



Shetland *arts*

Shetland Arts Development Agency (SADA) and myself (as Chair of the Board of Trustees) have recently received correspondence concerning the cancellation of Wordplay. Questions have also been raised about the organisation's literature strategy in general.

Firstly, I would like to welcome these comments, as feedback is the one of the best ways for the organisation to review and improve its output. The organisation is not and does not profess to be perfect and therefore we will gladly consider any constructive criticism levelled.

The cancellation of Wordplay, along with the Screenplay and Folk Frenzy festivals is a disappointment for the Organisation and the Board of Trustees. Unfortunately, these cancellations have been necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to protect the organisation in the long term. The Board has reviewed and ratified these decisions and remains confident that the Organisation has correctly prioritised its most effective areas of output under the conditions caused by the Coronavirus Lockdown and the Organisation's severely reduced resources.

I would like to reassure all parties that the decision to cancel the three festivals was taken solely as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is not a long term or permanent cancellation.

Shetland Arts is currently starting development of its next three-year strategy. The organisation is mandated to support the development presentation of art and art forms in the islands as defined by its Trust Deed. It is not mandated to run or support any specific Festival, Event or Development Programme and therefore all of the Organisation's output is up for review during the development of this strategy. The Organisation will shortly launch a public consultation (admittedly delayed due to the Coronavirus Lockdown) which will allow the public to help shape SADA's output in the next three years.

To specifically address the concerns around Wordplay, a number of constructive points have been raised surrounding the quality of the festival in previous years. It thus seems sensible to review the festival within the context of the Organisation's overall strategy. If the festival can be shown to be an effective part of the development of the arts in the islands, then SADA and the Board of Trustees will continue to wholeheartedly support it.

I would encourage any concerned parties to make their views known in the upcoming public consultation on the Organisation's next three-year strategy. All constructive viewpoints (and criticisms) will be taken seriously with the aim to improve Shetland Arts for the future.

The Organisation and I continue to remain open and approachable for constructive discussions regarding the Organisation's strategy.

R. Stevenson  
Chair, Board of Trustees, Shetland Arts Development Agency



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