

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

13th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday  
20 September 2023

## PE2030: Review cultural funding arrangements to enable Scotland to contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024

<b>Petitioner</b>	Denise Hooper
<b>Petition summary</b>	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the funding it provides to 'Scotland + Venice' and ensure that Scottish artists can contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024.
<b>Webpage</b>	<a href="https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2030">https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2030</a>

### Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 8 June 2023.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition can collect signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 26 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.
6. A submission has been provided by the petitioner. This is included at **Annexe D**.

### Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

**Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

# PE2030: Review cultural funding arrangements to enable Scotland to contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024

## Petitioner

Denise Hooper

## Date lodged

8 June 2023

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the funding it provides to 'Scotland + Venice' and ensure that Scottish artists can contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024.

## Previous action

I have written to my MSP, Marie McNair.

I have also canvassed previous contributors to ask if they will add their voice to a campaign.

## Background information

Scotland has participated, as its own entity, in the Venice Biennale since 2003. This prestigious, international arts festival has been successful in showcasing Scottish art and architecture on the world stage. People go to see specifically what Scotland is doing. It is an event I have attended on a number of occasions, and I feel Scotland must be represented.

The decision to withdraw from the 2024 event is not a good decision for Scotland. It is a step backward not to be on that world stage, part of the festival and contributing to it in Scotland's own right.

## Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, featuring the text 'SPICe' in white on a dark purple background.The logo for The Information Centre, featuring the text 'The Information Centre' and 'An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh' in white on a dark blue background.

# Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2030](#): Review cultural funding arrangements to enable Scotland to contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024, lodged by Denise Hooper

## Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petitioner is calling for a review of the Scottish Government decision to pause their involvement in the Venice Biennale in 2024.

The funding provided since 2003 through the '[Scotland + Venice](#),' programme has enabled artists and architects to showcase their work at the international festival. The petitioner is concerned that the withdrawal of the programme funding for 2024 will have a negative impact on the perception of Scotland's cultural sector on the international stage.

## Scotland + Venice

Scotland + Venice is a partnership between [Creative Scotland](#), [British Council Scotland](#), [National Galleries of Scotland](#), [Architecture and Design Scotland](#), [V&A Dundee](#) and the [Scottish Government](#). Founded in 2003, the project was designed to promote the best of contemporary art and architecture from Scotland on the world stage.

The Scotland + Venice project participates in the [Venice Biennale](#), an institution founded in 1895. La Biennale hosts international art and architecture exhibitions, with 86 countries participating in the programme of events. The art and architecture exhibitions take place on alternate years.

Scotland + Venice uses [open calls on the themes of La Biennale](#) to commission pieces for display at the exhibition, which is open from May – November each year. The [2023 pieces](#) are based on the theme *A Fragile Correspondence*.

The Scottish Government and Creative Scotland have provided the following information on funding for the project over the last five years. The Scottish Government provided the information on Architecture & Design Scotland funding.

The funding provided through Creative Scotland is in two forms: Grant in Aid (GIA) funding from the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland’s National Lottery funding. The National Lottery Funding is shown in a separate table.

Year	Scottish Government	Architecture & Design Scotland	Creative Scotland (GIA)	TOTAL
2023/24	£15,000	0	0	£15,000
2022/23	£50,000	£45,000	0	£95,000
2021/22	0	0	0	0
2020/21	£115,000	£5,000	£240,000	£360,000
2019/20	£90,000	£5,000	£67,342*	£162,342

\*Please note that the 2019/20 funding from Creative Scotland includes £27,342.77 towards project expenses. The rest of their funding in the table relates to awards.

	Lottery Funding		
	Total	Awards	Project Expenses
2022/23	227,575.06	149,000.00	78,575.06
2021/22	59,751.00	40,000.00	19,751.00
2020/21	1,125.00	-	1,125.00
2019/20	96,422.62	86,000.00	10,422.62
2018/19	360,754.63	335,000.00	25,754.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>745,628.31</b>	<b>610,000.00</b>	<b>135,628.31</b>

Please note that in 2022/23 £149,000 of the awards and £65k of awards in 2019/20 relate to the Venice Architecture Biennale rather than the Arts.

## Scottish Government policy

The Scottish Government have submitted written [evidence on the petition](#) to the Committee. Their statement notes that:

“The Board of Creative Scotland and the Scotland + Venice partners took the decision earlier this year to pause their involvement in the Venice Biennale in 2024. This allows for an important period of reflection and review. This has been a difficult decision to make especially given the project’s significant achievements over the last twenty years. However, in the present financial and planning environment it feels necessary to review the current model of delivery, and to consider the project’s position within the wider scope of international opportunities available to Scotland’s art/ architecture communities.”

It goes on to discuss how the review will take place, noting that the review should be underway by ‘summer 2023’ and that there will be opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the review process. The Scottish Government states that finding ways to engage in La Biennale in an ethical and sustainable way is a priority given the current climate crisis. The statement also discusses the difficult financial climate that needs to be taken into consideration.

