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Mr Oscar Van Heek
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EDINBURGH

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
EDINBURGH
IMPROVING SERVICES - CREATING JOBS

DATE 7 January 1993
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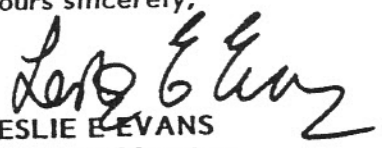
Dear Mr Van Heek

As you may already be aware, the City of Edinburgh District Council's Recreation Committee recently commissioned a review of the City's funding policy for video. The strategy paper has now been approved by both the Recreation and Economic Development and Estates Committees. A copy of the strategy is enclosed for your information.

The recommendations outlined in the paper are being pursued by two officers, Andrew Ormston and Lynne Halfpenny, both based at 219 High Street, Edinburgh, in partnership with officials from the Department of Economic Development and Estates. Joint meetings are being arranged between the two Departments to discuss implementation of the report's findings. Individuals and organisations affected by the strategy will also be consulted as part of this process.

The policy will inform all future cultural grant aid decisions. Revised grant aid forms will be available from the beginning of February for consideration at the March and April Recreation Committees. Please contact Lynne Halfpenny for further details or information regarding grant aid applications or any other queries regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely,


LESLIE E. EVANS
Assistant Director
(Arts and Entertainment)

IF PHONING OR CALLING ASK FOR **Ms Leslie Evans**
EXTENSION **209**
PLEASE ADDRESS REPLY TO THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION

EDINBURGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION

Video Funding Strategy

1. TIME BASED MEDIA - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Video

The first users of video were almost exclusively the broadcast television companies. After the introduction of portable black and white equipment in the late 60's, video was used initially in education, training and the arts. Following the development of cheap colour cameras and recorders a decade later, the medium has become the mainstay of a multi-million pound audio industry in the UK.

Video has found many applications in the cultural sector, used by individuals, community groups, workshops and independent production companies to generate material for broadcast and cassette distribution.

Although the medium itself has proved to be a cost effective means of disseminating information and entertainment, the community and arts sectors have ironically, suffered from a lack of communication, low investment, poor infrastructure, and inadequate distribution systems.

Driven by a technology led industry, the commercial sector has invested heavily, whilst the cultural sector has typically found itself under resourced, using obsolete and inferior equipment which is unable to meet either the technical demands of broadcasters or the sophisticated tastes of a viewing audience.

Though the medium may be said to have reached maturity, there is no sign that the rate of innovation is slowing. The introduction of digital techniques, new production formats, high definition television, multimedia and interactive systems, and virtual reality graphics mean that those involved must continually invest to remain so.

Film

Conversely, film technology and formats have not changed significantly for over 50 years and the dramatic development of electronic media has forced a decline in the use of film as an originating and post production medium. Film workers are being retrained for video production and in the long term, many of the craft skills associated with film production will be lost.

These factors combined with lack of investment have contributed to the demise of the feature film industry in Scotland and the rest of the UK. For the most part therefore this report is necessarily concerned with the use of video.

2. THE CURRENT POSITION

The versatility of video has meant that it is difficult to classify its use. In the commercial sector, this is not a problem if one assumes that all activity is motivated by profit, however, in the grant aided sector its application is diverse and therefore attracted funding from many sources. Whilst this has positive aspects, lack of co-ordination has resulted in an ad hoc arrangement of facilities, which operate on different and incompatible formats.

In Lothian Region it is evident that funding bodies have not, as yet, developed a strategic approach to video activity. Because of the nature of their activities, the groups mentioned in this report are obliged to seek funding from various sources and as a result the funding picture, locally and nationally reflects the fragmentary nature of the industry as a whole.

3. FUNDING BODIES

The Scottish Office

The Scottish Office administers funding directly to clients in the form of urban aid and devolved monies through the Scottish Film Council.

Scottish Film Council

After many years of successfully support media education, film archiving and exhibition, the Scottish Film Council has recently awarded £20,000 production funding for the First Reels project in a joint venture with Scottish Television (STV). Currently Scottish Film Council is also funding workshops and courses for screen writers.

