Dear Local Government and Communities Committee,

On behalf of the Scottish Music Industry Association (SMIA), Scotland’s trade body for people and companies working in the business of music, I would like to express my deep concern about the potential harm to the Scottish economy and reputation in respect to the proposals for a hotel property development next to King Tut’s Wah Wah Hut.

I produced a report called “Growing The Value For Music Tourism In Glasgow” (bit.ly/GlasgowMusicTourismReport) for Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow Life. Bridget McConnell (CEO of Glasgow Life) and Councillor David McDonald (Deputy Leader of Glasgow City Council and Chair of Glasgow Life) both quoted from the report at the Glasgow Culture Summit last year. Using the same methodology employed by UK Music for their Wish You Were Here Report, we calculated the value of live music in Glasgow at almost £160M per year. Venues of less than 1,500 capacity contribute almost £55M of that amount.

Glasgow is a UNESCO World City Of Music. It hosts popular, critically acclaimed music festivals such as Celtic Connections, TRNSMT, Glasgow Jazz Festival and Piping Live! And it is home to world-renowned venues. Glasgow has four entries in the Pollstar Worldwide 2017 Ticket Sales Top 200 Clubs Venues: O2 Academy, King Tut’s Wah Wah Hut, O2 Academy and The Garage (bit.ly/Pollstar2017WorldwideClubVenues). The SSE Hydro is one of the busiest venues in the world. Venues such as those and the Sub Club and Barrowland Ballroom are loved by musicians and fans the world over and often cited as reasons for visiting the city.

These venues and festivals are part of Glasgow and Scotland’s music assets. As stimulus for attracting music tourists they are both culturally and economically valuable. So it concerns me gravely to learn about the potential threat posed to King Tut’s Wah Wah Hut and the Sub Club by hotel property developments adjacent to the venues. It seems incredible that a new hotel development next to an established live music venue is not required to ensure it has adequate acoustic treatment in place to protect its residents. I urge you to take the importance and value of these venues, and others like them, into account when considering planning applications.

Glasgow enjoys a high demand for hotel bedrooms, which is why there will be 1,000 new hotel beds in the city this year. We need more hotels, no one disputes that. But new property developments must be created in a manner mindful of their cultural context. Adopting the Agent Of Change principal will help protect the viability of Glasgow’s iconic music venues. In terms of the city’s economic prosperity and international reputation, there is little point enabling new property developments if they compromise the viability of established businesses in the city which may then deter visitors.
On Wednesday 31 January I hosted a very popular networking event at citizenM in Glasgow about our music tourism development work. We have support for our recommendations from tourism and music businesses (especially hotels and venues), politicians and civil servants.

As chair of the SMIA, I sit on Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop’s Creative Industries Advisory Group. I have also been invited to join the Cross Party Group for Music that Tom Arthur MSP is forming. I will discuss this matter in these fora but I would also welcome the opportunity to work with you, and others, in Scotland in a collaborative effort to resolve potential conflicts positively and progressively.

Please do let me know if there is anything I can do to help.

Yours sincerely,

Dougal Perman
Chair
Scottish Music Industry Association