



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Embargoed: Friday 10<sup>h</sup> March 2006**

### **Arts ‘play essential role’ in lives of children living in rural areas**

A major conference will today discuss the importance of the arts to children in rural areas of Scotland.

The conference, *Arts for all? Meeting the needs of the whole child in rural Scotland*, will examine cultural opportunities for children in rural areas; the importance of place-based learning in children’s emotional development and learning; and the vital contribution of the arts to rural development.

Following the Executive’s pledge in January of ‘cultural entitlements’ for all Scots, the rights of children in rural areas to access cultural activities is an area seen as being of key importance in shaping children’s learning and life experiences.

Bronwen Cohen, Chief Executive of Children in Scotland, said: “Local culture is central to children developing a strong and enduring sense of place. The value accorded to local culture supports better learning and long-lasting commitment of rural children to their community.”

Shonaig Macpherson, chairman of the National Trust for Scotland and chair of the conference, said: “ The timing of this

conference will help to inform the debate on cultural entitlements for our children. Improved access to and appreciation of our cultural and artistic heritage can contribute to the development of children's own creativity and confidence. As custodians of many rural properties, the National Trust for Scotland is pleased to contribute to this important debate.”

The conference will emphasise the extent to which children can gain a valuable understanding of their local culture through arts programmes that are relevant to their lives and environments.

Rhona Brankin MSP, deputy minister for rural development, who will be speaking at the conference, said: “I am delighted to be supporting this event today. We want to see thriving rural communities where young people have access to a wealth of opportunities to learn and grow. Access to the arts and to cultural activities, and the ability to get involved in place-based learning, can help young people better value the communities in which they live and in turn contribute to the richness of our rural way of life.”

In addition, the conference will address:

- the importance of arts programmes being accessible to children with additional support needs
- how to ensure that young people remain in, and feel included by, their communities
- the priority of building diverse and strong local economies
- the need to achieve accessible public services that can be enjoyed by children and their families

**The conference, in association with Angus Council and the Angus Childcare Partnership, is being held at Carnoustie Hotel today (Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March).**

Angus Provost Bill Middleton said: “Angus Council is delighted to host this conference in partnership with Children in Scotland.

I'm sure that the wide range of professional skills and expertise represented here will ensure stimulating and informed debate which will, in turn influence future policy and practice.”

Speakers at the conference include Wenche Ronning, of the Norldland Research Institute, Norway; and Joan Parr, head of education at the Scottish Arts Council.

**The winner of a special art competition for pre-school children, ‘From my window’ will also be announced at the conference. The competition was open to all nursery children in the Angus area. The judges of the competition are Bronwen Cohen and Provost Middleton, and the winner will be announced by Shonaig Macpherson today.**

Children in Scotland will be producing a special publication on this conference, *Arts for all: developing cultural entitlements for young children in rural Scotland*.

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#### *Notes for editors*

- The publication *A sense of time, a sense of place: meeting the needs of the whole child in small communities* is available from Children in Scotland. Tel 0131 222 2410 to order your copy. £8 for members of Children in Scotland and £12 for non-members.
- Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provisions are of the best possible quality and able to meet the needs of a diverse society.