

The Christie Commission Report

A reflection by Ruth Wishart FRSA

Miracles take a little longer. Longer, at any rate, than the bare six months the Christie Commission had at its disposal to consider the future delivery of public services in Scotland. But in the time available it tried to map out a route for a raft of radical reforms to transform a culture too often blighted by duplication, obfuscation, and demarcation.

In truth, change is not an option but an imperative against the scale of the challenges ahead. The public services are about to be hit by a triple whammy of reduced budgets, increased demand, and new demographic pressures. There will be pain, and there will be gaps in the services people have come to expect. What the Christie report endeavours to do is show how these can be minimised by a heavy dose of integration, collaboration and common sense.

At the heart of the report is an attempt to shift the focus to a service where individuals and communities are at the centre of service design, and where their reservoir of untapped energy can be tapped into and more fully utilised.

Among the positive examples thrown up by 200 written submissions and 100 meetings with both providers and users were movements like the community development trusts which have demonstrated how a bottom up approach to determining local priorities and needs and responding to them can empower everyone involved.

The problems is that these remain islands of innovation within a bureaucracy infested landscape, where duplication is rife and details of the commissioning and procurement processes remain stubbornly opaque.

That has to change, and the report makes a number of recommendations as to how – not least making new funding agreements contingent on integrated provision, and wide ranging collaboration. New statutory duties and powers would include a presumption towards preventative measures to address the root causes of inter generational poverty, unemployment and low aspiration.

One of the most dispiriting statistics we encountered was that a whopping 40 per cent of the current spend is on what the jargon calls "failure demand." Today's problems guaranteed by yesterday's inability to grasp the nettle of early intervention.

Between the independent budget review and the independent Christie Commission, the government doesn't lack the evidence to demand an urgent re-think across service providers in every sector. Structural reform may come later. Right now, as that nice Chairman Mao might have observed, it's time for a cultural revolution.

Scientific Literacy and Society! A joint RSA Scotland / USA Venture

Frances Gallagher FRSA Chair RSA Scotland writes ...

I recently had the pleasure of meeting a most engaging group of Fellows in the courtyard of a lovely New York hotel overlooking the East aspect of St Patrick's Cathedral. The group was led by Peter Peyser FRSA and included of a variety of Fellows and a USA Board Trustee member.

The focus of our discussion was how, through purposeful collaboration, RSA Fellows in their different countries, can enable Lifelong Learning to become a reality among those who find it difficult to see the purpose of learning during, or after, their school years.

The meaning of scientific literacy was our common understanding: that to be scientifically literate means to be able to make decisions and take actions based on evidence of both purpose and functionality. And the vehicle? The food agenda! Food, we agreed, is the area which most often gives people an opportunity to become engaged in conversation and action.

Many of the decisions and actions in the food chain – growing food, harvesting, storing, selling, cooking – must all be based on a foundation of scientific literacy if success is to be achieved. The knowledge of what to do – when and how – based on evidence already gathered by others such as farmers, growers, chefs, retailers, consumers etc is the base line of a scientifically literate approach to action.

Aspects to be explored

- an invitation to FRSA and others to collaborate in this project
- a short nationally-certificated food course as an essential aspect of learning in both countries
- a student exchange programme to explore the variety of approaches to food.

Scotland

Professor Amartya Sen University of Edinburgh Enlightenment Lecture



Professor Amartya Sen - Nobel Laureate in Economics; Lamont University Professor, Department of Economics, Harvard University)

This lecture, co-sponsored by RSA Scotland in a consortium arrangement with Edinburgh University's Institute of Advanced Studies, the British Council, Museums and Galleries of Scotland /UNESCO and the Royal Society of Edinburgh, provides the opening session of the International Hume Society Conference, which will run from 18 - 23 July. The lecture is now fully booked with over 1200 people attending.

The lecture will be delivered on Monday, 18 July in The Assembly Hall, New College, The Mound at 6pm.

