



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

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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

This is our update for November 2020, on our continued activity to support Scotland's creative and culture sector in the context of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. I hope this continues to find yourself, the Committee members and the Committee Clerks safe and well.

There has been a significant amount of activity since our last update in October and I'll summarise these developments, while avoiding unnecessary repetition of matters covered in previous Committee updates.

Creative Scotland's top priority continues to be the delivery of the emergency funding package announced by the First Minister on 28 August, including £31.5m specifically to provide emergency support for culture, through Creative Scotland. Following our announcement on [03 September](#) setting out how this emergency support was to be delivered, our progress update is 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 and the recipients of the funding were announced on [03 November](#), with 30 independent cinemas and two touring cinema operators being awarded emergency funding. An additional £50,000 in funding from the National Lottery was used to top up this fund.
- 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 10 September and the fund opened for applications on 17 September, with a deadline of 24 September. We received 348 applications totalling more than £22m. Following assessment of these applications by a panel including representatives from Scottish Enterprise and Event Scotland, the first tranche of recipients of funding were announced on [05 November](#), consisting of £11.75m provided to 203 organisations across Scotland. A second tranche of awards will be announced on 19 November.

- The £5m [Hardship Fund for Creative Freelancers](#) addresses the financial hardship being felt by creative freelancers in the culture sector. We are working with sector partners to deliver this fund and we [announced who those partners are](#) on 15 October (BECTU, CraftScotland/Crafts Council, Help Musicians, Society of Authors and Visual Arts Scotland). The fund opened for applications on 26 October. All the funds reached 60% capacity within 48 hours and, as set out in our guidance, were then paused for application in order to give those freelancers who need more time and/or assistance in applying, the opportunity to do so. On 03 November, the Scottish Government announced an additional £3m, taking the total available for this fund to £8m, and we re-opened for application on 10 November. The funds remain open at time of writing and applications are being assessed and funding support delivered on an ongoing basis.
- Included as part of the above, the [£700,000 Screen element](#) of the Hardship Funds initially opened for applications on Tuesday 22 September and closed on Friday 2 October. The fund reopened on 10 November, with an additional £500,000 budget, closing on 16 November.
- 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. There are two elements to this fund:
 - £1.5 million for the [Culture Collective](#) programme, supporting organisations employing freelance artists to work in and with communities across Scotland. Details of the Culture Collective programme were announced on [04 November](#) with a call out for notes of interest by 18 November.
 - £3.5m which has been added to Creative Scotland's existing [open fund](#), available for applications from individuals now. The application threshold has been increased from £50,000 to £100,000 and we are progressing plans to simplify and streamline the process, starting with individuals and followed by that for organisations.
- On [12 November](#), we announced that 18 Youth Music and Youth Arts organisations have received a total of £1,053,000 to help the recovery of Youth Arts across Scotland and ensure creative opportunities for children and young people continue despite the continued impact of Covid-19. These awards are the first to be announced from the Scottish Government's £3 million funding package for Youth Arts. Further announcements will follow regarding recipients of at least £1.2 million through the [Access to Youth Arts Fund](#), the £700,000 [Small Grants Scheme](#) and £50,000 assigned to the [Time to Shine Nurturing Talent Fund](#).

As stated in earlier updates, everyone at Creative Scotland continues to work, as a priority, to ensure these emergency funds reach as many people and organisations working across Scotland's creative and culture sector as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

We also continue to issue 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, 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 16 November 2020, the fund had received 656 applications from individuals with a total ask of £8.5m and 297 applications from organisations, with a total ask of £7.4m. So far, we have made 327 awards totaling £5.7m through this fund, 210 to individuals (£2.7m) and 117 to organisations (£3m).

Awards through the fund are announced regularly through our communications channels, with the most recent announcement being on [28 October](#).

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. We continue to engage proactively with sector bodies as much as possible, for example, we will be speaking at the forthcoming Federation of Scottish Theatre members meeting in December.

We are also working collaboratively with the sector bodies to develop a collective approach to cultural advocacy, in order to use our collective communications to raise awareness, appreciation and understanding of participation in creativity and culture as a human right, underlining the social, economic and value that creativity and culture deliver to us as individuals and as a society. Since our last update, a Programme Board including representatives from the culture sector has been established to advise on this work, which is currently in development for roll out in early 2021.

Included as part of 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 early part of 2021.

We are also beginning the second phase of [Digital Pivot](#) (Digital Mentoring and Peer Support project) with The Space. The initial web events attracted 126 participants and applications for the follow-up mentoring programme are now being assessed. This programme is designed to help organisations move their work online during Covid-19 restrictions.

