

## FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

<b>Applicant name:</b>	Hebrides Ensemble	
<b>Application Reference number:</b>	G201001057	
<b>Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)</b>	£105,000	£105,000
<b>Officer's recommendation</b>		
<p>Summarise the key points of your assessment and draw out the strengths and weaknesses of the application taken together with any comments you have received from source evidence (portfolio of evidence/ internal / external consultation). Highlight any specific risks  <i>Note: The amount of information you provide here should be sufficient for the decision maker to reach a decision. As with all previous commentary boxes please do not exceed 250 words</i></p>		
<b>Comments:</b>		
<p>The proposal is highly ambitious in artistic calibre and vision. The company has already achieved a level of quality and status to merit this ambition and is in a very good position to boost this and its wider UK/European profile, particularly with the high level of support and commitment from the board with coherent strategic planning, through collaboration on all levels. The company has clearly been building and planning effectively for some time, as evidenced by putting into practice 5-year plans for a number of years. The only area recommended for development is that of Equal Opportunities.</p> <p>The risks to the proposal are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large increase in funding requested</li> <li>▪ Relatively low audience numbers projected – although these also represent an increase for the company</li> <li>▪ High subsidy per audience member</li> <li>▪ Budgets that need clarifying</li> </ul> <p>As lead officer for the Hebrides Ensemble, I am aware that the company has worked hard to develop its strategic planning on all levels to boost its profile and opportunities. In the context of the small and niche professional chamber music sector in Scotland, it consistently demonstrates highly strategic thinking and commitment to coming up with solutions to the difficulty in gaining audiences and profile.</p> <p>Based on this and the plans proposed, I would recommend the company for Flexible Funding but if there are pressure on funds, at a lower level than requested or phased increase to support a mixture of core and project costs.</p> <p>This would need to be confirmed with revised budgets and plans.</p>		
<b>Officer's overall priority recommendation</b>		<b>HIGH</b>
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 29 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Tamsin Mendelsohn	

## Stage 2: Heads of Departments prioritise applications with advice from Specialist Advisors

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the application identified by the Specialist Advisors? Please summarise their comments below. What were their ratings of the importance of the application in being supported?

The panel consisted of Murray Buchanan, Paul Bream, Jim Gaitens, Rachel Nelken and Susan Nickalls, with ratings received from Marie Fielding by email.

### Comments:

- The panel felt that, although a substantive increase in funds was requested by the Hebrides Ensemble, this request was sufficiently evidenced in the application and the proposed significantly increased programme of work.
- The panel recognised the organisation's work as being of the highest artistic quality, and were encouraged by their efforts at increasing their international reach.
- The panel felt that the Hebrides Ensemble were raising the bar in terms of artistic quality and expectation, and recognised the organisation's artistic risk-taking, experimenting and interesting collaborations.
- The panel felt that any perceived organisational weakness in marketing would be improved by granting funding.

The panel rated the importance of the application in being supported as **High**.

2. Summarise the role of the organisation within the infrastructure of the sector. Assess to what extent the organisation's vision will contribute to the department's and to Scottish Arts Council's aims: (to fulfil artists' potential, to increase participation, to place creativity at the heart of learning)

### Comments:

The Hebrides Ensemble plays an increasingly pivotal role in the Chamber Music Forum, one of the music department's key priorities for sector forum development. The artistic and administrative leadership of the ensemble is now equally creative since the appointment of a new General Manager, complimenting the already established artistic direction. The ensemble's repertoire embraces new work which is comfortably and successfully programmed to compliment what may be deemed the core "classical" chamber music work associated with Hebrides. There is also honesty in the manner in which audience potential growth is evidenced. It is obvious that the ensemble wants to grow audiences but equally clearly understand that this is a long-term investment for them.

The planning outline for the next three years links artistic endeavour with audience development, education outreach activities together with meeting financial objectives. There are also evaluation processes proposed to ensure cohesion and delivery of the planned programme.

The music department's mantra of the musician, the product and its distribution is well met by the Hebrides Ensemble as the quality of musician engaged, the work performed and the national and international reach alongside a growingly innovative education programme is commendable. This was further evidenced by the success of Hebrides pairing education and outreach work within two TuneUp tours which has positively influenced our criteria for future TuneUp touring programmes.

**1. Fit with FXO criteria:** Fully.

**1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists:** The Hebrides is now emerging as one of the pre-eminent ensembles, a market leader and an exemplar of creative vision and performance aligned to innovative education programmes.

**1.2 Improving your engagement with the public:** Hebrides is expanding its audience base, but doing so in a measured and achievable manner.

