

1st Draft
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COMMENTS ASAP
TO Damien Welfare on 30/4/86

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN LONDON

ARTS, RECREATION & SPORT

Objective

1. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the role and functions of a new strategic authority for London with special reference to arts, recreation and sport. The capital city has often been the testing ground for new and innovative policies in a wide range of fields: policies which have been taken up in other parts of the country and which have implications for the wider national and international legislative framework. The paper is based on the experience of the GLC over the past four years in its attempts to introduce a popular leisure and cultural policy.
2. The paper considers the changes required to enable local authorities to develop leisure and cultural policies as part of a wider social provision, and to spend money - as a statutory right - on arts, recreation and sports initiatives.

History

3. Much of what has taken place in the UK in the field of arts, recreation and sport has its origins in the 18th and 19th centuries. Though there was no universally applied policy it is possible to see how certain Victorian values, for the quality of life, became more widespread. In the main the achievements of those benevolent Victorians who wished to provide "recreations of an improving kind" can be identified under three broad headings: landscape design (Parks); entertainments (Arts); and heritage (Historic Houses/Museums/literacy (Libraries)). The Greater London Council and its predecessors have been responsible for the quality of a large part of London's physical and cultural landscape since the 19th century. The present GLC Department of Recreation and the Arts (b.1979) grew out of the original LCC Parks Department (b.1890) and now forms the largest concentration of professionals working in the field of arts recreation and sport in the United Kingdom, possibly the

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world. It is this central expertise across a wide range of knowledge which maintains the standards and environmental quality of life for Londoners.

4. Although London has long enjoyed the benefits of a higher than (national) average, provision for arts and recreation, it should be remembered that it is the LCC and GLC which established and developed the South Bank, protects the Green Belt and has revitalised the recreational services in London's major parks and open spaces - much of this has been of a traditional nature, some inherited from the Victorian era, although the Festival Hall was opened as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain celebrations, specifically to celebrate a popular identity after the gloom of the post-war years. Most arts and recreation policies, throughout local government in the past forty years have tended to identify needs in terms of services (i.e. buildings) and a narrow cultural range which in the arts, for example, allowed traditional forms such as opera or theatre to dominate and consume most arts and recreation budgets. Sports funding centred almost wholly on the provision of club facilities rather than, say, the facilitation of ethnic sports.

Indeed, it is perhaps not surprising to discover that the legislation giving local authorities powers to support leisure and cultural initiatives was largely confined to these 19th century traditional forms.

The first statute which enabled municipal authorities to spend monies on artistic and allied activities was drafted by Aneurin Bevan, when Minister for Health. In his book 'In Place of Fear' Bevan complained at the failure of local authorities to use the powers widely, and in some cases to use them at all. Though the present GLC has taken this challenge seriously, it has found, in trying to promote cultural diversity, the legislation severely lacking and at times frustrating. Any policy which attempts to broaden the definition of what is cultural; what is art; what is sport etc., is obliged to contain these policies within the 1972 Local Government Act. It is this Act which defines culture in 19th century terms: definitions which, for example, name

theatres and galleries but which do not specifically include 20th century forms such as video, television, photography, record distribution, community radio, community bookshops etc.

5. Though the present GLC has managed to develop policies for these popular 20th century forms, their implementation has been impeded rather than assisted by the legislation: no more so than in the equal opportunities and job-creation programmes. It is perhaps a unique feature of the cultural or leisure industries that different sectors e.g. television, music, video, theatre, interact with each other both culturally and economically - with workers often working in more than one sector and having membership of more than one union - to such an increasing extent that only a strategic planning body would be able to operate in the field: linking, in the capital city, international, national, regional and local structures share resources in marketing, distribution etc.

The GLC has the administrative, architectural, financial and legal expertise to sustain strategic planning and investment across the cultural sectors. Some idea of the importance of the cultural industries can be gauged from recent evidence issued by the Musicians Union:

"The music industry has a gross value of £1,000 million per annum, and the copyright industries as a whole - in which music plays a considerable role - represents 2.6% of the Gross Domestic Product. That's larger than either the motor car or the food manufacturing industries".