Scottish Film Production Fund

In the three years ending 1991, the Scottish Film Production Fund (SFPPF) has awarded a total of £375,724 to 26 projects in the form of development and/or production money. Most of the projects were co-financed. The Scottish Film Production Fund sees itself as a priming organisation, awarding seed money which will attract larger financial contributions. In addition its key role is to provide opportunities for new producers, writers and film makers. Full details of structure and finance are published in the Annual Reports and accounts 1990-91.

Lothian Regional Council

Education and Community Education are the two key areas through which the Regional Council funds video. The Region plans to improve facilities to be made available to schools in the development of Leith Academy, and schools themselves are increasingly investing in video equipment to meet their curriculum needs.

Edinburgh District Council

Edinburgh District Council funds video as an industry and as a cultural activity through two departments.

Economic Development & Estates Department

In 1991 the Training Trust for Cultural and Media Industries was formed to administer European Social Fund monies to four training organisations, including the Edinburgh Video Training Company.

Recreation Department

Both video production and distribution is funded by Recreation Department Cultural Grants. A total of £30,000 or 1½% of the budget is allocated to video, but grants are not made to individual writers, producers, or directors. Edinburgh District Arts Council has funded individuals, including students, in the past.

4. FUNDED CLIENTS

A major part of the research for this report involved discussions with organisations which receive a proportion for their funding from Edinburgh District Council Recreation Department. Below is an outline of the organisations contacted, all of which have published their own detailed reports of finance, development and future plans.

Each of the organisations have different requirements but they all expressed a desire for greater communication and feedback from funding bodies.

Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop

Founded in 1977 and funded by Channel 4 as a workshop in 1984, Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop (EFTW) has produced a range of broadcast and non-broadcast programmes. In recent years, following Channel 4 withdrawal of support from workshops, revenue has been largely generated (currently around 80% of total) by production.

Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop also provides specific training via the Women's Training Unit and Animation Workshop, which is also involved in educational projects. A detailed outline of the organisation is published in Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop Strategic Plan 1990-92. Workers at Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop have a high degree of skill and experience at non-broadcast and broadcast quality levels which will prove useful to other video production organisations looking to 'professionalise' their productions.

Video in Pilton

Video in Pilton (VIP) has developed over a 10 year period, consistently working with the local community. Programme output was originally concerned solely with local issues but recently productions with wider appeal have been screened on broadcast television.

Future projects may include a feature length film and a British Broadcasting Corporation co-production for the European Year of the Elderly. These projects are still very much rooted in the Pilton community and are seen as the natural evolution of a long term commitment to the area.

Although Edinburgh District Council finance forms a small fraction of total funding it is seen as vital by workers at Video in Pilton. The Edinburgh District Council cash contributes to the wage of a full time worker who provides initial training for local people who wish to work with Video in Pilton.

Edinburgh Video Training Company

Edinburgh Video Training Company (EVTC) has an impressive track record as an organisation which utilises resources intelligently to support both full time and short courses.

It is currently operating in unsuitable premises and is unable at present to either increase its intake or cater for people with disabilities.

Options for moving premises are under consideration. A proposed move to Wester Hailes would require a large investment and be dependant on securing European Community Funds but would provide much greater opportunities for training, skills development and refurbishment of capital resources. Other opportunities exist in the City Centre where Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd, are seeking to encourage cultural industry development as a pre-cursor for business activity in areas such as Cowgate.

The video training environment is rapidly becoming more professional and demanding, and more closely allied to broadcast requirements. Edinburgh Video Training Company need access to broadcast quality facilities and skills if they are to keep developing and offering training which is relevant to contemporary practice.

The Video Access Centre

The Video Access Centre (VAC), provides a limited production and post-production facility on an open access basis. Video Access Centre is underfunded, in unsuitable accommodation, under-resourced and appears to be on the point of collapse, relying on voluntary help to continue operations.

