The size in terms of visitor numbers may vary from less than a hundred to many thousands. Similarly the ethos may vary between those commercially-based events that clearly distinguish between professional artists and audience, and others where the boundaries are blurred, there is an absence of 'star' culture, and the emphasis is on participation with a high level of volunteering.[23]

Festivals may also be characterised by the nature of participation, for example the principal Gaelic festival, the Royal National Mod[24] is built entirely around a competition structure in contrast to the Fèisean nan Gàidheal[25] movement festivals which eschew competitions in favour of tutor-led workshops for young people. Modelled on the Irish *fleadhs*,[26] the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland (TMSA), founded in 1966, includes competitions in its festivals which are intended to be fully supportive and encouraging:

> The organisation actively promotes Scottish traditional music by running festivals […] and competitions, and helps create an environment in which old and new interpretations of traditional music and song can flourish.[27]

The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo)[28] held in Aberdeen in 2001 and 2006 combined tutor-led workshops and master classes with formal

[20] Speyfest, http://www.speyfest.com/, accessed 20 June 2009.
[21] The Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~wap001/events/cullerlie09/index.shtml, accessed 20 June 2009.
[22] Edinburgh International Harp Festival, http://www.harpfestival.co.uk/, accessed 9 July 2009.
[23] Stevenson, 107–47.
[24] An Comunn Gàidhealach, The Royal National Mod, http://www.acgmod.org/, accessed 21 June 2008.
[25] Fèisean nan Gàidheal, http://www.feisean.org/about-us.html, accessed 21 June 2009.
[26] Russell, 'Competing with Ballads', 176. The first all Ireland *fleadh* was held in 1951. See http://www.fleadh2009.com/history-of-the-fleadh, accessed 9 August 2009.
[27] http://www.tmsa.org.uk/about-tmsa.htm, accessed 21 June 2009.
[28] The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention 2006, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/events/nafco06/, accessed 21 June 2009.

concerts and market-place based events, such as busking trails and pub sessions, alongside an academic conference.

There are also several ways in which the regional identity of festivals is promoted. For example, the Newcastleton Traditional Music Festival[29] encourages the performance of border ballads by hosting an annual contest; similarly the Buchan Heritage Society Festival[30] at Strichen in Aberdeenshire is one of several in the North-East that run bothy ballad competitions, and competitions for the recitation of local Scots verse in the 'Doric' tongue.

Many festivals use the notion of 'authenticity' as a promotional tool in terms of location, artists, or content. Hence the Border Gaitherin[31] is 'at Coldsteam on the banks of the River Tweed', the World Ceilidh[32] stresses its setting as a 'unique family festival on a remote greenfield site in the Galloway hills', whereas the Hebridean Celtic Festival is 'set against the rich cultural backdrop of the Outer Hebrides'.[33] Undoubtedly small towns, villages and rural locations are strong selling points. The 'lineage' of singers and instrumentalists in terms of family connections, mentoring influences, upbringing, and geographical location is similarly stressed. The musical content is also a reason for endorsement. In the Celtic Connections festival [34] the publicity states that it is 'the UK's premier Celtic music festival', but the idea that it is devoted largely or exclusively to Gaelic or Celtic culture is not the case. The Carrying Stream festival in Edinburgh advertises that it commemorates the legacy of the folk song collector, Hamish Henderson, by way of a testimonial.[35] Intimacy is stressed at some festivals such as the Fife Traditional Singing Weekend at Collessie,[36] where numbers are strictly limited. Such festivals can suffer from too much success: the Portpatrick Folk Festival[37] is a case in point.

Many musicians and singers have been and are highly critical of the way traditional music and song is marketed for tourists in Scottish nights that

[29] Newcastleton Traditional Music Festival, http://www.newcastleton.com/, accessed 21 June 2009.

[30] Buchan Heritage Society Strichen Festival, http://www.plr.rapidial.co.uk/festival.htm, accessed 21 June 2009.

[31] The Border Gaitherin, http://www.bordergaitherin.com/, accessed 21 June 2009.

[32] Knockengorroch World Ceilidh, http://www.tmsa.org.uk/pdfs/eventcalendar2009.pdf, accessed 9 July 2009.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Celtic Connections, http://www.glasgowconcerthalls.com/celtic, accessed 9 July 2009.

[35] See http://www.springthyme.co.uk/events/, accessed 9 July 2009.