A recent research study at Warwick University estimated that the only industries predicted to grow at a rate of 30% per year were in the cultural field: film/video/television; publishing and sport. When this information is considered together with the tourist industry, worth £5,000 million in the UK, it can be demonstrated on grounds of planning resources and cost-effectiveness that a strategic policy is fundamental to local government in general and the capital city in particular.



Abolition of the GLC will scatter these specialised, central services between a range of unaccountable quangoes, who have already had their budgets cut by government. None of the arts or sports quangoes know their budgets, 5 months from abolition, and many arts, sports and other groups face a very uncertain future.

6. The Role of Local Government

Local Government is the largest resource and funding source in the UK, spending some £928 million on arts and recreation provision this year. It is not a "backdrop" (the Arts Council's term) to the work of the Arts Council of Great Britain with a budget of approximately £105 million, nor the Sports Council with a national budget of £30 million. In size, structure and range, local government provision in the field of arts, recreation and sport is different and comes from a different history. Local government is foremost in this field for the following reasons:

- (i) As service providers authorities often own and manage a large number of buildings deployed for arts and recreational use. Local authorities are now almost alone in being able to provide any capital monies for "housing the arts/sports" and the entertainments programmes, which at the GLC have included such important festivals as Thamesday and the London Marathon, are not only popular celebrations but a hidden form of commission subsidy for arts and sports groups. Some authorities have introduced a concessionary "leisurecard" scheme which allows free access to Council facilities for the unemployed etc.
- (ii) As focus for public consultation many authorities publish policy/research papers and hold conferences which facilitate a more open, participatory form of local government. Specialist concerns such as the cultural industries, black arts, children's theatre, sports etc. have been assisted in their development by the circulation of a wide range of research and policy papers produced by local authorities.

(iii) As major financiers of the voluntary cultural sector authorities can not only provide both subsidy and investment loans to arts and sports groups, but can also provide considerable financial, legal and planning advice to disadvantaged groups to enable them to gain access to resources: part of the wider aims of reducing disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity. In this respect grant awards and investment loans can be conditional upon equal opportunity codes of practice, reinforced with contract compliance mechanisms.

(iv) As direct and indirect employers in the arts, sport and recreational fields, local authorities play a major role in the achievement of equal opportunities. As an indirect employer through salary elements in grant/investment loans, awards accord, wherever possible, with cultural sector trade union agreements. As the average wage of arts and sports workers is around £3,000 p.a. it can be seen that many local authorities have a role in trying to limit this form of low-wage exploitation.

7. These considerations apply to local government as a whole. In addition there is a particular need for an active authority at the strategic level in London. Some of the reasons for this include:

(i) Because of London's historic role as the capital city the cultural industries are heavily concentrated in London as the hub of the national and international market. Printing and publishing is now London's largest manufacturing sector, exporting 34% of their output. If electrical engineering, which provides the infrastructure of cultural transmission, and the film/video/cinema are included, and music industries, these sectors make up almost one half of London's manufacturing employment.

The Institute of Employment Research estimates that for the period 1980-1990 the category of Arts and Sports will be the fastest growing area of employment increasing nationally by 30%. Hence, the cultural and leisure industries are a field



in which local authorities are beginning to invest through job-creation and equal opportunity schemes which combine economic and cultural policies.

(ii) Cultural forms have no respect for borough boundaries! Major networks of distribution and touring operate on a cross-Borough basis. There is no way film distribution, book publishing or record distribution, touring exhibitions or theatre companies could survive confined to certain geographical areas. This is why, for example, the GLC has particularly resisted the misinterpretation of the terms "community" or "ethnic" as "local". Cultural forms are part of a cultural and economic infrastructure which is finely balanced on the relationships between international, national, regional and local structures. The tourist industry is fully integrated into this structure.

The regional strategic authority plays a key role in maintaining this active and responsive network.

(iii) The uneven distribution of arts and sports provision in London.

Successive Governments, of every political complexion, have expected local borough councils to provide appropriate levels of support for arts and sports activities. Governments have enacted legislation to make it possible to fulfil these expectations. Yet some boroughs have consistently made hardly any significant provision for the arts and sports. In the arts field, Harrow, Bexley, Westminster, Barnet and Sutton spend less than approximately 20 pence per head of the population. On the other hand Hammersmith & Fulham, Camden, Hillingdon, Greenwich and Newham all spend more than £2 per head. There is no consistency in borough funding of the arts. Boroughs cannot be expected to aim for co-ordination and consistency - that is not their role. Nor is voluntary or informal co-ordination likely to be effective - the London Boroughs Association, when approached for statistics, confessed to having no records at all of arts, sports expenditure and no economic data on the leisure industries in the capital city.