Audience Intention Research

We continue to conduct research amongst the general public with the aim of understanding attitudes towards engagement with cultural activity and how these are changing in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research is being conducted in four waves and the results from the first wave have been [published on our website](#) with the summary [here](#). The second wave of this research has just

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

concluded, and results will be published as soon as possible. We will provide more information on this in our next update to the Committee.

Broader development and support

We continue to deliver communications and engagement work through the Covid-19 pandemic to support Scotland's culture sector. Alongside delivery of emergency funds, we are offering as much support as we can to the people and organisations who continue to produce creative work.

Some recent examples include news features on the [Scots Language Awards](#); a celebration of the [unheralded champions of the arts sector](#); and support for funded organisations such as [StAnza](#) poetry festival. In the past few weeks we have also published features on the [future of the art market](#); the [Scottish Album of the Year Awards](#); a spotlight on [Trad Music](#); and continue to promote and support creativity and culture across our [social media channels](#).

Most of our activity is captured in our [monthly newsletter round-up](#) which I would recommend to Committee members, if they are not already subscribed.

Screen Scotland

Safe Working Guidance

Screen Scotland continues to liaise with the British Screen Commission, PACT, broadcasters and producers on the application and revision of safe working guidelines and protocols for production and exhibition. These safe working guidelines are [available on our website](#). Industry guidelines have been designed to work with the Scottish Government's Protection Levels and to permit production to continue across each Level.

The prompt adoption of these guidelines has enabled many productions to proceed with filming safely. As a result, the Screen Commission is working with a significantly higher number of productions across film and television drama than would normally be expected during the winter season.

Funding/Production Update

So far in 2020/21, through our Film Development & Production Fund and Broadcast Content Fund we have supported the development and/or production of 100 projects from Scotland-based producers, writers and production companies, as well as eight production company development slates. This has seen support provided to 108 applicants with a value of £5.7m for awards made since 1 April 2020. Separately, our Production Growth Fund has supported the production of six films/HETV series in Scotland during the same period with an award value of £2.6m.

Studio Update

Bath Road (Leith), now operated by FirstStage Studios, has [welcomed its first production client](#), Wild Mercury Productions, with The Rig, written by Edinburgh based David MacPherson. The Rig will be the first Amazon Original Series filmed exclusively in Scotland. Production will start on the series early next year. This is major news for Scotland's Screen sector and follows a great deal of work involving Screen Scotland colleagues and, in particular, our Screen Commission team.

Skills & Talent Development

Screen Scotland's draft Skills Strategy will be considered by a new Skills Working Group, consisting of c70 representatives from the sector, at a meeting on 23rd November. The draft Strategy has been devised in consultation with the Screen Scotland partners and industry across 2020.

Short Circuit

Short Circuit, the new film talent initiative for Scotland delivered by Film City Futures in partnership with Glasgow Film, and funded by The National Lottery through Screen Scotland and BFI NETWORK, is [now accepting applications](#) for their feature film development scheme, First Features. The scheme will support Scotland-based filmmakers to take that career-defining step towards developing their debut feature.

First Features will be for writing, directing and producing talent from across Scotland who have a track record in short film and some industry recognition for previous work.

Broadcaster Partnerships

Building on the C4 Daytime development partnership and the BBC Three collaboration I outlined in my October update, Screen Scotland and Channel 4 have [announced a jointly funded initiative](#) for the Channel's 9pm factual slot. Documentary and specialist factual ideas centred around the family, community, work, holiday, business, the high street and education, will be the focus of the initiative. A total of three ideas will become eligible for further development funding and lead to a two-part 9pm commission, with a tariff of up to £200,000 per episode.

Concurrent with this initiative, Screen Scotland has partnered for the first time with Comcast owned Sky Documentaries to launch a [new strategic development initiative](#) to broaden Sky's supplier base in Scotland for documentary series and films. Sky Documentaries and Screen Scotland, with support from The National Lottery, will contribute £50,000 each towards the joint initiative to increase Scottish content on the network, with Sky seeking feature documentaries and limited series ideas with diversity strongly encouraged as part of any proposal, both in front of and behind the camera.

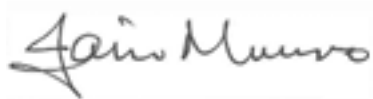
Details of the projects commissioned for development/production funding under each of these initiatives will be confirmed in due course.

In conclusion

This update provides a flavour 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 and the scale of work being delivered by Creative Scotland staff. We will provide a further written update in December and I also look forward to giving evidence to the Committee in person on 17 December.

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

Your sincerely



Iain Munro
Chief Executive
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