

# The Ulster-Scots Agency

## The funding and organisation of Ulster-Scots Music & Dance for 2012

### Community Consultation Paper

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Ulster-Scots Agency wishes to consult with key stakeholders on the music and dance tuition programme funded under the Financial Assistance Scheme. The purpose of the consultation is to review the operation of the scheme to meet the needs of communities whilst taking account of the future budgetary constraints and accountability in the management and distribution of public funds. **Interim arrangements for funding music and dance tuition have been put in place for 2011, however we will be implementing new funding arrangements in 2012 that will take account of this consultation process.**
- 1.2 Up to 2010, the scheme operated as follows: Tuition funding was provided over the calendar year and community groups were able to apply for a maximum of 40 weeks tuition, either for 1 or 2 nights per week. This **did not** include band practice sessions. In terms of teacher training for dance it was recognised that these may be held monthly. Some other special provisions did relate to the delivery of dance tuition, however no tuition award by the Agency under the Financial Assistance Scheme will exceed 75% of total project costs.
- 1.3 The tuition period was usually 2 hours or 4 hours per week if held over two nights. Dance tuition was usually provided in 4 hours sessions up

## ULSTER SCOTS AGENCY

to twice a week. Additional tuition time was not supported by the Agency **unless** tuition was being offered towards a recognised musical qualification.

- 1.4 The Agency tried to respond to groups needs and allowed up to two accredited or experienced tutors where appropriate e.g. piping and drumming, accordion and drumming or flute and drum. Groups receiving Highland or Scottish Country dance tuition did so from one tutor.
- 1.5 The Agency provided an award of up to £25 per hour for a skilled (a minimum of three years teaching experience) musical tutor. Costs of up to £15 per hour were awarded to anyone with less experience. Dance awards were £25 per hour for qualified tutors (accredited by the appropriate dance bodies) and up to £15 per hour for non or semi-qualified tutors. Under the scheme, tutors can be members of the group applying funding. Applications for teacher training could also be advanced separately under the tranche funding scheme.
- 1.6 Demand for highland dance tutors outstrips supply and, travel expenses for highland dance tutors were eligible for funding under the scheme. Funding was also available for hall rental for tuition at £30 per session. This rental fee includes cleaning, hall preparation and hall restoration. Groups with their own premises were not eligible for funding for hall rental.

## **2. Current Challenges**

- 2.1 The Ulster-Scots Agency is charged with the promotion of Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. More recently the Agency has also worked in partnership to raise awareness about Ulster-Scots communities and their traditions outside of Ireland. There is a lot to do and there are many opportunities through which awareness, acceptance and interest in Ulster-Scots can be increased.

## ULSTER SCOTS AGENCY

- 2.2 There is a very limited resource available and we will not be able to do everything that needs to be done. We will have to make difficult choices about how we support communities and be smarter about how we use precious resources. In particular, we should be encouraging and strengthening musical and dance ability by improving the quality of tuition and raising standards.
- 2.3 We have worked very hard, through our publications and through the work of our five development officers, to reach out to communities interested in promoting Ulster-Scots culture and to encourage applications to the Agency's Financial Assistance Scheme. It is a testament to the Agency's staff's energy, enthusiasm and effectiveness that this approach has yielded tremendous results.
- 2.4 Applications across all funding streams have increased year on year which has resulted in more, smaller awards. While this has enabled new groups to get help; it has also placed greater pressure on the funds – awards in many cases do not meet the projected short-fall of funding. This means organising groups can face possible debts or reductions in their proposed programme of activity. The limited funding available has also hampered the development of established groups as it has not been possible to fully support their plans for growth.
- 2.5 In practical terms, the current system for determining grant awards does not balance the demand on the fund with the needs of the community. All eligible projects are offered some help but sometimes not enough to make their proposal viable, this places undue stress on organisers and does not serve the community or the Agency's interests well.
- 2.6 We need to be much smarter about what we do with the limited money that we now have available. We will need to review everything we do and this paper, which sets out ideas about how music and dance tuition

in communities might work in the future, begins that process. **We need your help and throughout the paper a number of questions are asked to help us understand your views on how best we can target support in the future.**

**3. Music and Dance Tuition Programme - Progress**

3.1 We introduced support for music and dance tuition programmes to be delivered within communities to try to:

1. Stimulate new Ulster-Scots activity;
2. Support established organisations to secure a viable future;  
and,
3. Improve the standard of provision.