[36] The Fife Traditional Singing Weekend, http://www.springthyme.co.uk/fifesing/, accessed 9 July 2009.

[37] http://www.portpatrickfolkfestival.org/, accessed 12 August 2009.

package pipers in full Highland dress and kilted tenors with shortbread and heather. Such staged spectaculars synthesise Burns Nights celebrations and homogenise the music in a fantasised Brigadoon, lacking all sense of regional distinctiveness. Inevitably such productions are in the control of and directed by promoters rather than the musicians themselves.[38]

It was partly in response to this narrow image that the Smithsonian Institution, when Scotland was represented at the Folklife Festival in Washington DC in 2003, produced the CD *Scotland the Real*,[39] which deliberately avoided such clichéd representation – Nancy Groce, the curator, wrote in the programme: 'it's just that the real Scotland is even more varied and interesting than the stereotypes'.[40] Similarly a number of Scottish Government initiatives have been introduced since Devolution in 1999 to counter this image for tourists.

One of these has been the Traditional Music and Tourist Initiative (TMTI),[41] promoted by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Tourist Board (1999–2002), which sought to raise the profile of traditional music in Scotland and improve access to it for visitors. Based on comparisons with Ireland, it was felt that encouraging and promoting privileged sessions would be greatly beneficial and a 'low cost' initiative. This 'staged' informality was informed by the premise that tourists/visitors sought, in Dean MacCannell's terms, the 'back region' in preference to the 'front', preferring to stumble across 'the real thing' in informal settings.[42] Certainly, in the short term, there is evidence that in Dumfries and Galloway ('More Music Live!', 'Real Music Real Close', 2003) and in Shetland ('Simmerin Sessions') the idea worked and significantly increased visitor numbers, and consequently raised participating pub and hotel takings.

Fears that such socially engineered commoditisation could never imitate the spontaneity necessary to achieve a worthwhile visitor experience have

[38] See http://www.reel-time.co.uk/corporate/index.html, accessed 12 August 2009, for an agency providing such entertainment.

[39] *Scotland the Real: Music from Contemporary Caledonia*, Smithsonian Folkways, SFW CD 40511, 2003.

[40] Nancy Groce, 'Scotland at the Smithsonian', in *37th Annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival: Appalachia, Heritage and Harmony; Mali, from Timbuktu to Washington; Scotland at the Smithsonian* (Washington DC, 2003), 69.

[41] Lesley Stevenson, 'Commodification and Authenticity in the Traditional Music and Tourism Initiative', paper delivered at Developing Cultural Tourism conference, which was held at the University of Nottingham, December 2003.

[42] Dean MacCannell,. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley, 1999), 92–101.

generally proved ill-founded.[43] Although a few of these 'seeded' sessions have been problematic in certain situations for participant musicians, whether hired or freely participating, the overall effect has been greatly beneficial in bringing local traditional music into the public arena and in encouraging greater involvement in its performance, such that many informal sessions have since become self perpetuating and no longer need incentives to function.

Another initiative has been the ballad trail concept, which was pioneered in the Borders by the local tourist board in 2002 with limited success. This took the form of a tourist trail that drivers could follow in their own vehicles, but it was constrained somewhat artificially by political boundaries. According to Stevenson it failed because it was out of touch with practitioners and did not reflect living tradition.[44] Far more successful have been the ballad bus outings organised by the Doric Festival and the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute in the North-East.[45] These have been led and directed by singers themselves, and have involved a captive enthusiastic audience sharing a common experience in which location, provenance, cultural asset, and performance, have been brought together in a meaningful and relevant way.

'Every Pub Should Have One' (EPSHO) was part of a significant intervention led by the travel writer, Laudon Temple, in 2003. Disgusted by the poor quality and stereotypical choice of recorded Scottish music being relayed to visitors by 'tourist' pubs and hotels, he spearheaded, with the Greentrax record company, a special sampler CD, to which major Scottish folk artists, including Peatbog Fairies, Tony McManus, Fiddlers' Bid, and Shooglenifty, contributed tracks.[46] Several hundred of these were distributed free of charge to tourist destinations, who were encouraged to play the CD to their guests in preference to their established fare.

This effective reform of taste was combined with a further attempt to replicate the Irish experience. The 'McEwan Sessions' (2004–2007),[47] sponsored by the

[43] Compare David McCrone, Angela Morris, and Richard Kiely (eds), *Scotland the Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage* (Edinburgh, 1999), 9.