**1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:** The arrival of the current General Manager is now providing the same high degree of creativity to the administration that we see in the Hebrides Ensemble's performance programme and planning.

**1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access:** The Equal Opportunities area is being positively developed and the ensemble is seeking to widen access to its work and ensure that the needs of audiences are fully met.

**1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:** Yes.

**2. Fit with Departmental priorities:** Fully meets with departmental priorities, in particular developing the chamber music forum; distributing high quality product, both contemporary and more classically oriented and in providing access to learning opportunities.

**3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims:** Fully engages with all three aims, especially the first.

**3.** Based on the lead officer's assessment and the subsequent meeting with Specialist advisors, please rate the application (High, medium, low) summarise your reasons for assessing the application as you have (drawing out the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and highlighting any specific risks)

**Comments:**

As already stated above, the Hebrides Ensemble is an increasingly significant organisation for the strategic development of the stated priorities of the music department. The application from the Hebrides Ensemble does represent a significant increase in funding, but interestingly, this was the only one of all the FXO applications for music, where the increased funding was not an issue for the Specialist Advisors. They, like me and the assessing officer are confident that Hebrides will deliver the proposed programme and the increased funding will allow them to address the infrastructure of the organisation and provide the essential administrative growth and development that can match, enhance and expand the planned artistic and creative programme. The assessing officer raised concerns regarding a dedicated equal opportunities policy other than stated aims and this would certainly need to be addressed.

Whilst this application represents a significant increase in funding, I feel that this organisation can deliver and would hugely benefit from such an investment. I would echo the assessing officer's comment that a slightly lower level of funding might be considered, but do feel, as do our specialist advisors that this is one of the few FXO music applications where such an increase should not only be considered, but is merited by the organisation in this application process.

I believe that the Hebrides Ensemble will continue to develop as an ensemble of international significance, bringing immense credit and relevance to the music scene in Scotland, especially in the significant development of the wider chamber music sector, so crucial to the music industry and this department. Their creative, recording, performance (including education activities) and international touring profile will all benefit if successful.

**1.1 Application rating: High**

The Hebrides is one of a select number of organisations who continually “raise the bar” in terms of the quality of performance, creativity and growing spread of their available work. I fully concur with both the assessing officer and the Specialist Advisor’s panel that this application should be rated High.

**1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:** The quality and range of output and the continual desire to break new ground and create new opportunities for their work.

**1.3 Strengths of application:** Vision and quality.

**1.4 Weaknesses of applications:** A significant increase in funding, if granted would require additional programming and the equal opportunities brief needs to continue to develop.

**1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:** None.

**1.6 Development areas identified:** Equal opportunities as above.

**1.7 Recommended level of support:** £100K for both years.

**4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme**

**Comments:** As already evidenced, successful TuneUp tours have taken the Hebrides Ensemble to many of the remoter areas of Scotland and they propose working with 14 of Scotland’s 32 local authorities. Also their international portfolio is as important as their UK/Scottish activity. There is a comprehensively wide geographical access to their work.

**1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?** Throughout Scotland, the UK and internationally.

**1.2 Where will the audience come from?** The Hebrides audience is primarily interested in chamber music aligned with high quality contemporary repertoire, including new work, but their education work is also engaging with many young people.

<b>Head of Department’s overall priority recommendation</b>		<b>HIGH</b>
<b>Head of Department’s signature:</b>		<b>Date: 12 February 2008 Revised 23 March 2008</b>
<b>Print name:</b>	<b>Ian Smith</b>	

<b>Stage 3: Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) make recommendations to Directors (Acting Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive and Co-Directors of Arts)</b>		
1. Summarise the reasons why the final rating has been made.		
<b>Comments:</b> Strong overall fit with FXO criteria. Fund at the level requested. Support of £100,000 annually is proposed.		
<b>Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation</b>		High
Chair of Meeting signature:		Date: 2 April 2008
Print name:	Iain Munro	

<b>Stage 4: Directors make recommendations to Joint Board (strategic fit)</b>		
Record the Directors' recommendation and confirm the suggested level of support. If the recommendation differs from Stage 3, please summarise the reasons why.		
<b>Comments:</b> Agree with Stage 3 recommendation. Support of £100,000 annually is proposed.		
<b>Directors recommendations to Joint Board</b>		High
Acting Chief Executive signature:		Date:10 April 2008

<b>Stage 5: Joint Board's decisions</b>		
Record the Joint Board's recommendation. If the recommendation differs from Stage 4, please summarise the reasons why.		
<b>Comments:</b> The Joint Board accepts the Stage 4 recommendation.		
<b>Joint Board Final Decision</b>		<b>APPROVE</b>
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£100,000

**End of Assessment**