

On December 10th 2009, a new Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the British Council and Arts Council England.

It defines the common territory between Arts Council England and the British Council, while recognising that the two agencies serve different purposes. It establishes a framework within which the two organisations can jointly develop and create programme streams which are strategic, coherent, and serve the interests of their various constituencies.

The rationale for collaboration between the two agencies is centred on the shared territory between them:

- offering the benefits of their expertise and relationships to further artistic practice in this country
- supporting artists and arts organisations to take the fruits of this to audiences worldwide
- bringing the best of international practice to audiences in this country.

The agreement attempts to define the common territory between Arts Council England and the British Council, but recognises that the two agencies serve different purposes. It establishes a framework within which the two organisations can jointly develop and create programmes (ie, a catalyst for action rather than a piece of paper). It envisages the relationship structured around programme streams (rather than projects, as previously).

Over the next few months, Arts Council England and the British Council will demonstrate their new approach through a number of programmes in which they both have an interest:

- **Unlimited**, a project celebrating disability, arts, culture and sport on an unprecedented scale, in the context of 2012. The Arts Council is supporting a commissioning fund to support high-quality collaborations between disability arts organisations, disabled artists and producers, and mainstream arts organisations. The British Council is supporting collaboration between artists in the UK and other countries, and showcasing new work around the world.¹

¹ *Unlimited is funded by the Olympic Lottery Distributor and Arts Council England, and is delivered in partnership between London 2012, Arts Council England, the Scottish Arts Council, Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the British Council*

- **Music Showcases** – building on the recommendations of a recent jointly-commissioned report into international markets for music, the Councils will work in an increasingly focused way to maximise the impact of both inbound and outbound showcase activities, using the knowledge and expertise of the two organisations, and working with external specialists across the various music genres.
- **Cultural Leadership** – The Cultural Leadership Programme, the British Council's Cultural Leadership International programme, and the Clore Leadership Programme are together planning a Symposium, which will take place in May next year, to draw together providers of cultural leadership training internationally to learn from each others' experiences.
- **Cultural Diplomacy Group** – This group, which brings together the 4 UK arts councils and other statutory representatives (see annexe for membership) will set the strategy for UK's representation at the major 'showcasing events' globally, to ensure that the very best of the UK's culture can be presented on the world stage. The group will make shared decisions about resource allocation between some of the major cultural events (such as biennales and festivals) and at other major events which offer a potential platform for culture (such as expos and major sporting events).
- **London International Festival Symposium** - The two Councils are working together on this event, which will bring together in London in 2012 a gathering of the world's greatest artists to explore the role of the artist in the 21st century. The event will be illustrated by a series of commissions, made in response to challenges of global significance and will form a key component of the arts sector's international response to the hosting of the Olympic Games.
- **Points of Culture** - Building on the lessons learned from the Artists Links Brazil programme which will end in 2010, and in anticipation of new partnerships between the Olympic host countries for 2012 and 2016, the two Councils are supporting a cultural knowledge exchange programme, produced by Peoples Palace Projects, between Brazil and the UK that will arrange reciprocal learning visits in 2010 between individuals working within arts organisations, and for policy makers and funders within the two countries. The exchange will focus on the *Cultura Viva: pontos de cultura* programme in Brazil [Living Culture: Points of Culture] and on arts organisations experienced in running socially engaged arts programmes in the UK. It is anticipated that the organisations and individuals involved will establish links for future collaboration, supported by the two Councils.

In addition, the Arts Council and the British Council are looking closely at the both Artists Links programmes and the Arts Council's International Fellowship Programme, and thinking how these lessons might influence **Connections through Culture**, and other artist development programmes in the future.

Operationally the two organisations will begin to develop joint protocols around consultation and communication. Specialists in both organisations will meet together

more regularly to develop a common understanding of the arts in England and of the international context.

The MOU will be backed up by a full Action Plan (to be published early in 2010) and a communications strategy. This strategy will in particular seek to address confusion and duplication, and to make sure that both artists and those interested in the arts have clear pathways to follow when seeking information and advice. Progress on the MOU will be monitored through annual meetings between the CEOs, and quarterly meetings between nominated leads on the various strands of the plan.

Annexe: proposed membership of Cultural Diplomacy Group

Arts Director, Arts Council of Wales
Head of Arts Branch, Welsh Assembly

Chief Executive, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Arts Development Director, Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Executive Director, Arts Strategy, Arts Council England
Director Culture, DCMS

Chief Executive, Scottish Arts Council
Deputy Director of Culture, Scottish Government

Director of Strategic Communications, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Head of Public Diplomacy Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Chief Executive, UK Film Council
Chief Executive, Museum, Libraries and Archive Council
Executive Director, Visiting Arts