3.2 So far we have been relatively successful in delivering on the first objective. There has been a massive increase in applications to the Music and Dance Tuition Programme from 10 in 2000 to 365 in 2010. The high level of repeat applicants suggests that progress towards the second objective has been slower.

3.3 We know that all groups depend on volunteers and members to organise the projects, often juggling the project with work and family commitments, and that different groups need help with different things.

***Question 1: What sort of help should we offer new groups?***

***Question 2: What steps should we take to help established groups?***

3.4 The focus of tuition services has been on the promotion of Ulster-Scots music and song, including:

- Bagpipes,
- Drumming,
- Flute,
- Fife,

## ULSTER SCOTS AGENCY

- Fiddle,
- Accordion, and,
- Tin whistle.

3.5 Tuition in dance is also provided through the programme, including:

- Highland,
- Scottish country,
- Traditional square dancing, and,
- Traditional set dancing e.g. Quadrilles, Lancers and Caledonians.

There has been interest in all of the courses across the Ulster-Scots community and in an average year 75% of the programme goes towards music tuition and 25% towards dance tuition.

***Question 3: How do you think the programme should be split? between music and dance?***

***Question 4: Is tuition needed in other musical or dance disciplines or in other areas of Ulster-Scots cultural activity?***

3.6 Our policy that all projects eligible for funding are supported has resulted in a large number of smaller grants. This often creates a short-fall that groups have to meet if they wish to continue, many groups have to withdraw.

3.7 We also know some groups have problems managing all of the steps needed to qualify for grant and we want to make sure that changes to the programme make getting music or dance tuition easier. There are a number of ways tuition could be delivered and some options are set out below. **There may be other ideas and we would like to hear about them, we ask some more questions about our ideas and yours below.**

## 4. OPTIONS

**4.1 Option 1: Peripatetic Tutor Service for Communities**

4.1.1 Tutors would develop proposals for tuition in communities and submit them to the Agency. This might be organised on a geographical basis or in respect of specific instruments or dance styles.

***Question 5: Do you think tutors are best placed to organise tuition classes?***

**4.2 Option 2: Establish Sub-regional Centres of Excellence**

4.2.1 This approach would identify suitable accessible locations for sub-regional hubs from which tuition services would be delivered to surrounding communities.

***Question 6: How far would students travel to take part in tuition classes?***

**4.3 Option 3: Targeted Grant Scheme for Community & Voluntary Groups**

4.3.1 This approach would build on the existing scheme. It would target funding at those applications that best meet the Agency's objectives of supporting new groups and helping existing groups to become sustainable. Selection would be decided on the basis of the following tests:

- Does the group provide tuition for all levels?
- Are students progressing towards a recognised qualification?
- Is the participation in the programme growing?
- Does public performance form part of the programme?
- Is this a new group or a new programme within an existing group?
- Is the group making a contribution greater than 25% towards the costs? If it is an existing group – is it making a larger contribution than before?

## ULSTER SCOTS AGENCY

- Does the programme promote other Ulster-Scots cultural activities?

4.3.2 Applications would be scored against the criteria and funding awarded in merit order. This would restrict the number of grants awarded but it would ensure that projects would be offered enough grant to meet their needs.

### **4.4 Option 4: Enhanced Existing Scheme**

4.4.1 The existing scheme requirements would be supplemented to require a minimum group size of fifteen members. Groups would require Tutors to submit a “scheme of work” for each 10 week tuition period; detailed lesson plans and learning materials for the Agency’s approval. Plans would be required to demonstrate Ulster-Scots content. Existing criteria would apply and funding would be awarded on the basis of merit.

4.4.2 The approach would allow the Agency to assure itself that the tuition provided in communities is of a good standard and is providing opportunities for development and progression. In summary, it would assure the Agency that the service is meeting the community’s needs. An additional advantage would be that groups are already familiar with the process so implementation of new requirements should be straightforward. The submission of a programme of work and lesson plans should present no problems for a competent and experienced tutor.

