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Dear Patrick,

Thank you for your letter of 15 July, inviting me to respond to concerns raised by the Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) regarding the proposed closure of Cooper Gallery at the University of Dundee. I would also like to congratulate you on your election as Convener of the Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee.

Although the Scottish Government has committed funding support of up to £62m to the University of Dundee via the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the University is an autonomous institution with responsibility for its operational decision making, including in relation to cost-saving measures. However I do expect the University to undertake meaningful consultation with staff and students in relation to its proposals – in line with Fair Work principles and the SFC's conditions of funding. I also expect the University to explore fully all other cost-saving measures before considering any compulsory redundancies.

Regarding the specific concerns raised by SCAN, I fully appreciate the value of the Cooper Gallery in providing a distinctive platform for understanding the creative, social and educational impacts of contemporary arts practice. The University has stated publicly that it is proposing to cease operating the Cooper Gallery from July 2027, subject to a collective consultation process, and that alternative funding pathways and ways of working are being considered during this consultation.

The SFC have advised that the University met with SCAN on 29 July, along with staff members from the Cooper Gallery, to discuss the University's proposals. The University has also met with other key stakeholders such as the V&A Dundee and Dundee City Council to discuss the future of the Cooper Gallery. As part of this engagement, the University has discussed potential funding sources, and I understand that the University is exploring fundraising options. I welcome this approach and would urge the University to explore all possible options to secure a sustainable future for the Cooper Gallery, while making every effort to protect the specialist jobs and expertise that are at risk of being lost.

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During my recent engagement with the University's Interim Principal on 21 July, I was clear on my expectation that the University carefully considers the impact of its Strategy to Recovery proposals on students, staff and the wider community. Whilst the University is responsible for any decisions made in relation to the Cooper Gallery, I expect the University to take all reasonable steps to secure a positive future for cultural and creative assets under its custodianship.

I would also like to assure the Committee that the recovery of University of Dundee as a sustainable and well-respected higher education institution is a top priority for this Government, and Ministers will continue to do all in our power to enable this, while necessarily observing the autonomy of the University.

Yours sincerely



MÀIRI MCALLAN

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