[44] Stevenson, 'Commodification and Authenticity', 234–8.

[45] The Friends of the Elphinstone Institute have run an annual Ballad Bus since 2004. See *Newsletter*, Spring, 2004, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/newsletter/spring2004/, accessed 9 July 2009. Fyvie Folk Club is running a Ballad Bus in 2009 for the Homecoming celebrations.

[46] *Every Pub Should Have One*, Greentrax, CD LTC001, 2004.

[47] TMSA, 'About McEwan's Sessions', http://www.tmsa.org.uk/about-mcewans-sessions.htm, accessed 9 July 2009.

Table 1 Comparative Data from Two Festivals – Celtic Connections and the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention

	Celtic Connections, Glasgow, 2009		**North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, Aberdeen, 2006**	
Number of Events	300+		137	
Number of Days	18		5	
Attendances	92,022		13,471 (6,400 were onlookers for street performances)	
Visitors	68,845		3,536 (excluding onlookers)	
Net Market Spend	£3,588,887 (estimated)		not available	
Quality of Festival (Very Good/Good)	85% (15% 'don't know')		98%	
Visitor Profile in percentages				
Place of Residence	Greater Glasgow Other Scottish Other UK Overseas	63 29 5 4	Aberdeen City & Shire Other Scottish Other UK Overseas	36.8 22.1 14.7 26.3
Gender	Male Female	43 57	not available	not available
Age	Under 25 yrs 25-64 yrs Over 64 yrs	11 80 9	Under 25 yrs 25-59 yrs Over 60 yrs	19.3 63.1 17.6
Duration of Visit	Day Trippers Stayed Overnight	81 19	Day Trippers Stayed Overnight	36.4 63.6

brewers, were launched in over a hundred of their pubs throughout Scotland to improve the visitor experience of Scottish music. As Stevenson notes, it is not unreasonable to compare Temple's foray into the politics of representation with Walter Scott's construction of a 'borderland of minstrelsy'.[48] In 2009, the Scottish Homecoming initiative is similarly sponsoring a series of over 300 traditional music pub sessions through the TMSA.[49]

In this next section the focus will be directed towards data collected in connection with folk music festivals. Scotland's largest festival of this kind is Celtic Connections[50] which, when it was started in 1994, was an initiative of Glasgow City Council to attract audiences to the city at a comparatively quiet time of the year, the latter part of January. A summary of data is given in Table 1. It was gathered for this year's festival by GGA, an independent agency, and it makes impressive reading.[51] When we compare these results with those gathered for the 2006 NAFCo, audited by EventScotland, the profile is somewhat different.[52] This was a comparatively smaller more specialist festival lasting five days that incorporated an academic conference.

Bearing in mind the different sizes of samples and their statistical reliability, we can make a few observations with some degree of confidence.

1. Aberdeen (City & Shire) is a much smaller population centre than Glasgow, hence the proportion of visitors from outwith the area was much higher – 63% as opposed to 37%.
2. NAFCo was primarily an international event. Hence the proportion of international visitors was much higher – 26.3% as opposed to just 4%.
3. Consequently the proportion of people needing accommodation was also much greater – 63.6% as opposed to 19%.
4. The specialist nature of NAFCo tended to attract a higher proportion of young people than the more general festival – 19.3% as opposed to 11%.
5. The data for the older age groups is not directly comparable but it does emphasise the importance of this sector of the audience which

[48] Stevenson, 'Commodification and Authenticity', 275.

[49] TMSA, 'The Homecoming Trad Music Sessions', http://www.tmsa.org.uk/homecoming-sessions.htm, accessed 20 July 2009.

[50] Celtic Connections, Glasgow, 15 January – 1 February 2009, http://www.celticconnections.com/, accessed 9 July 2009.

[51] Glasgow Grows Audiences (GGA), *Celtic Connections 2009: Economic Impact*, report (Glasgow, February 2009).

[52] North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo), 26 – 30 July 2006, organised by the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, from reports submitted to the Scottish Arts Council and Aberdeen City Council.

represents about one fifth of the total in both cases.

6. Interestingly the Glasgow data indicates that it attracts significantly more women than men.

It should also be added that this data represents a summary and that both events collected a considerable amount of additional information.