There is no doubt that there is a huge demand for access in Edinburgh (Video Access Centre was involved in over 70 productions last year), but without adequate support, a clear policy or sense of direction, the Video Access Centre is being overwhelmed. The facilities which Video Access Centre offers have fallen so far behind contemporary requirements that a sizeable investment

in equipment would be required to enable Video Access Centre to fulfil its access role. This would need to be accompanied by a large increase in revenue, much of it earned, to pay for acceptable levels of management and staffing.

Grindlay Court

Grindlay Court currently operates as a day centre providing facilities for people with learning disabilities. The facilities include basic video production and post-production equipment which is also made available to the general public via adult education classes.

A recent proposal to establish a video resource centre would require considerable investment to bring the facility up to standards of contemporary practice. As the proposal is framed it is unlikely that the centre would be in a position to offer anything other than basic instruction in production techniques. However the building is currently unique in the grant aided sector in that it allows wheelchair access.

5. FACILITIES

Whilst the groups mentioned above display great integrity and commitment they are without exception working with resources which are less than adequate. None have direct access to broadcast standard facilities, and some are working with equipment which falls below current domestic standards.

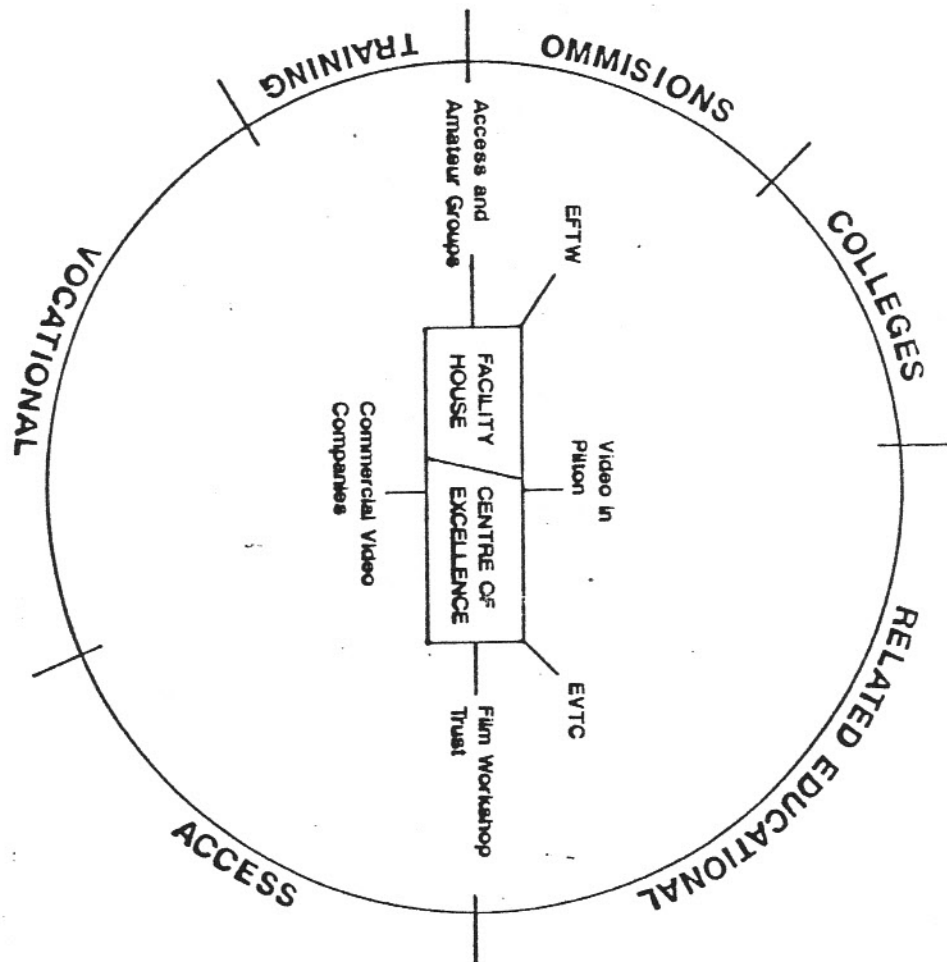
The screen industries and television companies in particular, have clear expectations of quality and training from those in the community or independent sectors who wish to work in, or have their work distributed by this sector.

