Thank you for your letter of 29 January 2008 regarding the predecessor Committee’s Disability Inquiry – *Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities* – and the three recommendations which you are seeking an update on.

I am delighted to be able to give you an update on what the Government is doing to ensure equal opportunities for all and in widening accessing to arts and culture activity

**Recommendation 76**

The Committee recommends that in its discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Arts Council on the development of cultural entitlements, the Scottish Executive should pro-actively ensure that disabled people are included and consulted at all stages of the process. (paragraph 1008).

**Scottish Government response**

As I said in my Statement to Parliament in November last year, I have decided to take a practical approach to widening access for all to cultural activity, and therefore will not be legislating for cultural entitlements. We are instead taking a number of steps to ensure that everyone can participate in the arts and culture and my officials are working with CoSLA and the Scottish Arts Council to ensure that equal opportunities will be an integral part of these discussions.

Part of that work is a quality assurance framework which is being developed with HMie (overseen by a local authority-led working group). This will focus on how cultural delivery should connect with the Scottish Government’s national performance framework, while achieving continuous improvement, dialogue with marginalised groups, and cross-service working to feed into Community Planning processes. We are also developing advice notes, within a reference group and a cast of stakeholders, for Community Planning Partnerships on the subject of how Partnerships can play a mutually-helpful role in cultural delivery.

The cultural pathfinder projects which are being undertaken at the moment, focus on the needs of different communities and sections of society known to be under-represented in terms of cultural participation. Certain projects include a focus on disabled people. An evaluation of the projects will commence in due course, with a report being available next year which will be distributed to interested parties.
Recommendation 77

The Committee wishes to ensure that service provision to disabled people is given prominence by Creative Scotland and recommends that it have inclusion in the arts, particularly participation by disabled people, at the heart of its agenda. The Committee considers that should be done by including disabled people in the creation of the new body and by consulting with disabled people throughout its strategic development. (paragraph 1012)

Scottish Government response

Creative Scotland will build on the work being carried out by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen in increasing the diversity of people who access and participate in the arts and culture. Its functions to identify, support, develop, and encourage as many people as possible to access and participate in the arts and culture will encompass disabled people. As part of the work in establishing Creative Scotland, an Equality Impact Assessment pro forma has been completed by the Government in collaboration with the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen. This identifies the work that both organisations are doing with regard to equal opportunities in general, and with the disabled sector. Both organisations have Disability Equality schemes and this work will transfer to Creative Scotland. The pro forma will be published on the Scottish Government’s website in due course.

The joint board of the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen are working with a Transition Director in developing a vision and plan for Creative Scotland, with a view to widening access and participation to arts and culture for the people of Scotland.

Recommendation 91

The Committee recommends that Creative Scotland, in conjunction with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, establish and administer a network for arts and cultural providers to allow the sharing of good practice in service provision to disabled people. (paragraph 1106).

Scottish Government response

Ministers will look to Creative Scotland to have a strategic role in working with partners such as CoSLA, other national cultural bodies, advisory bodies, the private sector and other interested stakeholders in establishing and promoting good practice in service provision across all the art forms and all sectors including disabled people.
I hope the above answers the Report’s recommendations, and I am sure that you will agree with me that we are at an exciting stage in the development of the country’s cultural landscape. One in which we want all the people of Scotland to play a part.

LINDA FABIANI