- (iv) The uneven distributions of the ethnic minority groups and other disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, etc., within London. In 5 boroughs 25% or more of the population is of New Commonwealth of Pakistani origin whereas in 6 boroughs the figure is fewer than 5%. Some boroughs have a very large elderly populations, other quite small.

Some boroughs have adopted positive action programmes in the race and sex equality fields. Many have not, and therefore the GLC believes it should demonstrate at the strategic level what can be done. In general GLC reports such as 'Mainstream Arts & their challenge to Racism' and 'An Arts Recreation policy for the Elderly' have been welcome.

8. Present GLC Activities

The very idea of 'London' and being a 'Londoner' is a cultural phenomenon, build up particularly in the last 100 years by popular forms:

- (i) **A METROPOLITAN CULTURE:** A wide range of activities including nursery rhymes, the post war London novels, Ealing Film Comedies Painting, Football, Greyhound Racing and Reggae have all helped to give London its identity today. Most of the community arts, ethnic arts and sports activities which the GLC funds maintain these tradition: pub theatre, estated based projects, local publishing, music workshops, sports projects with the unemployed training schemes for women and ethnic minorities, arts policies for the elderly.
- (ii) Just as the National Government stages major events from the State Opening of Parliament to the £31 million Liverpool Garden Festival, so the GLC is the Regional Government for the capital city and celebrates its CIVIC PRIDE in London and Londoners through over 800 outdoor events, including Thamesday, South Bank Day, the Easter Parade, African Music Village, the London Marathon and the opening of the Thames Barrier.

The events bring together millions of Londoners, from the 32 boroughs, to celebrate London's identity.

- (iii) As a London-wide authority the GLC has always been able to balance out funding of the arts, sport and recreation across the whole of London. This strategic role not only involves the support of major regional facilities such as the Crystal Sports Centre or The Albany Empire Deptford, but crucially protecting London's history. The GLC has responsibility for over 30,000 listed buildings, for theatres cinemas and museums, for the Green Belt, the owns on behalf of Londoners historic houses such as Kenwood, Marble Hill and Rangers House.
- (iv) In times of recession, spending on arts and sports seems a natural target. And yet that expenditure is vital not only to the 300,000 jobs in this area, but through tourism and other cultural industries such as publishing, film and television to the economic health of the capital. The largest and fastest growth industries in London are now sports and other leisure activities. At a time of over four million unemployed people the GLC's arts and recreation training courses and job creation in the major economic sectors of the capital are crucial.
- (v) As a provider of services the GLC has sought to reflect the multi-racial nature of London through its arts, recreation and sports facilities and policies. All grant-aid/investment groups are required to know that their project is ran on democratic lines with a representative management structure, and concern for ethnic minority and women equality consideration. With reference to these disadvantaged groups the Council has established a number o training courses in London Higher Education institutions.
- (vi) The GLC's open foyer policies on the South Bank have been widely acclaimed, together with its imaginative plans at Burgess and Mile End parks.
- (vii) As a direct employer the GLC has introduced innovative



schemes both for its parks staff and in new developments at the Brixton Recreation Centre and the South Bank etc.

- (viii) As a leader of public opinion the GLC declared 1983 Peace Year, 1984 Anti-Racist Year and 1985 Jobs Year: all of these programmes backed up with a wide-ranging programme of events, publicity conferences, books and information packs. Most of these programmes had a large arts and recreation input.

9. Existing Legislative Constraints

Whilst the GLC has sought to implement its duties and policies under the Local Government Act 1972, it has faced considerable difficulties in specific fields. Unlike some other GLC committees who have in the main been forced to implement their duties under the discretionary powers of sections 137 or 142, and have faced difficulties thereby, the arts and recreation committee largely uses the cultural powers defined in section 145, and has faced difficulties of a wholly different, but no less intense, nature.