Further information about the Conference "Hume after 300 Years" can be found at <http://www.hume2011.org/>

The lecture is free but ticketed. Book online at <http://edinburgh-university.eventbrite.com/>

Economic / Community Development

The **Venture fund** and the **Catalyst fund** can be used by Fellows to link into projects that will enhance community and Fellowship engagement. Fellows can lead projects and apply for funding from either, or both, of these funds.

Highland Network

A number of Fellows and guests from the Highlands of Scotland met for the first time in Inverness in April as a first step to establish a local network. A further series of meetings is planned starting summer 2011 with Fellows keen to generate positive action and debate. We hope this active network will generate more members in the North. For more information about the Highland Network, please contact Kathryn Logan FRSA (Moray Firth Partnership) by email: logan1@uk8.net or telephone: 01463 225530 or Jamie Cooke, Networks Manager jamie.cooke@rsa.org.uk.

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Governance Advisory Group



Luke Johnson, Chairman of RSA and of the Governance Advisory Group, has provided Fellows with an opportunity to respond to *The Governance Review 2011 Report*. We hope that as many Fellows as

possible were able to contribute their views. The Governance Recommendations will be out shortly, and we look forward to their dissemination.

Matthew Taylor in Scotland

Since Matthew's generous input to the RSA Scotland Conference organised by Jane Kille, the RSA CEO has since made several visits to Scotland. As well as being warmly welcomed at the New Fellows' Reception, Matthew was a Keynote Speaker at two functions relating to the Christie Commission dealing with Public Service Reform. He also chaired another event in Scotland - *Economics, Internet and Society* at Edinburgh's Faculty of Advocates.

Matthew Taylor at the Festival of Politics

Whose heritage, whose society?

Can culture, in all its forms, help us to understand better Scotland's place in the world, as well as addressing the issues that face Scottish and global society? A panel of cultural commentators, academics and practitioners in the field of 21st century enlightenment will explore those themes in a highly interactive audience discussion. Chaired by Jan McDonald, Professor Emerita and honorary professorial research fellow at the University of Glasgow, is joined by Mark O'Neill, Director of Policy, Research and Development at Glasgow Life; Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive, Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce; Professor Neil Blain, Head of Film, Media & Journalism Department, Stirling University; and the playwright David Greig.

August 25th 10:30 - 12:00, Committee Room 1, FREE

RSA Scotland in association with British Council, the Institute for Advanced Studies Humanities Edinburgh University, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Museums and Galleries Scotland /UNESCO.

Scotland

Scaling the Depths - Aquaculture and the Scottish Economy



Professor Brian Austin BSc PhD DSc ILTM FRSA

As a microbiologist with active interests in taxonomy, biotechnology and fish diseases, it is gratifying to realize the importance of these subjects to Scotland's economy. With the

widespread interest in the possible impact of environmental change on biodiversity, taxonomy is back in vogue and fundable! No longer are taxonomists regarded as confined to museums, but are in the forefront of scientific developments. This is seen by the application of new molecular-based techniques particularly to microbial taxonomy, and the explosion in the recognition of new names. For example, a new genus, *Sneathiella*, recognized by my team from China, became classified in term in a new Family, Sneathiellaceae, in a new Order, Sneathiellales. It is speculative how many new microbial species remain to be discovered, but I would guess that only a small minority have been described to date. This excludes those organisms, which have not been cultured, some of which are labelled as unculturable. The genetic potential of this component of the microflora cannot be reliably estimated.

Although society is rightly concerned about the potential loss of plant and animal species to environmental change, micro-organisms should not be neglected particularly as we search for new products for commercialization. In this, Scotland has been at the forefront of environmental biotechnology, from the development of novel pharmaceutical products, specifically anti-infective [specifically antibiotics with effectiveness against the hospital superbugs], anti-viral and anti-tumour compounds, bio-energy [from seaweeds and spent cereals], enzymes and polymers. Here, marine micro-organisms, which are often so different genetically from their terrestrial counterparts, have potential which may be exploited for

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commerce. Of course, this necessitates a strong, innovative and collaborative science base, which is present in the universities, colleges, research institutes and industry. The challenges centre on how to maximize the potential of new product development for the benefit of our society, but what will be the source of the necessary funding?