Not all users require broadcast quality but some organisations (e.g. Edinburgh Video Training Company, Video in Pilton, Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop) and individual programme makers are increasingly expected to produce material to this standard. Training standards required by Scottish Vocational Qualifications; for Video demand full broadcast standards by level 5 which organisations like Edinburgh Video Training Company will be expected to provide.

Access to 'high end' production equipment is clearly required and some of this can be provided by commercial facilities locally. However, investment in a central resource, which is made available to appropriate practitioners may prove to be a more cost effective alternative.

Video Provision in Edinburgh

The role of a Centre of Excellence and Facility House



Such a resource would also enable independent companies to develop and exploit the local market for corporate video in both the private and public sectors.

The development of a successful partnership involving several funding bodies may provide the means to realise such a centre and provide a high profile base for training, cultural and commercial broadcast production. Other models exist, such as Stonehills in Gateshead, which would be examined as part of a feasibility study into the provision of such a facility. The Edinburgh Film and Television Working Party would need to be re-established to oversee such a project. Representatives from the independent sector, screen industries, Scottish Film Council, Film House, Film Festival, Lothian Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd, and the Broadcast media would need to be recruited on to the working party.

6. ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Access to video provision is probably better than elsewhere in Scotland, however, specific facilities for ethnic minorities and for those with disabilities are not evident. Also, the equipment is not situated where it can be most effectively made use of. Training and supervision are essential elements of access to video. Therefore, equipment and professional video workers need to be situated together.

Successful models of community access are demonstrated by Video in Pilton and Edinburgh Film Workshop Trust. Video in Pilton has over a long period gained the trust and support of a local community resulting in a range of projects which develop in direct response to the needs of that community. The Video in Pilton model exemplifies the long term commitment, strategy and investment of energy required to develop a successful cultural organisation. Its success is largely the result of the dedication of a small group of people to a particular local community, and the ability of the organisation to maintain a view which is outward looking.

As such it could be regarded as a microcosm of the ideal approach to both cultural and commercial enterprise. Given a sufficient level of financial support Video in Pilton has the potential of becoming a flagship organisation both regionally and nationally.

Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop has developed the concept of Community Integrated Production (CIP), which provides training, facilities and production support. Through the Community Integrated Production programme, Edinburgh Film & Workshop Television Workshop wishes to provide opportunities for those groups which are traditionally denied media access, including women and people with disabilities.

Edinburgh Film & Workshop Television also illustrates a similar commitment but one which operates from an issue led base. Project funding targeted at Community Integrated Production could assure the future operation of the organisation and provide community access, particularly for disadvantaged groups, combined with essential support and expertise.

7. TRAINING & EDUCATION

Training

The activities of the Scottish Training Trust have been suspended pending a review. The likely outcome will be the establishment of a national body to oversee and regulate training standards. The new lead industry body will be designing qualification which will require video training organisations to apply them and to assist college leavers to make the transition to employment in the industry.

Despite shortcomings mentioned earlier in this report, the Edinburgh Video Training Company is providing a valuable local service and is likely to occupy an increasingly important place in the infrastructure of the industry, as the broadcast sector reduces its training commitment. However, the Edinburgh Video Training Company largely restricts itself to the training of video workers and is not so concerned with writing, directorial or producing skills. Until some form of commissioning or production fund is established in Edinburgh opportunities for Edinburgh Video Training Company and other independent companies to assist writers, directors, and producers will remain very limited.

Education

The training gap is filled to a large extent by the education sector of the colleges teaching time based media, Napier and Duncan of Jordanstone are the most notable. Both offer a high standard of facilities and expect graduates to enter the industry directly. Currently being developed as a joint venture The Scottish Film & Television School is a one year MSc degree course in film and television commencing January 1993. The course will run from both sites with Napier providing the film element. Students will specialise within a particular medium and may take a minor option in a second area. (e.g. directors may wish to study editing as a minor subject).

