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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

By email to:

Patrick Harvie MSP
Convener
Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
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Dear Patrick,

**CULTURE PRIORITIES**

In advance of our discussion on 8 September, and with the publication of the Programme for Government on 1 September, I am writing to provide some updates on our progress to date.

**FIRST 100 DAYS COMMITMENTS**

**Traditional Music National Performing Company**
In line with our 100 Day Commitment to give Traditional Music the same platform as other performing arts – supporting both established and emerging talents – a public-facing survey has now been launched.

The survey seeks views on how a National Performing Company for Traditional Music could not only raise the profile of Scottish folk music around the world but also protect the legacy of trad' music and help it to thrive. The survey is available at the following link- National Performing Company for Traditional Music – Survey

The sectoral roundtable which I hosted on 27 August proved extremely helpful and the Scottish Government will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders around the formation of a National Performing Company.

**The People's Palace and Winter Gardens**
The Scottish Government has announced up to £14 million conditional support towards the refurbishment of the People's Palace and Winter Gardens in Glasgow, supporting its reopening to the public.

This is an essential part of efforts to reopen one of the city's most recognisable, cherished and free-to-access attractions. The People's Palace has long made culture and heritage available to all, which is why the Scottish Government has prioritised this support during the first 100 days of the new Government.

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This investment is in addition to £19.55 million of funding contributions from Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to date, with further funding opportunities continuing to be explored to ensure the full refurbishment of the site.

The refurbishment is also expected to support jobs and footfall in Glasgow's East End, helping local businesses and strengthening the wider visitor economy. It will safeguard historic collections and artefacts that tell the story of Glasgow's working people and help protect the Winter Gardens attached to the venue as a green space for community use.

**Role of the Scottish Government in Public Service Reform**
Whilst it is not the job of Government to dictate how people engage in culture, it **is** the responsibility of all those in the public sector to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to get involved irrespective of background or where they live.

To achieve maximum Value For Money and functionality for the Scottish Ministers – and thereby, ultimately, the people of Scotland – a Public Service Reform approach must extend beyond individual culture public bodies and include the operations of the wider culture sector as a whole

The Scottish Government has therefore already been examining how to ensure the sector is better joined up with increased efficiency in order to better deliver for people.

**Public Service Reform of the Culture Sector**
A Public Service Reform Culture Cluster has been running for a number of years comprising CEOs from the main publicly funded culture bodies and chaired by Scottish Government officials to support a collaborative approach to Public Service Reform that will help sustain and develop the whole sector over the next 10 years and ensure those services are built around the people and communities they serve.

The Scottish Government will therefore continue to build on a number of successful pieces of work already underway and developed by the Culture Cluster. These include:

- **Historic Environment Scotland (HES)** has developed and implemented a revised business model with a view to HES growing its commercial income and reducing its Grant in Aid from the Scottish Government.

- The independent review of **Creative Scotland (CS)** has produced a series of recommendations aimed at maximising the impact of the organisation for the benefit of the sector.

  It also includes a number of wider reaching recommendations for consideration by the Scottish Government about how the culture sector is best supported more broadly. Pre-election, the Scottish Government responded to the recommendations, accepting them in principle.

  The Scottish Government is now working with Creative Scotland to develop a programme of work that takes the recommendations as its basis.

- **National Collections bodies** (National Galleries Scotland (NGS); National Museums Scotland (NMS); National Library Scotland (NLS)) have established a Collections

Storage sub-group, commissioning an options appraisal of potential joint storage solutions.

- Our Manifesto and Programme for Government committed to **setting up Screen Scotland as a distinct body**, outwith Creative Scotland. This is exemplary of the Scottish Government's approach to Public Service Reform being about renewal, not reduction; the new body will be optimised to support the screen industry and accelerate growth, bringing increased inward investment alongside greater sustainability for our domestic production sector.

  This will bring rewarding, creative jobs, as well as economic and cultural benefits. Our screen sector - including Screen Scotland- already supported productions like The Incomer and An t-Eilean - not only give a global platform to Scottish creativity, but also bring economic benefits to the length and breadth of the country, with £340 million total GVA outwith Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Central Scotland in 2023.

  The form, and specific functions, of the new body are currently being developed, with engagement from stakeholders.

## ONGOING WORK

In addition to taking forward the analysis of the recommendations and evidence from these, and other sources of learning, the Scottish Government will build on the strong foundations it has already delivered to ensure sustainability.

### Outreach work by the National Performing Companies

In 2022/23, the existing National Performing Companies worked with over 1,600 creative practitioners in 373 venues across Scotland, delivering 2,047 live dance, theatre, opera, orchestral and chamber music performances to over half a million people across all 32 of Scotland's local authorities

In 2025 **RSNO**'s National Schools' Tour took Yoyo & The Little Auk to primary school pupils in Bo'ness, Inverclyde, Inverness, Oban, Stranraer, Forres and Stirling, engaging 1,753 children in both English and Gaelic.