Much of the difficulty centres on the working and interpretation of the Local Government Act which allows spending to be pre-disposed towards the traditional cultural (19th century) forms. For when the GLC tried to make available grants or loans towards projects and organisations involved in cultural training programmes, new media technology such as community radio, ethnic magazines and publishing projects, sports bursaries, etc., cultural forms which bridge both leisure, industry and employment and even scientific purposes (e.g. video) the existing legal structure has blocked (or delayed) initiatives.

What section 145 specifically refers to - and therefore legitimises as culture and entertainment - are dancing, theatre, concert halls, bands and orchestras, arts and crafts, stage plays, cinematograph films, boxing and wrestling and public music. That is to say live performance almost exclusively. Crucial as live performance is in many cultural forms, in 1985 the majority of people at their theatre, melodrama, music, visual images, sport on the radio, television, films and on records: through the electronic forms of mass communication. These popular cultural forms, which the GLC's

policy of cultural diversity has tried to encourage, are simply not there in the legislation.

10 Future Functions of a Strategic Authority: Options

The South Bank

From April next year, the South Bank will be run by the South Bank Board as an autonomous part of the Arts Council. The re-establishment of a democratic strategic authority in London would clearly re-open the question of the future of the South Bank.

The main justification for transfer to the Arts Council made during the abolition debate was that, in the absence of the GLC, it was the only appropriate body. A subsidiary argument was that the South Bank is of national, not regional, significance. It should be noted that the then Minister for the Arts, Lord Gowrie, went on record as saying that Arts policy as such did not provide a justification for abolition.

It seems clear that the choice must be between the Arts Council, and a strategic authority. Before the abolition of the GLC, the Arts Council commissioned an independent study of the few buildings that it directly manages - the Hayward Gallery and the Serpentine Gallery - which concluded that the Arts Council fivest itself of this incongruous role. The same paper floated the suggestion that as the GLC had a long and substantial history of direct management of large institutions, including the rest of the South Bank, it would be a proper rationalisation to hand over the Hayward fir integration into the rest of the Complex. The assumption by the Arts Council of control of the whole South Bank could be seen as very substantial increasing the anomaly of direct management by what is basically a national grant-giving body. The necessity of employing gardeners for the Jubilee Gardens and workers for the riverside functions has been pointed to as an illustration of how far control of the South Bank has taken the Arts Council from its primary role.

If the South Bank were to be retained by the Arts Council following the re-establishment of a strategic authority, it would have to be on the basis that the South Bank is so overwhelmingly a national,

not regional asset that control by a national body was imperative, even if such control was a serious distortion of the role of that body. It should be noted that not only is the large majority of the audience for the South Bank made up of Londoners or foreign tourists, but also that the facilities themselves have been paid for by Londoners and built by their democratic representatives.

The Arts Council half-accepted, then vigorously opposed, and is now implementing, through the South Bank Board, the integration of the Hayward Gallery into the rest of the complex. It is difficult to see any reason for reversing this if a strategic authority was to regain the South Bank.

Parks and Green Belt Lands

In London, public open space is administered by a number of different organisations. The main authorities are the Department of the Environment (the Royal Parks), the GLC (most open space of strategic significance other than the Royal Parks) and the London borough councils who are responsible for local open spaces.

The distinction between strategic and local parks is clear in the pre-abolition legislation. The London government Act 1963, which set up the GLC, provided that the Council should only retain parks "approved by the Minister as being for the benefit of an area of Greater London substantially larger than the London boroughs -- -- ---- which the park or open space [is situated]".

Accordingly, in 1971 the GLC handed over some 2,780 acres to the boroughs, retaining 3,961 acres. This figure has since risen with the creation of new country parks at Trent, Havering and Stanmore.

Under the abolition legislation, these GLC parks will also be transferred to the boroughs, although in some cases the Government seem to have accepted a London-wide dimension (although no final decision has been taken at the time of writing, Hampstead Heath is likely to be transferred to the City of London with "London-wide" financial arrangements).

The case for returning strategic parks to a London-wide authority rests on two arguments; firstly, that boroughs will be incapable of

on the Thames. In essence, this required them to make the best practicable use of the Thames for recreational purposes. Associated with this are plan making functions and responsibility for the natural and built environment and heritage associated with the Thames.

