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Patrick Harvie MSP
Convener
Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Scottish Parliament

21 October 2026

Dear Patrick,

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2027-28: funding for culture

Ahead of my forthcoming appearance before your committee, I should like to provide the following thoughts.

Culture budget and wider context

The Scottish Government is committed to Scotland's culture. We are delivering an additional £20 million in funding for culture in 2026-27 as the next major step in honouring our commitment to provide an additional £100 million of resource (RDEL) annually for culture by 2028-29. This has taken the culture budget in 2026-27 to £381 million, of which £322 million is RDEL.

This equates to a total annual increase in the culture budget of £70 million since 2023-24 and follows the record increase of over £34 million in 2025-26, which was the biggest rise in culture funding in the history of this Parliament (discounting COVID-19 recovery support).

Increasing funding in the context of a challenging fiscal landscape demonstrates our commitment to the sector and the value we know it delivers to Scotland's economy and society – both nationally and in local communities. The Programme for Government published last month contained ambitious proposals on culture which my officials and I are progressing at pace.

To achieve value-for-money and maximum quality of outcomes for the people of Scotland, the 2027/28 and future Culture budgets must be approached and viewed through the prism of Public Sector Reform (PSR), and apply the ambition and focus of the PSR Strategy 2025. A PSR approach must extend beyond individual culture public bodies and include the operations of the wider culture sector.

A PSR Culture Cluster comprising Chief Executive Officers from our non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and chaired by Scottish Government officials, aims to support a collaborative approach to PSR that will help sustain and develop the whole sector over the

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next 10 years. Work is underway to understand how best to support the development of a proactive and comprehensive PSR plan in agreement with culture NDPBs and wider key sector organisations to enable longer-term sustainability. We are also co-producing plans with NDPBs to share storage of our national archive collections at co-located sites. Capital investment for this will be considered at this and future budgets. We are also exploring with the sector ways to share resources beyond storage as we modernise how we look after, store and share our collections.

There are already exemplars of PSR in action in the culture sector including Historic Environment Scotland's development and implementation of a revised business model with a view to the organisation growing its commercial income and reducing its Grant in Aid requirement from the Scottish Government. In addition, we are investing £56 million across the Scottish Spending Review in The Artworks, which will help to realise the vision of a shared storage facility, enabling public access to our national art treasures at the heart of a wider regeneration initiative for the Edinburgh, Granton area.

Specific Areas of Focus

Multi- year funding

A total of 262 cultural organisations currently benefit from the stability of multi-year funding from Creative Scotland. This includes many theatres and performing arts venues. Thanks to Scottish Government investment in the culture and creative sector, this is more than double the number of recipients which received grants under Creative Scotland's previous core funding arrangements.

Screen Scotland

In 2026/27, we increased Screen Scotland's ring-fenced Grant-in-Aid funding by £800,000, to a total of £12.05m. This was in recognition of the screen sector's value to the Scottish economy whereby it is contributing £718m Gross Value Added in 2023, and is on track to reach £1bn GVA by 2030. We will continue to support Screen Scotland's excellent work as we progress our commitment to establish them as a distinct public body with increased Scottish Government funding in future years.

Historic Environment Scotland

The aforementioned revised Framework Document with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) provides the organisation with greater financial freedoms to manage its commercial income.

As part of this agreement, HES is continuing to reduce its dependency on public funding towards its operational budget as its commercial income continues to grow. This will be the third year of that agreement which sees a further £2 million reduction in resource funding providing HES in 2027-28 with £55.2 million as part of a five-year plan.

Supporting the museum and galleries sector

We have committed £8 million to date for the pioneering Museum Futures programme to drive innovation in the sector, allowing for more collaboration between galleries and museums, and upskilling staff. The Museum Futures Programme, delivered in partnership

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with Museum Galleries Scotland and National Lottery Heritage Fund, demonstrates the Scottish Government's commitment to safeguarding cultural infrastructure across urban and rural communities with awards reaching museums in every region of Scotland.

Festivals

Festivals across the country have received significant increases in core funding through the multi-year funding programme. A third of multi-year funding recipients run a festival, and a number are receiving it for the first time.

Our commitment to provide additional funding for culture by 2028-29 has supported the development of the Expanded Festivals Fund, with 55 arts festivals across Scotland delivering ambitious collaborations and commissions through an initial £5.7m pilot. The Programme for Government underlines our commitment to make this fund permanent.

National Performing Companies

We will continue to fund the internationally acclaimed work of our National Performing Companies in 2026-27 with a view to providing additional funding in future years as part of the commitment to £100m by 2028/2029. Last year they shared an uplift of £1 million, following an increase of £700,000 the previous year. That's up 9.4% since 2023-24, taking funding to almost £25 million shared across the five companies. Scottish Government officials have been engaging with the National Performing Companies on how their future financial sustainability can be secured.

Traditional Music and a new National Performing Company

Traditional music is a vital part of Scotland's cultural identity and international reputation. It plays a central role in connecting communities, preserving our heritage, and inspiring new generations of musicians and audiences. A National Performing Company for Traditional Music has the potential to enhance Scotland's cultural profile at home and abroad, create new opportunities for artists, support talent development, and contribute to wider social, cultural and economic outcomes. It is important that any future development is informed by those working within the sector. I am very conscious that the nature of traditional music means that it may not fit tidily into the format of our other National Performing Companies (in theatre, ballet, opera and the orchestras). I am comfortable with this and am keen to be creative as we develop the model.

International culture

The ability to work internationally is vital to many creative professionals and wraps right across the culture sector. Being clear about the importance of export, we funded British Council Scotland to carry out a feasibility study into a support service for cultural export and exchange. This [report](#) was published on 7 October and I was pleased to engage with stakeholders on it. As we consider the recommendations carefully, we are also providing support for international touring in the music sector by providing £300,000 to Creative Scotland to establish a rapid-response pilot fund to support musicians to cover rising costs.

Community culture

Culture is at the heart of strong, resilient and cohesive communities right across Scotland.

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We support public libraries in Scotland in several ways. The primary funding for public libraries comes through the Scottish Government block grant to Local Authorities. It is then for Local Authorities to fund public libraries based on the needs within their communities. We also support public libraries through our funding for the Scottish Library and Information Council. We have welcomed the report by Matt Baker on Local Culture Scotland and recognise the important role that local culture in communities can play. I met with the authors of the report on 29 September and officials are now considering next steps.

Minimum Income Pilot

Scotland's artists make a significant contribution to our economy, communities and international reputation, yet we know that many continue to face persistent financial insecurity and precarious working conditions. Through the Scottish Artists' Minimum Income Pilot, we have an opportunity to explore new approaches to supporting sustainable artistic careers. Engagement with artists and the wider sector is of critical importance. The pilot will be informed by the lived experience of artists working across different artforms, career stages, geographies and communities. This will be the focus of the development work in 2027/28.

Culture Co-ordinators in Scottish Schools

The Committee asked about the Cultural Co-ordinators in Scottish Schools (CCiSS) Programme. This began in 2002 and provided a mechanism for delivering cultural experiences to children and young people in Scotland. From 2002-6, The Scottish Executive provided £750,000 per annum to the Scottish Arts Council – the precursor to Creative Scotland to manage this programme. The Scottish Government Spending Review in November 2007 stated the intention to phase out funding for the Programme over the financial years 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

I look forward to hearing the Committee's thoughts on the draft culture budget for 2027-2028. This letter has referenced funding lines which have been raised by the Committee however it does not refer to all funding lines in the culture area.

Yours sincerely,



MÀIRI MCALLAN

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