### Culture in our Communities

We are committed to supporting community engaged creative activity driven by the communities they are based in to shape the future cultural life of Scotland. By providing £4 million to Creative Scotland for the Culture Collective and £400,000 to our flagship community culture project Creative Communities, we are offering a package of support to expand the reach and impact of cultural activity in communities.

*Culture Collective*

As announced on 12*th* March 2026, twenty three projects across 13 local authority areas were awarded funding for Culture Collective projects. The fund supports projects that use arts and culture to improve wellbeing, strengthen local identity, create paid opportunities for artists and empower communities to lead their own cultural futures.

Successful projects will bring a range of participative arts opportunities to communities across Scotland, including refugees and asylum seekers, women, young people, carers and disabled people. Activities, including film-making, performance and creative writing, will take

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place in communities across nine local authority areas, including in Glasgow; Fife; Dundee; Aberdeen; Sanday, Orkney; South Lanarkshire; Craigmillar, Edinburgh; Gorebridge, Midlothian and Galashiels, Scottish Borders.

*Creative Communities*
In terms of **participants** in 2025-26, across the 11 Creative Communities Scotland projects funded by the Scottish Government there are expected to be 560 regular participants and approximately 1305 participants at one off events and 196 volunteers.

From Caithness and Sutherland to Hawick and beyond, recipients will develop new opportunities for people to take part in creative activity where they live, while supporting artists to work directly with communities to respond to local priorities, challenges and ambitions.

**Further cultural work**
The Scottish Government commissioned Matt Baker, artist and co-founder of the Stove Network in Dumfries, to lead a team of creative practitioners experienced in this field, to explore options for a national approach for delivering culture in community settings and produce proposals for the Scottish Government.

The report is called **'Local Culture Scotland - Culture is infrastructure for place-based working'** and was published on 3 September. It is available at the following link*:* https://creative-edinburgh.com/local-culture-scotland.

We welcome the report and the hard work put in by Matt Baker his team and all the people who took time to engage on the project. We will now be considering next steps and will respond to the report in due course.

**Cross Portfolio Work**
Work under the Youth Music Initiative is distributed to all local authorities in Scotland, and its purpose is to ensure that the YMI Scottish Government commitment is met: that every pupil in Scotland be offered a year (equating to at least 12 hours) of free music tuition by the time they leave primary school.

Many Local Authorities also provide some targeted work as well, for example further provision to young people with additional support needs and/or those who may benefit from delivery focused on improving overall health and wellbeing.

This includes delivery in residential homes, nurture groups in schools, alternative curriculum settings and ASN/SEBN and/or early years settings. Some of these projects include work in Dundee City, Renfrewshire and Aberdeen, Angus.

Club Ciuil also offers weekly after-school groups, residential weekends and a Gaelic songwriting programme to Gaelic-speaking children in Dingwall.

**Tobar an Dualchais**
The Scottish Government also continue to provide support to the Tobar an Dualchais Project, dedicated to the presentation and promotion of audio recordings of Scotland's cultural heritage through the website and subsidiary projects.

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**Funding Stability for Organisations and Individuals**
The Scottish Government has increased funding and enhanced certainty and thereby continues to provide growth and stability for the culture sector. We have provided increased funding, and set this out in Multi-Year Funding which benefits both individual artists and organisations.

Due to expanded funding Multi-Year Funded organisations now have a base in 28 of Scotland's local authority areas, with 35 per cent of organisations operating beyond their home postcodes on a Scotland-wide basis, providing access to the arts in communities across the country.

We will continue to encourage and secure Fair Work in the sector within devolved powers and are developing options for piloting an Artist Minimum Income.

**Investment in Infrastructure**
The Scottish Government has invested to create new nationally significant shared infrastructure for the sector, such as The Artworks at Granton as well as helping secure existing sector infrastructure like the Kings Theatre, the Citizens Theatre and the People's Palace.

I have been closely engaged with Creative Scotland on the future of the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow and, following conclusion of long running insurance matters, am engaging closely with Glasgow School of Art on the future of the Mackintosh Building.

As a result of the work of the Public Service Reform Culture Cluster (above) a £56 million capital investment from Scottish Government has been secured for The Artworks as an exemplar project of what can be achieved in the collaborative and innovation space. Successful delivery of The Artworks project will enable future options around the flexible use of the rest of the collection's estate.

**Museum Future Programme**
The Museum Futures Programme is delivering targeted, strategic support at a critical time for Scotland's museum sector. The programme demonstrates the Scottish Government's commitment to safeguarding cultural infrastructure across urban and rural communities with awards reaching museums in every region of Scotland and to date covering 23 local authority areas.

A wide range of projects has been supported, illustrating the breadth of the programme:

- A **shared staffing model pilot for rural museums in the Highlands**, helping organisations collaborate, strengthen resilience and develop new income streams to improve future sustainability;
- Scoping feasibility of a **shared collections store in the Tayside region**, improving access to collections and long-term sustainability;
- Creation of a **heritage skills hub in Whithorn**, supporting training, community engagement and traditional skills development; and
- Investment in **low-carbon infrastructure**, such as a new form of renewable energy at the Museum of Lead Mining in Dumfries & Galloway.

