Museums Galleries Scotland
Supporting Scotland's Museums

29th October 2026

To: Member of the Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Securing a fair share for Scotland's museums

Dear Convener and Committee Members,

As the Committee conclude its pre-budget scrutiny deliberations, I am writing to reinforce the case I made during my appearance on the 29th of September that Scotland's museums need a fair share of the planned additional investment in culture funding if they are to continue delivering for your constituents and communities across the country.

The Scottish Government's commitment to increased cultural investment is welcome. However, the benefits have not been felt equally across the sector. Of the approximately £70 million in additional culture funding announced to date, just £4 million annually has been directed to Scotland's non-national museums through Museum Futures. Meanwhile, arts organisations have benefited from substantial increases, including expanded multi-year funding through Creative Scotland.

This imbalance matters. Scotland's 450 museums represent an essential civic infrastructure supporting education, health and wellbeing, local economies and a sense of place and belonging. Museums are the doorway to cultural participation; accessible, welcoming places where people can encounter culture, connect with their communities and explore Scotland's stories. We must keep that door open.

The evidence shared from our sector survey shows the scale of the challenge. 17% of respondents told us a venue they operate could be at risk of closure within the next 12 months. 40% have three months or less of reserves, 52% are not keeping on top of regular maintenance, and 38% report museum buildings or stores in poor or bad condition.

The growing proportion of museums at risk is a clear warning that the status quo is not sustainable. We are approaching a tipping point and investment now is essential if Scotland is to retain a truly national network of museums, accessible to communities in every part of the country. The cost of inaction will be felt not only by museums themselves, but by places that depend on them.

We believe we have demonstrated a compelling case for strategic investment. Museum Futures has been described as a flagship programme demonstration how targeted support can help organisations strengthen leadership, address underlying weaknesses and develop more sustainable ways of working. Alongside direct funding, Museum Futures is also

enabling museums to innovate, diversify income, develop new ways of working and build more sustainable business models through specialist advice and wraparound support.

In its first year, the programme engaged 104 organisations, with £3.5 million distributed to 58 organisations through 94 awards. This is promising progress, but sustained investment is essential if these foundations are to deliver lasting change.

I would urge the Committee to recommend that the Scottish Government take a more ambitious approach to museum funding in the forthcoming Budget.

The committee asked what a fair share of funding for museums would be. We believe that a fairer distribution must reflect not only the contribution museums make, but the scale of the need they face. Therefore, we urge the Committee to recommend an additional £8 million annually for Scotland's non-national museums as a necessary first step towards addressing this longstanding imbalance.

While representing just 8% of the additional £100 million for culture of this uplift, it would provide meaningful support for the hundreds of museums currently facing significant financial and operational pressures. Alongside a multi-year commitment to Museum Futures and greater capital investment, this funding package would help protect the sector's long-term resilience and ensure that public investment reaches communities across Scotland.

This is not simply a question of fairness; it is a question of necessity. Scotland's non-national museums have faced years of underinvestment; the wider cultural funding uplift cannot be considered a success if a substantial part of Scotland's cultural infrastructure remains without investment. I hope you will use your final scrutiny recommendations to make that case to the Scottish Government.

Thank you for your continued consideration of Scotland's museums and galleries.

Yours sincerely

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