



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

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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

Please find below the latest update from Creative Scotland, for October 2020, focusing on our activity in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. I hope this update continues to find yourself, the Committee members and the Committee Clerks safe and well.

The most significant developments over the past month in support of the creative and culture sector during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, have prioritised delivery of the Scottish Government's emergency funds. This update summarises these developments, while avoiding repetition of matters covered in previous Committee updates.

Following 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 (including £31.5m specifically to provide emergency support for culture through Creative Scotland), our top priority has been, and continues to be, the delivery of this funding support to the sector.

On [03 September](#) we announced how this £31.5 in emergency support was to be applied across five funds, and I provide an update on progress with each of these as follows:

- The £3.5m [Independent Cinema Recovery and Resilience Fund](#) was established to 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 opened for applications on 14 September, closed on 5 October. 27 applications were received totalling £3.55m. Applications are currently being assessed and funding decisions will be communicated to applicants by the end of October.
- The £15m [Culture Organisations and Venues Recovery Fund](#) is intended to support organisations that are vital to the cultural life of Scotland and which are experiencing critical financial problems that threaten insolvency or significant job losses due to the impact of COVID-19. 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. We received 348 applications totalling more than £22m. Applications are currently being assessed and awards will be announced the first week in November.

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- The £5m [Hardship Fund for Creative Freelancers](#) will help address the current financial hardship being felt by creative freelancers in the culture sector, whose work has been impacted by COVID-19. An open call for partners was issued on 11 September with a deadline of 25 September. We [announced who those partners are](#) on 15 October (CraftScotland/Crafts Council, Help Musicians, Society of Authors and Visual Arts Scotland) and the fund will open for applications on 26 October with awards being made as soon as possible in November. BECTU are also on board as partners, but at time of writing, this is subject to final confirmation. The £700,000 Screen element of these Hardship Funds opened for applications on Tuesday 22 September and closed on Friday 2 October. Assessments are taking place and decisions are being communicated to applicants. The Screen Scotland Hardship Fund has been designed in consultation with BECTU and is delivering 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** supports 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. Details on the Culture Collective are still being finalised and will be announced early November. The remaining £3.5m has been added to Creative Scotland's existing [open fund](#) which is open for applications from individuals now. The application threshold has been increased from £50,000 to £100,000.
- £3million **Youth Arts** funding package comprises of £1.2million through the [Access to Youth Arts Fund](#) which will be open to applications until Thursday 12 November; the £700,000 [Small Grants Scheme](#) which launched on Thursday 24 September and will be open to applications until Monday 2 November; £50,000 assigned to the [Time to Shine Nurturing Talent Fund](#), and an additional £1,050,000 allocated to support a number of targeted national and local area youth music and wider youth arts organisations. These organisations have been invited to apply for the [Youth Arts Targeted Fund](#) with a deadline of Tuesday 13 October.

As previously expressed, everyone at Creative Scotland is working, as a priority, to ensure these welcome emergency funds reach as many people and organisations working across Scotland's creative sector as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

In order to keep everyone updated, we are issuing regular weekly progress updates on these emergency funds and promote them widely through our digital, social and media channels. These are available to read on the [News](#) section of our website.

Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund

As reminder, and in addition to the new emergency funding set out above, we also recently ran the Performing Arts Venue Relief Fund (PAVRF), full details of which, including fund guidance, can be found [here](#).

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 nearly 500 jobs will be saved from redundancy or brought back early from furlough, and there will be over 1,000 commissions for freelancers.

Awards from the £5m open fund element of the PAVRF were [announced on 24 September](#), with 59 venues across Scotland receiving £4.74m. The remaining budget from this fund will be re-allocated to other emergency support funds, and this is currently being discussed with the Scottish Government.

Grassroots Music Venues Sustainability Fund

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

We received 98 eligible applications to this fund, with a funding request totalling £3.8m. On 22 September we announced the awards of the £2.2m fund to [72 venues across Scotland](#).

Open Fund: Sustaining Creative Development

Creative Scotland's revised Open Fund: Sustaining Creative Development has been open for applications since April. It is a rolling fund, accepting applications on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Up until week commencing 14 October 2020, the fund had received 545 applications from individuals with a total ask of £6.9m and 255 applications from organisations, with a total ask of £6.1m. So far, we have made 271 awards totaling £4.7m through this fund, 174 to individuals (£2.2m) and 97 to organisations (£2.5m).

Awards through the fund are announced regularly through our communications channels, with the most recent announcement being on [30 September](#).

Engagement with the Sector

We continue to meet regularly with the Sector Development Bodies¹ and the Scottish Government to map the ongoing impacts being felt, to discuss the needs of the sector to help manage the challenges, and to look to a process of recovery and renewal for Scotland's culture sector.