**Supporting sector innovation and behaviour change**
Founded on Public Service Reform principles, 2026-27 signals Year 2 of the pioneering Museum Futures programme which is being delivered in a partnership between National

Lottery Heritage Fund and the Scottish Government with Museums Galleries Scotland. This active learning programme of funding and wraparound support for non-national museums across Scotland is fostering a mindset of sustainable practice and collaboration, with lessons learned to be shared with the wider sector.

**Young People**
As well as the existing cross-portfolio work for young people delivering both educational and cultural outcomes – such as Instrumental Music Tuition and Sistema Scotland/Youth Music Initiatives – we committed to a Youth Culture Pass.

With the benefits for young people we already see being delivered in France, Spain and Italy it is clear that Youth Culture Passes can be mechanisms to deliver a range of outcomes. These include:

- increased cultural participation among young adults;
- support to cultural venues and organisations;
- support for the wider cultural economy; and
- encouraging first-time attendance.

Helping to build lifelong cultural habits through reducing cost barriers to participation and addressing socioeconomic inequalities during these crucial early years as an adult will provide an invaluable boost.

The value has also been demonstrated in other administrations with the potential for a Youth Culture Pass now being explored in Ireland with the Irish Government's 2025 Commitment to:

> "Examine the introduction of a Culture Card for 16 and 17-year-olds to access theatre, music and art events.

**Festivals**
Recognising arts festivals as invaluable platforms for our artists and performers to develop and support their ambition and creativity we are committed to building on the successful pilot of the Expanded Festivals Fund to make this fund permanent, further supporting the ambitions of these outstanding cultural organisations across Scotland.

The Expanded Festivals Fund pilot has supported 55 arts festivals across Scotland to develop ambitious collaborations and commissions. This commitment follows the significant increases in core funding arts festivals across Scotland are receiving through Creative Scotland's Multi Year Funding programme.

A wide range of projects across 2026 and 2027 are being supported, illustrating the breadth of the programme, this includes:

- A new strand of concerts, Gaelic Drama performances, and a collaboration between 6 Irish, Cape Breton and Scottish musicians at the **Blas Festival,** an annual celebration of Gaelic language, music and culture, delivered by Fèisean nan Gàidheal and The Highland Council;
- For **Arts D&G** in Dumfries & Galloway to create *TAM O'SHANTER: A New Scottish Musical*, an ambitious commission reimagining Robert Burns' iconic poem through a contemporary feminist lens, created in collaboration with leading German theatre-maker Norbert Goetz.
- Supporting **Findhorn Bay Festival** to deliver a delegate programme, bringing together international presenters to unlock touring and commissioning opportunities. Through

community participation, artist development and cross-regional partnerships, the programme aims to raise ambition, expand sustainable career pathways and demonstrate Scotland's leadership in rural cultural regeneration.

**Island Communities**
The latest National Islands Plan recognises the contribution that Scotland's Islands have made, and continue to make, to our culture, heritage and arts.

In 2025/26, through the enhanced funding, Creative Scotland was able to support 15 island-based organisations with investments of £12.4 million over the 2025-26 to 2027-28 period. Seven of these organisations will receive multi-year funding from Creative Scotland for the first time

The Islands Plan also commits the continuation and expansion of the "Even Here, Even Now" project, developed through the Scottish Government's Culture Collective Fund, which celebrates the quality and distinctiveness of creative work produced on the islands, rooted in the preservation and development of traditional skills and intangible cultural heritage.

In addition, through the Islands Growth Deal we are supporting projects including the Arts Piers Centre in Orkney and the Calanais Vistors Centre in the Western Isles.

**A New Creative Media and Content Festival**
Following the legacy Edinburgh International TV Festival departing for Manchester after 50 years, we committed to supporting a new, future-focussed and creativity-driven event in Edinburgh from August 2027.

This will be designed by industry experts, and will reach across Edinburgh's existing, unparalleled, Festivals landscape to bring fresh and exciting opportunities for public audiences and for those working in the television and content-creation sectors.

**Creative Economy**
The Scottish Government is committed to strengthening the creative economy as a key driver of innovation. Over the next year, we will work closely with industry and public sector partners to refresh the Creative Industries Framework Agreement, to reflect the creative industries ecosystem of today, ensuring that it provides a shared strategic approach to supporting the sector's development and growth.

We will continue to support a partnership-based 'no wrong door approach' for sector support. I will also continue to convene the Creative Industries Leadership Group, bringing together leaders from across the creative industries to help shape our collective priorities for the sector.

I am pleased to have set out some of my priorities within the Culture aspects of my portfolio. I have not covered priorities across Gaelic, Scots, BSL nor in Education. I look forward to the opportunity for further discussion.

Yours sincerely,

**MÀIRI MCALLAN**

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