This raises the third aspect of my interests, namely fish diseases and the relevance to the aquaculture industry, which is a strong contributor to the Scottish economy principally through the production of salmon, which is sold as fresh and the added value smoked salmon. In case we forget, aquaculture is the fastest growing sector of agriculture, worldwide, and our research has real significance to developing countries from Africa and Asia to South America. With the growth of aquaculture, there have been an unwelcome increase in the range of diseases, which may decimate production and necessitate effective disease control. Scottish scientists have led with the development of vaccines, some of which are now commercially available such as for the control of the bacterial disease furunculosis, and other innovative approaches including non-specific Immunostimulants, pro- and pre-biotics, and nutritional supplements, including garlic and ginger.

To exploit our strong research base, scientists need to work with industry to develop our potential for the good of society. The question is – how do we do this for the benefit of the participants in particular, and society in general?

Professor Austin is Director of the Institute of Aquaculture at the University of Stirling

RSA Scotland BBQ

Iain Scott FRSA writes ...

Glasgow. Summer. Barbecue. Three words in search of a fourth – rain! Yes it did indeed rain for the first ever Scottish RSA BBQ. But that did not matter for the thirty people that turned up at Glasgow's très chic Hotel du Vin. Fellows came from as far as Elgin to enjoy the delights of excellent food and good company. The opportunity to hear from George Mewes about why he opened a specialist cheese shop and then to taste a range of Scottish cheeses made sure the evening was also highly informative. This kind of get together brings out the best in Fellows. We had the opportunity to meet new people, learn something new and have a good time. Is this what is meant by 21st Century Enlightenment? I certainly hope so ...

Scotland

RSA at the Edinburgh

International Book Festival

THE FUTURE IS URBAN

What does the dominance of the metropolis and the extraordinary worldwide urban migration mean for the future of the planet? How does the city inspire us? And does it simultaneously damage us? A discussion chaired by **Joan Bakewell** featuring two urbanists and a poet.

Edward L Glaeser, is the Fred and Eleanor Glimp Professor of Economics at Harvard University. His book is *Triumph of The City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier*.

Miles Glendinning, Reader in the School of Architecture at the Edinburgh College of Art and Director of the Scottish Centre for Conservation Studies. His book *Architecture's Evil Empire* is a passionate, polemical critique of the state of contemporary global architecture.

Michael Symmons Roberts, poet, novelist and co-author of *Edgelands*, an exploration of the spaces in between cities and countryside.



Professor of Economics at Harvard, Edward Glaeser is widely regarded as the world's leading authority on how and why cities work. His new book, *Triumph of the City*, says we must learn to love our cities, or suffer the consequences. Seamlessly combining economics and history, he makes a compelling case for a bright, urban future and in this event he explains his thinking to one of Scotland's leading urbanists.

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Dear Diary ... 2011

- 12 Jul** Ethical Approaches to Climate Change Management and the Built and Historic Environment (MCICH)
For details, contact apmichc@btinternet.com
- 6 Aug** Bishopsland Annual Retrospective Silver Exhibition plus both Illustrated Presentation by Oliver Makower FRSA and Lunch (MCICH)
For details, contact apmichc@btinternet.com
- 23 Aug** The Book Festival – Professor Edward Glaeser – 3.00 – 4.00pm at RBS Main Theatre - booking required.
- 25 Aug** Festival of Politics 10.30 am Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament
- Sept TBC** AGM – RSA Scotland.
Associated event to follow
- 23-24 Nov** Remote Access to World Heritage Sites from St Kilda to Uluru. (MCICH)
For details, contact apmichc@btinternet.com
- Dec TBC** Angus Millar Lecture –Speaker pending

Notification confirming the details of events yet to be finalised will be sent via post or email in the coming weeks.

Call for RSA Scotland Committee members?

If you would like to volunteer for membership of the RSA Scotland Committee, please be in touch with Frances Gallagher – fcaq2001@gmail.com – or David Miller – david@learnwith.co.uk .

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Contribute

The Editor would like to thank all those who contributed to the Summer Newsletter. If you would like to contribute to future publications, please email David Miller - david@learnwith.co.uk .