The final comment by the Scottish Government recognises the importance of international engagement with the cultural sector and commits to “developing an International Culture Strategy” to ensure that this engagement can be supported. Any decisions on future engagement with La Biennale are likely to be in the context of this strategy. A [consultation on the International Culture Strategy](#) was published in February 2023. The introduction to the consultation notes that:

“The development of an International Culture Strategy will seek to provide greater coherence to how the Scottish Government supports international cultural activity. It will focus on the motivations of culture sector stakeholders in working internationally, while recognising that such work has wider impacts on Scotland’s international reputation and relationships.

“However, the sector is currently experiencing significant concurrent challenges and the development of a strategy must be set in that context. It must support sectoral resilience, recovery, and long term development and be one way through which current challenges can be addressed.”

The current Scottish Government [Culture Strategy for Scotland](#), includes the following aim under the pillar of ‘strengthening culture’:

“Foster international collaboration and build on Scotland’s reputation for cultural excellence”

The strategy includes a number of examples of how the Scottish Government intends to realise this aim.

**Laura Haley**

**Researcher**

[07/08/2023]

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at [spice@parliament.scot](mailto:spice@parliament.scot)

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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## Annexe C

### Scottish Government submission of 29 June 2023

#### PE2030/A: Review cultural funding arrangements to enable Scotland to contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024

The Committee has requested a response from the Scottish Government to Public Petition PE2030 which asks the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the funding it provides to 'Scotland + Venice' and ensure that Scottish artists can contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024.

The Scottish Government recognises the important international platform offered by the Venice Biennale to promote the best contemporary art and architecture from Scotland on the world stage. Through participation in La Biennale, Scotland + Venice aims to position Scotland internationally as a distinct, dynamic and diverse centre for creative excellence, fostering ambitious, innovative work in the fields of contemporary art and architecture, strengthened through international development, professional dialogue, public engagement and cultural exchange. Each year the Scotland + Venice partners commission leading artists and architects in Scotland to present new work within La Biennale's international exhibition of art/ architecture.

Scotland + Venice is a partnership between Creative Scotland, British Council, National Galleries of Scotland, Architecture & Design Scotland, V&A Dundee and the Scottish Government.

The Board of Creative Scotland and the Scotland + Venice partners took the decision earlier this year to pause their involvement in the Venice Biennale in 2024. This allows for an important period of reflection and review. This has been a difficult decision to make especially given the project's significant achievements over the last twenty years. However, in the present financial and planning environment it feels necessary to review the current model of delivery, and to consider the project's position within the wider scope of international opportunities available to Scotland's art/ architecture communities.

The decision also acknowledges the impact that the project has on the environment and the need to consider how it can be delivered more ethically and sustainably into the future.

There is a commitment to review the project for future years to ensure that it meets sectoral and partner ambitions and that it is being delivered ethically and sustainably, especially in the context of the climate crisis. It is anticipated that the review process will be underway in Summer 2023 and opportunities to participate will be widely advertised.

The review will include a process of sectoral engagement to explore new approaches to the project for the longer term while also looking to identify opportunities for artists and curators to experience the Biennale in 2024.

The petitioner asks the Scottish Government to review cultural funding. The Scottish Government understands that this is an incredibly worrying time for the culture sector and is engaging closely with Creative Scotland to provide support where possible for those organisations facing immediate challenges. However, the Scottish Government has an obligation to balance the budget each year. This is increasingly challenging in the face of rising costs and the need to support enhanced pay offers for public sector workers. To balance the budget with a focus on supporting public services, tackling child poverty and transitioning to Net Zero, limited funding must be prioritised to deliver the best value for every taxpayer in Scotland. This requires some difficult decisions and robust spending control.

Funding for Scotland + Venice comes from a variety of sources and the major funder is Creative Scotland. Creative Scotland use National Lottery funding as opposed to Scottish Government funding for this project. The Scottish Government provided £15,000 in 2023/2024 towards the Scotland + Venice project.

The Scottish Government is fully committed to supporting the Scottish culture sector's international interests and ambitions and is currently developing an International Culture Strategy to that end.

Yours sincerely,

**CHRISTINA MCKELVIE**

**MINISTER FOR CULTURE, EUROPE, AND INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

## Annexe D

### Petitioner submission of 5 September 2023

#### PE2030/B: Review cultural funding arrangements to enable Scotland to contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024

I wish to add the following for consideration along with my petition.

On the 5th September 2023, the First Minister, Humza Yousaf, announced in in the Programme for Government that the Government “values the role of culture not just for the substantial economic impact it has but also for the incredible joy that it brings to people in Scotland and around the world.”

The First Minister’s statement asserted that the Scottish Government would promote culture in Scotland, with details of future support to be included in the budget, in clear recognition of the economic and cultural benefits this would bring.

With the First Minister’s statement in mind, I would urge the Committee to focus on the benefit of that contribution and impact for Scottish culture and arts to have a presence on the international stage that is the Venice Biennale 2024.

A whole sector represented in this international exhibition that is recognised by the world as a key cultural artistic gathering.