In 2002 an independent study by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre examined data from forty folk festivals (six in depth) throughout the UK, out of an estimated total of 350.[53] They estimated the total impact of all festivals at £77 million, which included ticket sales, travel, accommodation, food and drink, and other purchases. For our purposes, direct comparison is not possible with Celtic Connections or NAFCo because the published data is incomplete and presented in a different format (see Table 2).

Table 2 The Impact of Folk Festivals in the UK in 2002, based on data from 40 festivals (Association of Festival Organisers, 2004)

Number of Festivals	350	
Visitors	350,000	
Net Market Spend	£76,980,000	
Visitor Profile in percentages		
Gender	Male	48
	Female	52
Age	Under 19 yrs	20
	19–35 yrs	25
	Over 35 yrs	55
Duration of Visit	Day Trippers	68.5
	Stayed Overnight	31.5

However, the 2004 report does make several other interesting points. For example, under the heading 'Folk festivals change people':

- over 90% of visitors participate in dancing, singing, or playing a musical instrument;
- 60% of the visitors can play a musical instrument;
- 27% have the skills and confidence to play in public;
- 33% play for personal pleasure;

[53] The study is summarised in two related reports: Association of Festival Organisers in association with the Arts Council of England, *A Report into the Impact of Folk Festivals on Cultural Tourism*, report (Matlock, January 2003); idem, *The Impact of Folk Festivals*, report (Matlock, March 2004).

– an additional 14% would like to learn to play.

Under the heading, 'Festivals produce a sustainable return on investment':

– 24% of visitors are trying a festival for the first time;
– 18% (three-quarters of these) will return;
– public/arts funding constitutes 10.6% of festival turnover of £19.9 million (representing 2.7% of the economic impact);
– sponsorship and trusts constitute 7.9% (representing 2.0% of the economic impact);
– non-ticket earnings amount to 7.7% (representing 2.0% of economic impact);
– ticket income is 74% (representing 19.1% of economic impact);
– festivals support the local economy.

In the section on audience development, under 'Festivals are a gateway into folk' and are 'family friendly':

– first time visitors report that they feel very welcome and find it easy to join in;
– festivals report a growth rate of 5.6%;
– 38% of festival goers have children;
– 32% regularly bring their children to festivals;
– festivals attract young people and women.

Another important conclusion is that festivals train, launch, and support artists and administrators.

Of course, not all traditional music festivals are well organised and appropriately managed, nor do they automatically achieve financial or artistic success. Moreover, in terms of the intangible cultural assets that they present, their influence is not always beneficial. As UNESCO has noted, festivals, because of their rigid formats, may lead to the distortion, abbreviation, and standardisation of certain cultural assets or practices.

> Many traditions of music, dance, and theatre figure into cultural promotion as tourist attractions, included for example in the itineraries of tour operators. Although this may bring revenues to a country or community and offer a window onto its culture, it is not uncommon that such processes create new forms of presenting the performing arts that are abbreviated, losing certain elements important to the tradition, and may turn a traditional form into mere entertainment.[54]

[54] UNESCO, 'Performing Arts: Challenges to Viability', in *What Is Intangible Cultural Heritage*, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00054, accessed 21 June 2009.

Thus certain assets or practices may achieve success on the public stage, but at the expense of their integrity or meaning. Broadly speaking, tourism may contribute positively to the revitalisation of traditional culture, giving a market value to it, but the result may well be a transformation that is considered detrimental by its performers.

This point is taken up by the TMSA in their 'Scottish Traditional Arts Declaration',[55] which takes the form of a petition addressed to the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, and bodies such as the Scottish Arts Council, soon to be integrated into a new body – Creative Scotland. A further concern, voiced by the TMSA, is that in the relentless drive for quality and creativity, promoted by arts funding bodies, the gap between performance-led events featuring elite artists and the grass-roots activity of community music-making and singing is ever widening (see page 136).

The size of the stakes in the political argument to realise the benefits of traditional culture as an asset is apparent from a recent Scottish Government report, *Culture Delivers*,[56] which places high expectations on the panacea of culture to rid society of the ills of community dysfunction and disaffection, and to meet economic and environmental challenges. For example, Clause 9 states:

> Cultural activities targeted at people at risk can provide diversionary activities and make a positive impact on the incidence of crime and ant-social behaviour.
>
> Cultural activity and learning build self esteem, can help people to articulate anxieties and aspirations, and promote dialogue and understanding across the generations.

