



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

Joan McAlpine
Convener
Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

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IM/KF

Dear Convener

CREATIVE SCOTLAND UPDATE – response to COVID-19

I hope this latest update from Creative Scotland continues to find yourself and the Committee safe and well. There have been significant developments over the past month as regards our work to support the sector during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This, the latest of our monthly updates to the Committee, summarises these developments, while avoiding repetition of matters covered in previous updates.

The most significant development over the past month has been the announcement on 28 August by the First Minister of a £59 million funding package to help protect jobs in the culture and heritage sectors and help the industry weather the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This announcement included £31.5m specifically to provide emergency support for culture through Creative Scotland. Our news release on this announcement can be read [here](#).

On 03 September we announced how this £31.5 in emergency support is to be applied across five funds, as follows:

- The £3.5m [Independent Cinema Recovery and Resilience Fund](#) will help secure the survival of Scotland's independent cinemas, enabling them to re-establish and adjust their business models in response to COVID-19. The fund addresses the critical financial need faced by Scotland's independent cinemas to enable them to return to full-time operation, significantly reducing the risk of wide-spread redundancies and closure of vital community assets. The fund opened for applications on 14 September with a deadline of 05 October and funding decisions will be communicated to applicants at the end of October.
- The £15m [Culture Organisations and Venues Recovery Fund](#) will support organisations that provide opportunities for cultural engagement and who have been unable to trade due to the impact of COVID-19. It includes both organisations which provide opportunities for audience engagement (such as galleries, performing arts spaces, commercial theatres, festivals, comedy clubs and nightclubs) as well as those that enable and deliver cultural activity (such as production facilities, music and dance companies). Eligibility criteria and guidelines were published on Thursday 10 September and the fund opened for applications on Thursday 17 September, with a deadline of 24 September. Awards will be made by the first week in November.

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- The £5m [Creative Freelancer Hardship Fund](#) will help address the current financial hardship being felt by creative freelancers in the culture sector, whose work has been impacted by COVID-19. We are currently working to appoint sector specialist partners to help us distribute this funding in order to ensure a wide spread of coverage of this funding, including into sectors where we don't historically operate. An open call for partners was issued on 11 September with a deadline of 25 September and we expect to be in the position to open access to the funds in early October. Guidelines for Screen Scotland's element of the Hardship Fund will be launched on 21 September, with applications open from the following day. The Screen Scotland Hardship Fund has been designed in consultation with BECTU. It will deliver support to practitioners across film and television as well as in corporate video, commercial video production and professional photography.
- The £5m **Sustaining Creative Practice Fund** will support artists to continue developing new creative work that will make a significant contribution to Scotland's recovery from COVID-19. This includes £1.5 million for the Culture Collective programme, mentioned in the Scottish Government's Programme for Government, supporting organisations employing freelance artists to work in and with communities across Scotland. The remaining £3.5m will be added to Creative Scotland's existing [open fund](#) which is open for applications from individuals now.
- The £3m [Youth Arts Fund](#) will ensure creative opportunities for children and young people continue to exist across Scotland despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund includes targeted and open funding to youth music and wider youth arts organisations, a scheme to devolve grants locally to artists who work with young people, and small grants delivered directly to young people to support them fulfil their creative ambitions. Details of the fund were launched on 17 September.

All my colleagues at Creative Scotland are working, as a priority, to ensure these welcome emergency funds reach as many people and organisations working across Scotland's culture sector as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Clearly, there is a lot happening, and moving at pace. In order to keep the culture sector, stakeholders and the public as informed as possible we are issuing regular weekly updates on these emergency funds as they are rolled out and we are also promoting them widely through our digital, social and media channels. These are available to read on the [News](#) section of our website.

In addition, I issued a comprehensive update to Regular Funded Organisations, and the sector more broadly, on 11 September and this is also available to read [here](#). One particular point of interest from this communication is our publication of the findings from the first wave of our Audience Intention research, on which I provide a bit more detail later in this update.

Performing Arts Venue Relief Fund

In addition to the new emergency funding set out above, we have also been progressing with the emergency funds that were previously announced by the Scottish Government, including the Performing Arts Venue Relief Fund (PAVRF), full details of which, including fund guidance, can be found [here](#).

As a reminder, the first Scottish Government announcement that there was to be a fund for Performing Arts Venues was made on Friday 3 July 2020. On Wednesday 15 July Creative Scotland announced Strand 1 of the PAVRF for organisations in the RFO network. Eligible RFOs were then emailed to provide them with the guidance for the fund and the application form for completion, should they choose to apply.

On 29 July, an additional £2.5m for Performing Arts Venues was announced by the Scottish Government making the total available through the open element of the PAVRF £5m. This open element of the fund also opened to applications on that date.

On 05 August, we announced the [20 venues to be in receipt of the £7.5m](#) from the first strand of this fund. The proposals from the 20 RFOs in receipt of the £7.5m funding indicate that at least 423 jobs will be saved from redundancy, 167 people will be brought back early from furlough and there will be 1,037 commissions for freelancers.

Applications to the £5m open fund element of the PAVRF are currently being assessed and decisions will be made and published on 24 September.

