

Scottish Contemporary Art Network Written Submission to Inquiry into Budget Scrutiny 2023-24

Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) connects and champions Scotland's contemporary art community. Our 300 plus named organisational and individual members work at the heart of communities from Shetland to the Scottish Borders and from East Lothian to the Western Isles. They include Scotland's leading galleries, artists' studios, workshops, and production facilities, as well as a highly skilled workforce of artists, art workers, and creative thinkers. Our members are a network of free at the point of access galleries, community organisations, and venues together with the artist-led initiatives, agencies, workspaces, expertise, and production facilities that support artists to pursue their livelihoods. These are responsive and flexible institutions that anchor local communities and open their doors and activities to their neighbours and visitors alike.

Scottish Government emergency funds distributed by Creative Scotland made a critical difference in stabilising the contemporary art sector, through both individual and organisational support, in the period to end March 2022 when our members were impacted by lockdown and the impact of the pandemic on income, opportunity and organisational business models. The recent independent report, Evaluation of Creative Scotland Covid-19 Emergency Funding Programmes, commissioned from EKOS and published in August 2022, states that: "Overall, the evidence is that the emergency funding programmes have played a vital role in sustaining the creative sector through the worst of the pandemic. "

However, the report also states that: "Now, as energy costs, wages and inflation all rise, the sector will face increased costs as well as reducing audiences as people prioritise essential spending over culture when household budgets come under pressure. Many of the consultees felt that while CS and SC Sc had done well to deliver effective support to the sector, the pandemic had exposed years of under-funding for cultural organisations and structural weaknesses, particularly in relation to working conditions for freelancers. The most recent recovery funds may help, but questions about the future shape and scale of the sector remain."

In common with colleagues across the charitable and culture sector SCAN members now face a new crisis around the cost of living, inflation, energy price increases and the increase in costs of export and international working due to Brexit. Individual members and freelance artists already on low incomes are facing inflation, increased costs of materials, the Brexit impact on cost of exports and the likelihood of landlords increasing studio or facility rental costs. Many organisational members, including public buildings and studio providers, will face severe challenges around utility costs. For example, one SCAN member, a long-established production facility reports that energy bills will now increase from c30k per annum to over 70k per annum. Members in local authorities and

ALEOS face funding challenges because of the impact of the energy price increases across property portfolios. Members who receive direct investment from their local authority may face a reduction in support as part of the knock-on effect. SCAN welcomes the emphasis in Creative Scotland's Future Funding Framework on sustainability and has called for support for Climate Adaptation funds for cultural buildings. These are made ever more urgent by the energy crisis.

SCAN also supports the Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework and has been working with members on understanding and implementing a range of aspects of Fair Work. Additional investment will be required to ensure that the Fair Work Framework can be met. In a sector where our workforce is predominantly freelance (currently estimates suggest over 80%) and work is often precarious self-employment SCAN supports the emphasis on better support for artists made by the committee's precursor the CTEEA in 2019 and the target figure of 1% investment in culture across Scottish Government spend contained in the committee's report.

While the evidence base for the health and wellbeing benefits of culture is well established, and frequently acknowledged by government, the Scottish Government Cultural Strategy has not yet created many consistent formal mechanisms for a cross-cutting approach to culture. Scottish Contemporary Art Network's members across the country provide a range of health and wellbeing interventions both directly and indirectly through projects tackling isolation and loneliness, community wellbeing, skills and confidence as well as work in healthcare settings such as hospitals. However, our members report that the role of cultural organisations in providing health and wellbeing benefits and the value of investment in culture is not always readily understood at local level for example by local authorities and the network of Third Sector Interfaces. And at Scottish Government level, clarity around the role, value and eligibility of cultural activity across national investment and strategic programmes appears to be incremental and, on a case-by-case basis. The Scottish Government could lead in sharing this message across spending areas, and in communicating it to stakeholders such as local authorities, public sector bodies and TSIs, for example through a national summit. Further work could be undertaken to establish where cultural activity should be included as eligible for participation in national programmes or where cultural bodies such as Creative Scotland might usefully become a statutory consultee. We also believe this situation would be transformed by a requirement for local authorities to undertake cultural strategy planning with an outcomes-based approach could embed cross-cutting across local government functions.

Two immediate measures, the introduction of Transient Visitor Levy and the development of a % for art scheme, at an investment level linked to national infrastructure spend, could be implemented.

SCAN would welcome a much greater emphasis on information sharing, consultation and formal mechanisms for embedding the culture strategy across Scottish Government in keeping with the principle of collaborative government within the National Performance Framework.

An increase in multi-year funding through Creative Scotland's forthcoming Funding Framework would require significant increased investment to deliver effectively. A wide range of organisations have been waiting for the opportunity to apply for multi-year funding and it is likely that demand will outstrip available resources.

SCAN members are embedding the learning from Covid in a wide range of ways, for example by continuing digital provision of services such as events, screenings, and workshops for the public as well as training and support activities for the sector. Our members are maintaining community relationships and partnerships forged over the pandemic. Anti-racism, inclusion and anti-poverty work is undertaken throughout the culture and heritage sectors and the work our members do reflects an increased awareness of the uneven impact of covid on particular communities. However, there remains much work to be done, and investment required, to ensure that the positive outcomes that cultural provision can provide are fair and accessible for all communities in Scotland. SCAN would welcome opportunities for information sharing and learning across the cultural sector, but in particular would welcome opportunities to place these in the much wider context of learning across the charitable and public sectors.