A provision was included in the 1973 Act for these functions to be transferred (by order) to the GLC. The TWA proposed this in 1975, and the draft order has been with the Secretary of State ever since - part of the reason for this was disagreement on some points of detail between the GLC and the TWA. Since 1975 the TWA has spent little on recreation on the Thames in the GLC area. Given this history, it is clearly an option for the new strategic authority to take on these functions from the TWA.

The TWA is only responsible for a comparatively short stretch of the River within the GLC area - the Port of London Authority (PLA) has responsibility for 36 miles within the GLC area (95 in total) as against 7.3 miles for the TWA. Similar considerations to those which prompted the proposed transfer of TWA functions could apply to those exercised by the PLA. This case could be particularly strong if other functions were transferred from the PLA, particularly leading to its abolition. Other Future of London Discussion Documents which contain proposals relevant to London's waterways and the TWA, PLA and British Waterways Board functions are: Transport; Options for Planning; and Public Health and Safety: Land Drainage and Flood Prevention.

Local Radio and Cable Television

Radio is a major cultural medium which entertains and enriches the lives of its listeners. Because of the way in which local government legislation on the arts has followed traditional 19th century patterns, radio has not in the past been seen as a concern of local authorities. However, with the advent of local radio some years ago and the current government plans on community and community-of-interest radio, it may be appropriate for strategic local government to take on a role consistent with its general remit for the cultural and leisure life of the region.



Similarly, the respect of cable television potentially brings TV down to an equally local level, although much would depend on decisions still to be taken.

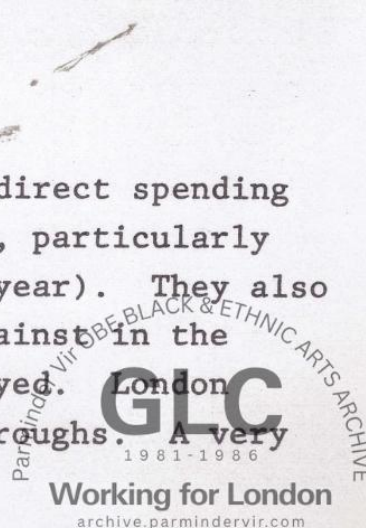
It can be argued that a role in radio and cable provision would help to redress what is seen as the continual failure of existing radio and television provision to represent fairly the diversity of cultural identity of ethnic minority groups living in multi-racial London. At present, the GLC funds a number of community radio stations and their training courses - community radio has a structural, economic and strategic relationship to the black music sector in that it is becoming the main medium through which black music can be distributed and programmed.

Options for (commercial) local and community radio and cable TV roles for a strategic authority include:

- The strategic authority could submit proposals and comments to the IBA/Cable Authority/Government before franchise numbers and boundaries (?) are decided on, and before particular franchise awards are made, and the IBA/Cable Authority/Government could be statutorily obliged to "have regard to" the strategic authority;
- these decisions could be taken by an independent and public inquiry at which the strategic authority could be represented;
- these franchise functions could become statutory duties of the strategic authority, with the IBA/Cable Authority/Government involved only to the extent of issuing national guidelines.

Improving Library Services

Libraries do represent the most important area of direct spending by the state on culture (£359.6 million in 1981-2), particularly for local authorities (£320.5 million in the same year). They also provide services for many who are discriminated against in the cultural market place, notably the old and unemployed. London alone has well over 440 libraries, run by local boroughs. A very



large proportion of this spending is taken up by staff and building costs. Libraries have only recently begun to come to terms with the new technologies of culture, with records and tapes (including, after a long delay, popular music) and now, video (already being provided in 50 out of 187 library authorities in the UK).

Many would argue that the libraries could considerably expand their sphere of operation to encompass the provision of information services and cultural services for those not working during the day. With cinemas continuing their steep decline, libraries would make ideal venues for film and video exhibition, linked to the provision of childcare facilities.