Napier reports that many of its current graduates are obliged to seek employment in London but Duncan of Jordanstone expects an increasing number of ex students to remain in Scotland.

8. PRODUCTION AND PROJECT FUNDING

Whilst various organisations are actively providing training, and facilities for sections of the Edinburgh community, particularly at a basic and intermediate level, there appears to be very limited opportunities for those who wish to develop a practice within the grant aided sector whilst remaining in the region. This is a problem which exists at a national level and is symptomatic of a failure to invest in the arts generally.

Currently, Edinburgh District Arts Council offers the only source of finance locally to new and developing talent, but a £1,000 ceiling barely covers the cost of the hire of a broadcast standard edit suite for one day. This level of award may be appropriate for some projects but it may be more effective to offer these sums for script development or pre-production costs. Inadequate funding inevitably means that the final product will be compromised, and reinforces a negative view of the capability of the independent sector held

by parts of the broadcast media industry. It has been difficult to assess the work of Edinburgh District Arts Council in relation to film and video. Its policy or criteria for awarding grants is unclear. More explicit guidelines for applicants would be helpful with conditions attached relating to exhibition and distribution.

Edinburgh District Arts Council could be much more pro-active, forming partnerships with co-funders lobbying for increased finance, forging links with sponsors and utilising expertise in the region to assist developing programme makers. Alternatively, media project funding might be removed altogether from Edinburgh District Arts Council and administered by a separate body, alongside a small and rolling production fund (as operated in Birmingham). The organisation could be recruited from the Film and Television Working Party and provide an expert selection committee for allocating grants.

9. EXHIBITION AND DISTRIBUTION

Festivals

The Film Festival and the Fringe Film & Video Festival (FFVF) are Recreation Department Grant Clients. The Edinburgh International Film Festival continues to develop as a high profile event and showcase for new productions. In addition to documentaries and animation, two Scottish features were premiered at the 1992 festival. One production, Blue Black Permanent was financed in part by the Screen Industries Office.

Properly financed, the Fringe Film & Video Festival would be better placed to encourage the local talent which must remain in the region if cultural industries are to develop. The festival could also play an important role in developing an international network for distribution of short films. Established models for Fringe Film & Video Festival have existed in Germany, Holland and France for many years now and are seen as prestigious events which foster european talent. The funding base of the Fringe Film & Video Festival would have to be widened and increased for this to occur.

Exhibition and Distribution

The Filmhouse is the obvious place for local exhibition of funded work and premieres at the venue could be a condition of funding if desired.

Currently the Filmhouse offers a regular Forum consisting of screenings and a social 'get together' to Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop, Video in Pilton and Edinburgh Video Training Company. While willing to develop this role further the Filmhouse is concerned that such activity does not clash with their need to maximise income and audiences. An annual showcase for Edinburgh's independent producers was proposed as the best solution. This could take the form of a 'mini-Festival' in the Spring, based at Filmhouse, but screening in a range of venues.

The Edinburgh based distribution company, Benchmark, has now ceased trading. However, a role exists for a distribution company to represent the interests of Edinburgh's independent sector. Such an initiative could evolve from a one person operation, but will need to grow to be a long term and viable proposition. Such issues should be considered alongside the Central Resource mentioned earlier in this report.

10. OTHER SECTORS

The Commercial Sector

The commercial sector is important and provides employment opportunities for trainees and other workers. Nationally, the sector is over capitalised and competition is fierce. Edinburgh companies often lose work to London because it is perceived as the skills base. However a number of companies are prospering, including Picardy Pictures, Skyline, La Mancha, Barony, Gallus Besom and Vi 2. Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd is currently undertaking a study of this sector with a view to attracting more business to the region.

The Broadcast Sector

In principal, there are now more opportunities for cultural organisations to produce programmes for national broadcast television. Locally however, it appear that there are few opportunities to produce realistically budgeted material and broadcast companies show little sign of allowing true participation by the communities which they serve.