To contribute to this, we are developing a series of sector led events 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 are also working collaboratively with the sector bodies to develop a collective approach to cultural advocacy, in order to use our communications to raise awareness, appreciation and understanding of participation in creativity and culture as a human right, underlining the social, economic and reputational value that creativity and culture deliver to us as individuals and as a society. This is not a time limited exercise but one that will continue on an ongoing basis. Work on this will begin to roll out in November.

Audience Intention Research

As mentioned in previous updates, we are conducting 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 have been [published on our website](#) including 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 November.

Broader development and support

¹ 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 and TRACS

I'd also like to draw the Committee's attention to ongoing communications and engagement work that we are delivering through the Covid-19 pandemic to support Scotland's culture sector. Alongside delivery of emergency funds, which remains our absolute top priority, we continue to offer as much support as we can to the people and organisations who are producing creative work at this time. Some recent examples include our continued delivery of the [Visual Artist and Craft Maker Awards](#), which opened for applications this month, and the launch of the second phase of our [digital pivot programme](#) last week. We also continue Communications support for work that we fund which is still happening despite the pandemic – some recent examples being: [Edinburgh Art Festival](#); [Bookbug](#), through the Scottish Book Trust; [StAnza](#) poetry festival; [Y-Dance](#) work to tackle anti-social behaviour; the [Scots Language Awards](#) 2020; and the [Wigtown Book Festival](#), to name only a few.

Our [monthly newsletter round-up](#) pulls together all of this ongoing activity each month and is widely issued to our subscribers and on social media.

Screen Scotland

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](#). The prompt adoption of these guidelines has enabled many productions across genres to proceed with filming safely and in compliance with the Scottish Government's rules, advice and guidance.

Funding/Production Update

So far in 2020/21, through our [Film Development & Production Fund](#) or [Broadcast Content Fund](#) we have supported the development and/or production of 77 projects from Scotland-based producers, writers and production companies as well as seven production company development slates. This has seen support provided to 84 applicants with a value of £4.5m since 1 April 2020. Separately, our [Production Growth Fund](#) has supported the production of three films/HETV series in Scotland during the same period with an award value of £1.4m.

Across Scotland, we currently have a significant volume of feature film and HETV drama either in production or looking to start filming in the near future. We are currently facilitating shoots, supporting production and/or enabling skills/talent development opportunities with *Outlander Series 6*, *The Origin*, *Guilt Series 2*, *My Son*, *Vigil*, *Castle for Christmas*, *Screw*, *Annika*, *Princess Switch 3* and a number of confidential projects. After a summer in which all major shoots across the UK were paused or postponed, these projects are bringing much needed work to the Scottish crew base and facilities providers.

Studio Update

Screen Scotland's Screen Commission team continues to work with international productions looking to shoot on location and in studios in Scotland, including at Bath Road (Leith), now operated by [FirstStage Studios](#), with a number of very positive leads as production activity increases across the country.

Short Circuit, Little Pictures and Bridging the Gap

I'd also like to bring to the attention of the Committee, a number of recent projects and developments in support of Scotland's Screen sector.

In September [Short Circuit](#) announced the nine short films commissioned as part of the *Sharp Shorts* project. Short Circuit will launch its *First Feature* development fund shortly 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. In September Short Circuit also launched a [programme of online events](#) including free webinars with leading film production and exhibition talent.

[Little Pictures](#), GMAC's new micro-budget short film commissioning scheme for people aged over 16, closed for applications on 8 October. Little Pictures will help to kick start and develop new 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.

The Scottish Documentary Institute's [Bridging the Gap](#) programme, one of the leading documentary new talent initiatives in the UK, announced its long-list of filmmakers taking part in a series of intensive workshops to help them develop short and ambitious documentaries for international distribution. Up to five projects will be commissioned in January 2021, with the support of Screen Scotland, Northern Ireland Screen and the University of Edinburgh.

Screen Scotland and Channel 4 have announced the Scotland-based independent production companies who are to benefit from their joint [Daytime development partnership](#). Together, Channel 4 and Screen Scotland pledged a £75k investment to fund up to five new project developments and one new transmittable pilot from a Scotland-based production company.

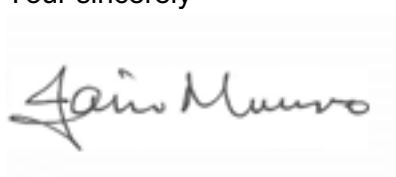
Screen Scotland also partnered with BBC Three and BBC Scotland for a new collaboration that will provide production companies in Scotland with the opportunity to win a four-part series commission, to be transmitted on the channels. The Scottish production companies shortlisted for development are Beezr, Tern, Firecracker, Storyboard Studios, Mentorn Scotland and Two Rivers Media. Two companies will progress to pilot production in November.

In conclusion

I hope this update provides a clear indication of the range and 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 November.

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

Your sincerely

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Iain Munro".

Iain Munro
Chief Executive
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