While it may be reasonable to expect that the practice/performance of Scotland's arts and culture, including its intangible cultural assets, may have a part to play in community regeneration, it seems a heavy burden to place at its door, especially as there is a funding imbalance between Scots and Gaelic culture, with Scots culture receiving less than a tenth of that awarded to Gaelic organisations and initiatives.[57]

[55] TMSA, 'Scottish Traditional Arts Declaration', 14 August 2008, http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/tmsa-scottish-traditional-arts-declaration.html, accessed 21 June 2009.

[56] Scottish Government, *Culture Delivers* (Edinburgh, 2008).

[57] Evidence presented by John Morran to the Scots Language and Culture Forum at the Scottish Government Scots Language Conference, University of Stirling, 9 Feb 2009.

TMSA's Scottish Traditional Arts Declaration

Published by TMSA on Aug 14, 2008
Category: Music
Region: Scotland
Target: Scottish Government & Parliament and all bodies sponsored and/or funded by them

We, the undersigned, maintain that:

- Scotland has one of the richest living traditions in Europe;
- the traditional arts of making music, singing, dancing, poetry and storytelling are an intrinsic and vital part of Scottish culture;
- all of Scotland's indigenous languages and traditions are of equal importance and value;
- Scotland's traditional arts and languages make an irreplaceable and distinctive contribution to world culture;
- the foundation of all traditional arts is the grassroots inclusive participation of the people of Scotland;
- the traditional arts give a unique perspective on Scotland's political and social history;
- the traditional arts bind together communities in Scotland and the Scots Diaspora;
- Scotland's traditional culture can and should be reinterpreted by each generation but that this must not result in discarding the past.
- Scotland's cultural traditions can and should play a part in the economic and social regeneration of Scotland.

We therefore call on the Scottish Government and Parliament and all bodies sponsored and/or funded by them to ensure that:

- all the indigenous languages and traditions of Scotland are treated equally;
- funding for traditional arts is enshrined in all government arts policies;
- traditional arts are embedded in Scottish education at all levels;
- opportunities for taking part in traditional arts are actively encouraged;
- provision of spaces for traditional arts is supported;
- initiatives to make our traditional forms of expression accessible to all are supported;
- in the drive to make commercial use of the traditional arts, the traditions themselves are not distorted or lost;
- all of the traditions – not only the more commercial aspects – are valued and maintained;
- recognition is given to the irreplaceable contribution that volunteers supporting traditional arts in Scotland make to the economy.

Although in 2009 the country is in the grips of an economic recession, the achievement of the goals for the Year of Homecoming seem more attainable than the aspirations expressed in the *Culture Delivers* report. While it seems that international visitors from the Scottish diaspora may be fewer than were anticipated, home support has been strong. Several events foregrounding ICH and more specifically traditional music and song, including, of course, recognition of the national bard, have received much needed funding, either directly from EventScotland or via a local authority arts funding scheme or forum.

Undoubtedly Scotland's traditional music and song are vitally important cultural, social, and economic assets, but in the endeavour to exploit them for national well-being, there is a danger that the lessons learnt from the past are being ignored. For example, the second folk song revival came unstuck when it lost touch with the grassroots which had nurtured it. This dichotomy has been interpreted as a fracture between the purist camp on the one hand and the eclectics on the other, complicated by a generational divide.[58]

Throughout the discourse surrounding how ICH might be exploited successfully to the mutual benefits of all parties, we should acknowledge and utilise the expertise that has been accumulated through research at institutions of higher education, such as Glasgow, Aberdeen, and elsewhere, and in particular, the wealth of the Archives of the School of Scottish Studies at the department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh, which will soon become widely available through the *Tobar an Dualchais* ('Kist o Riches') digitisation project, which is a partnership project with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig of the University of the Highlands and the Islands, the BBC, and the National Trust for Scotland.[59] Intangible Cultural Heritage may seem to certain critics like the latest global buzzword, but this perception should not blind policy makers in Scotland to the hugely important benefits that are available from the resources of folklore, ethnomusicology, and ethnology, and the contributions they can make to our understanding of community and identity.

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[58] Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival, 1944–2002* (Aldershot, 2003), 63–86.

[59] See http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/, accessed 9 June 2009.