### **4.5 Option 5: Working in Partnership**

4.5.1 This option would require groups to work in partnership and achieve a minimum group size of fifteen to avail of funding. Groups from a specific locality might find it more cost-effective to pool resources. Likewise groups that wish to engage a tutor to develop specialised skills perhaps in a specific type of drumming or musical style may find this approach beneficial. It would allow a few members from each group to develop very specialised skills which they could

## ULSTER SCOTS AGENCY

take back to their own group to share thus raising the quality of all of the groups where members participated.

- 4.6 For Options 3 – 5 we would need to ensure that there are opportunities for all musicians and dancers seeking to develop their skills. Eligibility criteria could be adjusted to provide support to new groups or disciplines currently under-represented across the programme by ring-fencing a proportion of the grant available.

***Question 7: Do you agree that funding should be targeted at a smaller number of quality projects?***

***Question 8: How would you choose projects for support?***

***Question 9: Do you agree that a proportion of the budget should be ring-fenced for new groups or disciplines under-represented across the programme? If so, what proportion?***

***Question 10: What might the Ulster-Scots elements of the programme include?***

***Question 11: Are your organisation's member groups likely to work in partnership to deliver tuition?***

### **5. Other Proposed Changes to the Programme**

- 5.1 Whichever way tuition is provided there are changes which we could make that might make managing the grant easier.
- 5.2 The current payment model allows groups to draw-down grant in four tranches. A new system whereby grant recipients would access grant in two payments might be easier to manage.
- 5.3 Under this proposal groups would be allowed to draw-down a percentage of grant, in advance of payment, on presentation of



## ULSTER SCOTS AGENCY

contracts and invoices from the tutor and from the venue provider for the provision of the services for the period of the grant claim. The remainder of the grant would be retained by the Agency until the tuition is complete, evidence of payment of all of the submitted invoices, a full income and expenditure report verified by an officer of the group and the post-project evaluation would be required.

***Question 12: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the payment process? Are there other improvements that you would suggest for 2012?***

***Question 13: Are there other issues that we should consider to improve tuition services in communities?***

### **6. Conclusion**

6.1 Regardless of which changes are made to the programme, the new system will have to:

- Be easy for applicants to manage;
- Be open about how grant is awarded;
- Support new and existing groups;
- Reflect the diversity of the community;
- Encourage sustainability and improve quality;
- Be consistent with the Agency's objectives.

**Response to the Ulster Scots Agency  
Consultation on Music and Dance.  
[Closing date 31 October 2010]**

Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

Contact name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

**Consultation Questions**

**1: *What sort of help should we offer new groups?***

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2: *What steps should we take to help established groups?***

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3: How do you think the programme should be split between music and dance?**

---

---

---

---

---

**4: Is tuition needed in other musical or dance disciplines or in other areas of Ulster-Scots cultural activity?**

---

---

---

---

---

**5: Do you think tutors are best placed to organise tuition classes?**

---

---

---

---

---

**6: Would you travel to take part in tuition classes?**

---

---

---

---

---

**7: Do you agree that funding should be targeted at a smaller number of groups?**

---

---

---

---

**8: How would you choose projects for support?**

---

---

---

---

**9: Do you agree that a proportion of the budget should be ring-fenced for new groups or disciplines under-represented across the programme?**

---

---

---

---

**10: What might the Ulster-Scots elements of the programme include?**

---

---

---

---

---

**11: Are your organisation's member groups likely to work in partnership to deliver tuition?**

---

---

---

---

---

**12: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the payment process? Are there other improvements that you would suggest for 2012?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**13: Are there other issues we should consider to improve tuition services in communities?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*Thank you for responding to this consultation. Completed responses [pages 10 – 14] should be returned to :-*

*The Ulster Scots Agency  
68/72 Great Victoria Street,  
Belfast  
BT2 7BB*

*Electronic responses should be sent to :-*

*Info@Ulsterscotsagency.org.uk*

***The closing date for responses is  
31<sup>st</sup> October 2010***