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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**

This is our update for December 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.

This is also the last update of 2020 at the end of what has been the most extraordinary and difficult of years. As it draws towards a close, we acknowledge how much the Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone and think of those who have died or have lost loved ones.

Following the onset of the pandemic back in March, it was immediately clear that the Creative sector would be severely impacted by the necessary restrictions that needed to be put in place to protect public health. With the support of the Scottish Government and the National Lottery, we very quickly adapted our operations and resources to prioritise the delivery of emergency funding to people and organisations in the sector. That work continues, and I particularly want to pay tribute to my colleagues in Creative Scotland and Screen Scotland who are so committed and passionate about what they do and are working tirelessly to provide that vital support, whilst working from home and managing the challenges of their own personal circumstances.

People and organisations in Scotland's creative sector continue to show great resilience and adaptability in the face of the ongoing challenges brought about by Covid-19, however, the very welcome news of vaccine availability heralds an increasingly brighter future in the months ahead. I'm sure Committee members join us in looking forward to the time when we can gather again in our theatres, music venues, galleries, cinemas, at festivals and anywhere else where we can once again enjoy, share and celebrate the wonderful art and creativity that is so important to our lives and for which Scotland is rightly renowned around the world.

Until then, 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 as at December 2020 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. This fund is now closed.
- The £15m [Culture Organisations and Venues Recovery Fund](#) was established 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 was announced on [19 November](#), consisting of awards of £1.4m to a further 30 organisations. This fund is now closed. Creative Scotland is in discussion with the Scottish Government as regards how the remaining £1.85 million budget from this emergency fund will be allocated and more information on that will be shared in due course.
- The £5m [Hardship Fund for Creative Freelancers](#) addresses the financial hardship being felt by creative freelancers in the creative sector. We were working with sector partners to deliver this fund and we [announced who those partners were](#) 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 applications on 10 November. The funds remain open at time of writing (although will pause briefly over the festive period), we have received nearly 4000 applications, all of which are now being dealt with, 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 for two subsequent rounds of applications, with an additional £500,000 budget, and finally closed on [09 December](#). Nearly 600 people have been supported with individual hardship grants of up to £2,000 each so far, with more applications still being processed.
- 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. The Fund received 148 Expressions of Interest (EOIs) totalling £28million. 68 organisations, with proposals totalling £14million, have now been invited to make full applications. Awards will be announced at the beginning of February 2021.
  - £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. On [03 December](#) we opened for expressions of interest for the Time to Shine, Nurturing Talent Fund and on [15 December](#) we announced the recipients of the £700,000 [Small Grants Scheme](#). Further announcements will follow regarding recipients of at least £1.2 million through the [Access to Youth Arts Fund](#).
- In addition to the emergency funds we are delivering on behalf of the Scottish Government, on [10 December](#) we announced the Touring Fund for Theatre and Dance to support Covid-safe touring work from Spring 2021, supported by £600,000 National Lottery funding. The deadline for applications is 05 February 2021.
- [The 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 supported by funding from both the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. Up until week commencing 14 December 2020, the fund had received 729 applications from individuals with a total ask of £9.5m and 333 applications from organisations, with a total ask of £8.4m. So far, we have made 404 awards totaling £7m through this fund, 264 to individuals (£3.4m) and 140 to organisations (£3.6m). Awards through the fund are announced regularly through our communications channels, with the most recent announcement being on [25 November](#).

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.

As a reminder of previous Covid-19 emergency funds we have delivered:

- [Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund](#): 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](#).

## Engagement with the Sector

On 27 November, I wrote directly to all 121 Regularly Funded Organisations to provide an update on where we are with future planning and what we know in terms of budget timelines. This correspondence will also be of interest to the Committee and it is provided as an Appendix to this update.

We also continue to meet regularly with the Sector Development Bodies<sup>1</sup> 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, I spoke at the Federation of Scottish Theatre members meeting on 14 December.

We are also working collaboratively with the sector bodies to develop a collective approach to cultural advocacy, to use our collective communications to raise awareness, appreciation and understanding of participation in creativity and culture, underlining the social, economic and value that creativity and culture deliver to us as individuals and as a society. Since our last update, the Programme Board consisting of representatives from the culture sector has met to discuss this work, and we intend to roll out our new approach to advocacy 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.