However, the recent First Reels commissions, funded jointly by Scottish Television and the Scottish Film Council, provided a national opportunity for young and first time film makers. Total funding for First Reels was £40,000 which was awarded to 35 applicants in amounts which ranged from £75 to a maximum of £2000 pounds. Some of the completed productions will be screened at the Fringe Film Festival in December 1992.

Features

The establishment of Screen Industries is recognised as a first step towards generating feature film production in Scotland. In the short term, the immediate beneficiaries may be the hotels and restaurants (see Lothian Regional Council Report Strategy for Screen Industries), used by visiting film companies.

In the long term, investment in production, marketing and distribution is the only way to create an indigenous film industry. This is a national issue but Edinburgh District Council can increase its role in this area by jointly involving the Department of Recreation and Economic Development and Estates.

11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survey revealed that Edinburgh has a wide ranging and active media base. In the cultural sector, there are several highly organised, motivated groups, which whilst maintaining roots in the community have the potential for developing a much wider national and international perspective. Despite this status, all of the groups are restricted financially and face uncertain futures. The three largest organisations, particularly Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop, have made great efforts to operate mixed economy budgets, generating income to supplement revenue funds. However they remain dependent on Edinburgh District Council and other bodies for their continued existence.

There is also a great deal of Independent activity in the region in a sector

which comprises of small groups and individuals generating a wide range of material including pop promos, experimental work, animation, documentaries and short drama. Because of the nature of the sector it is without effective representation and has been largely neglected by funding bodies, but patronage in the form of grants and facilities is the only means of allowing this sector to gain experience in production.

The talent in this sector will either form the basis of a future media industry in the region or, without support, leave the area and/or the industry. In the last decade, a cultural medium has been established and flourished largely because of the effort of dedicated groups and individuals. A watershed has now been reached and there is a clear choice to be made. If support remains static or is cut back, Edinburgh will lose part of its cultural base. On the other hand, there is now an opportunity to capitalise on the commitment, talent and expertise in the region and to develop an infrastructure that contributes to a Scottish media industry. This is a challenging and complex task and depends on co-ordinated partnerships between practitioners, funding bodies and private enterprise.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Edinburgh District Council should enter into discussions with the appropriate organisations to revive the 'Film and Television Working Party in order to:
 - a. prepare a brief, secure funds for, and oversee a feasibility study into the creation of a combined Facility Resource and Centre of Excellence in Edinburgh.
 - b. consider new initiatives for the distribution and exhibition of independent work.
2. Edinburgh District Council's Department of Recreation and Economic Development and Estates should jointly establish a small rolling commissioning/production fund to assist writers, directors, and producers based in Edinburgh and working in Film, Video and Theatre. An initial investment of £10,000 would be required in 1993/94.
3. Edinburgh District Council's Department of Recreation should identify a lead officer to liaise with Edinburgh's video grant clients. The officer will need to keep abreast of developments in the field through attendance of conferences and seminars.
4. The Departments of Recreation and Economic Development and Estates will arrange two video forum meetings per annum.
5. Edinburgh District Council's Recreation Committee should seek to increase the level of cultural grant allocated to Video in Pilton, and Edinburgh Film Workshop Trust, and to financially support Edinburgh Video Training Company in the future. Substitution of funding within the video sector should be considered.
6. Edinburgh District Council Recreation should establish clear access policies with Video in Pilton, Edinburgh Film & Television Workshop, and Edinburgh Video Training Company to ensure that access to video equipment and training continues to develop.
7. A Festivals liaison officer should be appointed by Edinburgh District Council Recreation to assist co-operation and joint initiative between festivals, including Film and Video Festivals. Festivals themselves, and joint funders should support such a post. The creation of a new video mini-Festival for Edinburgh based video producers should be discussed with other Festival organisers.
8. Edinburgh District Council should seek to form stronger links with other funding bodies, including the Scottish Film Council, Lothian Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd, and the Scottish Film Production Fund.