However, if improvements like these are to be made, the resources must be available. In many ways, library services are most critically needed in the poorer parts of the capital, where boroughs are already overstretched. It may be appropriate for the cross-London financial resources of the strategic authority to be available. At the lowest level, this could merely consist of making grants to boroughs to improve services (as would be possible under existing legislation). Alternatively, the strategic authority could have default powers if boroughs failed to meet minimum standards laid down by the strategic authority, in consultation with the boroughs. There would need to be provision for appeal against minimum standard targets, perhaps to the Minister for Arts and Libraries.

While this may help to increase provision of library facilities, it could also be seen as an infringement of the democratic rights of borough councils to decide their own priorities in spending. Another option would be for the strategic authority to have the power to spend money on a borough library service to improve standards without the agreement of the boroughs. This may, however, result in boroughs failing to meet their obligations because they know the strategic authority would step in.

Taxes and Levies on the Commercial Sector

Taxes and levies on the commercial sector are an established part of the structure of the arts. They have, however, been built up in an ad hoc manner and apply only haphazardly. In additions,



striking feature of such levies has been the way in which they have tended to favour the already successful - the Eady levy is distributed in proportion to box-office takings, the PLR scheme in proportion to book borrowings (so favouring already successful authors) while proposals to levy blank audio and video cassettes always tend to assume that funds should be distributed to record or video companies according to sales.

An alternative structure would be to use a tax on (near-monopoly) controllers or distribution to fund a redistributive programme which can serve both to create jobs and meet hitherto unmet cultural needs.

The press, for example, taxes on advertising revenues (above a certain level) could be used to subsidise newsprint for small circulation newspapers aimed at audiences which aren't wealthy enough to generate advertising revenue, or for start-up funds for new publications. In music, funds generated from radio airplay could be used according to similar principles rather than going to those who are already successful.

Clearly, this would constitute a national initiative in arts policy. Its relevance to strategic government in London, however, is that the revenues from such taxes could be administered at different levels - the strategic authority could be responsible for the funds made available by taxes at the regional, rather than national level, to be redistributed at the same level. One advantage of this approach is that it would enhance democratic accountability over what could become a very important element in arts policy, significantly redistributing the resources available to the arts media and encouraging breadth and diversity.

On the other hand, it could be argued that there is no particular virtue in earmarking taxes - that is, there need be no direct relationship between how taxes are raised and how they are spent, and of course this is true of the vast majority of central and local government revenues. Earmarking could be seen to lead to the demand that the cultural sectors should become internally "self-supporting". The demand for redistribution within the cultural sectors, this argument suggests, could lead to a



restriction of redistribution between different sectors. This could be countered by[?]

Percentage for the Arts and Recreation Scheme

This option would provide for a 1% levy on the cost of all new building projects, refurbishment and environmental schemes to be set aside for an artistic or recreational component of the schemes.

The proposal is in part based on a successful scheme in the city of Seattle. Legislation already exists at federal, state and city level in the USA, and Norway, the Netherlands, Italy, Finland and Canada have all adopted some form of percentage for arts legislation. In this country LB Lewisham has introduced a scheme.

It may be more flexible to pool the levies into a central fund administered by the strategic authority, (advised by a panel of practitioners in the arts) to ensure that the varying needs of new developments could be met above or below the sum contributed.

Such a scheme is already possible under existing legislation - the suggestion is that it should be made mandatory.

The advantages of the scheme are that it would provoke a massive shift of art into the public domain and would recognise the importance of art in the development of London's environment - it could help to combat alienation and humanise the urban landscape.

On the other hand, it could be argued that it would be inappropriate and possibly self-defeating to introduce a mandatory requirement.

Transport and Arts and Recreation

In addition to new specific arts, recreation and sports powers, the re-creation of a strategic authority for London would open up new possibilities through the reassembly of other functions. One example would be a LEISURECARD.

The idea behind this scheme, successfully implemented by Sheffield City Council, is to combine free or concessionary travel and

entrance to arts and sports facilities. At present, the elderly and unemployed have very limited opportunities to enjoy arts and sports facilities, which are often either too expensive or too inaccessible or both. At the same time, it is perhaps even more important for these groups to gain access to the enriching experiences available to the rest of the population.

A leisurecard available to the elderly, the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups like the homeless would make a significant impact on the quality of life of a significant (and growing) proportion of Londoners. Such an initiative, however, would only be possible if the transport system and the relevant facilities were under the control of a single, London-wide, democratic authority.