### Audience Intention and Sector 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 concluded, and results will be published prior to the Christmas break.

We are also conducting a [Covid-19 Sector Survey](#) to understand the impact of the pandemic on Scotland's culture sector and the ongoing issues it has created as we move into 2021. Findings from this survey will help in our discussions with the Scottish Government and other partners on how best we continue to respond to the ongoing pandemic and help the culture sector begin to recover and renew. The survey is live at the time of writing.

### Broader development and support

We continue to deliver communications and engagement work through the Covid-19 pandemic to support the 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 annual [Scots Trad Music Awards](#); the launch our [EDI Advisory Board](#) and a call out for members; announcement of the artists and curatorial team for [Scotland + Venice](#); and support for the cultural programme as part of the [St Andrews Day](#) celebrations. In the past few weeks we have also published features on the [Youth Music Incubator Fund](#), the [Nurturing Talent Fund](#) recipients, 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 again recommend to Committee members, if they are not already subscribed.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

## Screen Scotland

### Safe Working Guidance/Film Production

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. The first Screen Scotland funded feature film to shoot in Scotland since the onset of COVID-19 completed principal photography in early December. *The Origin*, marks the feature debut of breakout talents, director Andrew Cumming and was shot in an isolation bubble on location in the Scottish Highlands around Gairloch, Wester Ross. The movie is produced by Escape Plan's Oliver Kassman (*Saint Maud*) in co-production with Scottish producer Wendy Griffin of Selkie Productions (*Calibre*, *She Will*, *Phea*), with financing from Screen Scotland and the BFI, awarding funds from the National Lottery.

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 110 projects from Scotland-based producers, writers and production companies, as well as nine production company development slates. This has seen support provided to 119 applicants with a value of £6.1m for awards made since 1 April 2020. Separately, our Production Growth Fund has supported the production of seven films/HETV series in Scotland during the same period with a total award value of £3,080,000.

### Studio Update

Bath Road (Leith), as previously reported, is now successfully hosting its first production, the Amazon Original production, [The Rig](#). Work continues at Screen Scotland to support the development of studio infrastructure across Scotland.

### Skills & Talent Development

Screen Scotland's draft Skills Strategy was considered by a new Skills Working Group at an online meeting on 23 November. The draft Strategy was welcomed by all. Final suggested amendments are to be provided by 18 December and it is anticipated that the Strategy will be published in February 2021. A copy will be provided to the Committee prior to publication.

With the number of films and high-end television dramas filming in Scotland increasing above normal levels for winter, Screen Scotland is working with [Screen NETS](#) to host new trainees within those productions. Screen NETS Industry Training is funded by Screen Scotland in partnership with Screen Academy Scotland/Edinburgh Napier University.

### Broadcaster Partnerships

Screen Scotland development partnership with Comcast owned Sky Documentaries was launched on 13 November. [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. [Submissions](#) are open until 21 December 2020.

Screen Scotland, BBC TWO and BBC Scotland have also announced a new joint initiative to encourage Scottish independent production companies to develop proposals for 8x60 factual series which have the scale to return. Following shortlisting, a development fund of £15,000 will be shared across a number of successful proposals from independent production companies, jointly funded by Screen Scotland and the BBC. The successful series will be broadcast on BBC Scotland and then on BBC Two.

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

#### British Academy Scotland Award Winners 2020

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts in Scotland ([BAFTA Scotland](#)) announced the winners of this year's British Academy Scotland Awards during a special Covid-safe digital ceremony at the start of December. Screen Scotland supported the awards again this year, and directly sponsored the Audience Award (won by *Outlander*) and the award for Writer/Television (won by Paul Laverty for *Sorry We Missed You*).

Comic actor and entertainer Stanley Baxter was presented with Outstanding Contribution to Film and Television, while film and television editor Phyllis Ironside received the Outstanding Contribution to Craft (In Memory of Robert McCann). Several Screen Scotland supported people and productions were nominated in the awards including productions like *Guilt*, *Deadwater Fell*, *The Nest* and *Elizabeth is Missing*, and the full list of nominees and awardees can be found [here](#).