Grassroots Music Venues Sustainability Fund

On Thursday 9 July 2020, the [Scottish Government announced £2.2m funds](#) specifically aimed at helping grassroots music venues.

Timescales for this fund are as follows:

- Publication of fund Guidance and Application questions – Wednesday 19 August 2020
- Applications open – Wednesday 26 August 2020
- Deadline for Applications – Thursday 3 September 2020

We received 98 eligible applications to this fund, with a funding request totalling £3.8m. Applications are currently being assessed and awards will be made and announced on 22 September. Further details of the fund can be found [on our website](#) and via our accompanying [news release](#).

Open Fund: Sustaining Creative Development

Creative Scotland's revised Open Fund: Sustaining Creative Development has been open for applications since April. Up until week commencing 16 September 2020, the fund had received 497 applications from individuals with a total ask of £6.2m and 231 applications from organisations, with a total ask of £5.4m. Since the start of July, we have made 219 awards totaling £3.8m through this fund. Assessment of applications continue and successful awards [are published on an ongoing basis](#).

Engagement with the Sector

Addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Scotland's culture and creativity needs to be a collective effort. To help with this, as well as ongoing dialogue, we continue to meet regularly with the Sector Development Bodies and the Scottish Government to map the ongoing impacts being felt and discuss the needs of the sector to help manage the challenges.

As a reminder, the sector bodies involved in these meetings are:

- Arts and Business Scotland
- Craft Scotland
- Cultural Alliance
- Culture Counts
- Federation of Scottish Theatre
- Festivals Edinburgh
- Literature Alliance
- Publishing Scotland
- SCAN
- Scottish Music Industry Association

In addition to these regular meetings, we are moving ahead with a series of sector led events, in partnership with the above organisations, with the aim of contributing to future policy, holding visible and open debate, and increasing understanding of the challenges faced by the sector

amongst policymakers. These events are in development and will be held, virtually, in the latter part of this year. We will have more detail to share in our next update to the Committee.

As is hopefully clear to the Committee, we continue to issue regular updates, including directly from myself, via our social media channels and through our website, specifically on emergency funding but also regarding future planning.

Audience Intention Research

As mentioned previously, an important piece of research that I'd like to bring to your attention is the Audience Intention work that we have been undertaking. This is research amongst the general public with the aim of understanding attitudes towards engagement with cultural activity – for example attending cultural events and venues – and how these are changing in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research is being conducted by an independent research specialist in four waves and the results from the first wave were [published on our website](#) last week. The research tells us that 81% of the Scottish population are still interested in attending cultural events, however, it also highlights areas where audiences have increased concern due to COVID-19, information that is very useful as the culture sector plans on re-opening to the public.

In particular, I would recommend that the Committee reads the 11-page summary of the key findings from the first wave of the research, which is presented [here](#). The second wave of this research will take place in October.

Screen Scotland

Single Project Development

As detailed in last month's update, Screen Scotland launched Single Project Development Routes (with the existing Film Development & Production Fund and the Broadcast Content Fund) for both film and television as a response to the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown. These Routes allowed for greater flexibility and faster assessment of applications.

94 applications across film and TV were received (85 of which were eligible for assessment). Awards to a value of £941,750 have been funded to date. Out of 94 applications, 15 were from new applicants who had not previously engaged with Screen Scotland. Assessments are ongoing and it is expected that the full commitment of £1m will be reached.

Safe Working Guidance

Screen Scotland continues to liaise with the British Screen Commission, PACT, broadcasters and producers on the application and continuous revision of safe working guidelines and protocols for production and exhibition. These safe working guidelines are [available on our website](#).

Studio Update

First Stage Studios, working with Screen Scotland, continue to field enquiries from producers, with a number of very positive leads being pursued as production activity looks to recommence across the country.

Short Circuit and Little Pictures

On 2 September **Short Circuit** announced the nine short films that are to be commissioned as part of the *Sharp Shorts* project. A total of 21 individuals are involved with these films, 16 of whom are non-male identifying and seven do not identify as white. These production teams have already

undergone a COVID-19 safety course for production and will receive more production training as they aim to deliver their short films before the end of the financial year.

Short Circuit will launch its *First Feature* development fund in the coming month and is currently working on two bespoke professional development courses to be launched later in the year. Under *First Feature* five projects will be selected for development, with development awards up to £20,000 per project.

Little Pictures, GMAC's new micro-budget short film commissioning scheme for people aged over 16, funded by Screen Scotland, is now open for applications. Little Pictures will encourage new filmmakers who don't normally have the opportunity to make a film, or who have not been funded to make a film before, to develop their voice, take creative risks and will help to kick start and develop film talent from across Scotland. Six short films will be commissioned with budgets of up to £2k cash and support from GMAC Film in training, each project is supported by a mentor.

In conclusion, I hope this update provides a clear indication of the scale of activity we are undertaking to help address the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on creativity and culture in Scotland. We will continue to keep the Committee updated on progress, with a further update in October.

If there are any questions, or anything specific you are interested in, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Iain Munro". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Iain Munro
Chief Executive
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