#### **In conclusion**

We will provide a further written update in January and I also look forward to giving evidence to the Committee in person on 04 February. Until then, I wish all Committee Members and the Committee Clerks and support staff a safe and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

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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## **Appendix: Communication to Regularly Funded Organisations, 27 November 2020**

Dear All,

I'm writing to provide an update on the Covid-19 emergency funds that we are managing on behalf of the Scottish Government, and where we are in terms of forward budget and strategy planning. This is against a backdrop of continued uncertainty, but I want to share as openly as possible what we know, or can reasonably anticipate, at the time of writing.

In the light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Creative Scotland continues to deliver the emergency funding package announced by the First Minister on 28 August, including £31.5m for culture, as quickly and efficiently as possible. We made an announcement on [03 September](#) setting out how this emergency support was to be delivered, and progress is being announced on a weekly basis. You can keep up with all of this via the [News](#) section, on our [Twitter channel](#) and other social media.

While we have prioritised our resources to address the impact the Covid-19 pandemic is having on people and organisations across Scotland's creative sector, other work also continues. For example, our newly enhanced £10.5m Open Fund remains live to help sustain creative practice and activity; other funds not specifically related to the Covid-19 emergency continue to operate; and our Officers continue to work with people and organisations to offer support and advice directly (including RFOs); all of which is essential to the future health of Scotland's creative and culture sector.

Nevertheless, while we remain in the midst of addressing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is also a pressing need to help organisations look forward as much as we possibly can. This includes setting out our priorities within this changed context and moving to new funding models, including acknowledging that the current Regular Funding arrangement, affecting 121 cultural organisations across Scotland, is currently scheduled to come to an end in March 2022.

On this point, I want to re-iterate that we have agreed with the Scottish Government to commit to supporting the fourth year of Regular Funding in 2021/22, subject to confirmation of the level of budget available. We are working on the planning assumption that funding for the 121 Regularly Funded Organisations for this fourth year will be at an average of the funding awarded in the first three years.

The Scottish Government has also confirmed that the overall Scottish Budget for 2021/22 will be published on 28<sup>th</sup> January, at which point we would also expect to understand Creative Scotland's draft budget for the forthcoming year. Following confirmation of Creative Scotland's budget settlement, the proposed breakdown of this budget for 2021/22 will be discussed at the 24<sup>th</sup> February Creative Scotland Board meeting and communicated to you as soon as possible after that.

At the beginning of 2020, the Creative Scotland Board agreed on the high-level recommendations from our Funding Review and a refresh of our Strategy, work which had been conducted through much of 2019. Our intention had been to proceed with sharing these recommendations and to begin to implement the recommendations from Spring 2020 onwards. The unexpected and unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic required us to delay these plans and to prioritise securing and subsequently delivering emergency funds to support the sector.

However, we are now revisiting this work, taking into account the new context, to consider how we support organisations across our funds in the future. This will include consideration of how we will move on from the current Regular Funding programme, from 2022/23 and beyond. This work will align with ongoing developments in our approach to supporting individuals.

All of the above will be brought together into a draft action plan which will set out our priorities and future funding models. We are working to have this framework and action plan in place for

2021/22, with an update on our thinking to be shared publicly in the early part of next year and discussed with you directly, including as part of your Annual Review meetings in April and May.

In summary, four key things to note:

1. The delivery of Covid-19 emergency funding and support remains a priority;
2. We are committed to a fourth year of Regular Funding through to March 2022, subject to confirmation of Scottish Government budgets;
3. The Scottish Government Budget will be published on 28<sup>th</sup> January, with Creative Scotland's headline budget, including the fourth year of RFO funding, planned for discussion at the 24<sup>th</sup> February Creative Scotland Board meeting;
4. We are revisiting our work on future strategy and funding models and these will be communicated in early 2021.

I appreciate that you will have many more questions as regards the above that we are not able to answer, at this point in time. However, I want to assure you that we will continue to share updates as soon as we have them, to keep you fully informed.

Finally, I want to emphasise how much we appreciate the nature of the challenges you and Scotland's wider creative sector are currently facing, the stress and difficulty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the uncertainty this has brought in terms of planning for the future. This impact is clearly being felt across all parts of society in Scotland and, indeed, across the world.

Nevertheless, I can promise you that I and my colleagues at Creative Scotland will continue to provide as much support and clarity as we can, so that we can collectively meet the challenges ahead.

Best wishes

Iain Munro