

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

INQUIRY ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCOTLAND'S CULTURE AND TOURISM SECTORS

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH CONTEMPORARY ART NETWORK

25 June 2020

This submission follows on from our initial submission made on 20 May 2020.

The process of creating, making and connecting through art feeds long-term change¹. It is, as the Culture Strategy for Scotland indicates, a positive force. As such we welcome the recognition of culture's core role in the economic recovery by the Scottish Government's Economic Advisory Group (EAG) in their report dated June 22.

SCAN's members work at the heart of communities from Shetland to the Borders and from East Lothian to the Western Isles. They are a highly skilled workforce of artists, art workers and creative thinkers. They sustain a network of free at the point of access, responsive institutions that anchor local communities and open their doors to their neighbours and visitors alike.

The pandemic has presented huge challenges for our sector, as it has for Scotland as a whole. We are determined that we play a key role in societal renewal from our own local communities outwards, and in doing so we share the Scottish Government's ambition for a more equal, fairer and sustainable society underpinned by universal human rights.

The EAG report recognises that the response to the challenges of Covid recovery should not be prescriptive and that "action will be needed across a very wide front, involving all sectors and all parts of Scotland."

In recognition of this statement we urge the Scottish Government to take bold fiscal action through:

- An ambitious ring-fenced investment for cultural renewal where citizens can creatively address recovery locally
- A nationwide investment programme for artists, production facilities and cultural civic spaces which forms the bedrock of imagination for renewal and recovery.

¹ [SCAN Art in Action campaign, Debate in Parliament led by Claire Baker MSP, 5 Dec 2019 Link here](#)

- Additional investment for cultural input into curricular and extra-curricular learning that embeds creative skills for future generations.

We believe that our ambitions are essential for an ambitious renewal programme, and would be deliverable within the wider context of a **doubling of the current cultural budget and providing a five-year stabilisation deal for the cultural sector**, so that we are able to contribute fully to the national recovery and build a cultural workforce based on the principles of equality and fair work, enabling publicly-funded organisations to pay union rates and support the living wage.

In addition we believe that action in a number of wider policy areas will support the needs of the visual arts workforce, providing vital support for freelance creatives and helping deliver the transformative change needed to renew, reset and recover. Those areas are:

- Introduction of the Citizens Basic Income across Scotland
- Tackling digital exclusion and improving digital infrastructure
- Investment in green infrastructure

We note that at a time of great economic pressure, and thanks to public support and government interventions, our members have strived to maintain employment in the visual art sector and nurture their communities of artists and freelance workers under difficult circumstances.

They have used their community reach and resources to fill gaps in provision and their digital skills to support wellbeing and community cohesion during lockdown. They now need your help, so together we can build back better for Scotland.

Here's why visual arts are vital to a sustainable national recovery.

SCAN and its members directly and imaginatively support work that:

- **Contributes directly to local renewal strategies** through collaborating with communities and working with the third sector, health boards and local authorities. For example Dundee Contemporary Arts' ST/ART project, delivered in partnership with Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust, is a long-running programme designed to make a major contribution to the health, wellbeing and confidence of people recovering from stroke or acquired brain injury, offering in-depth workshops across a range of creative disciplines.

- **Places creative thinking and learning at the centre of a sustainable recovery** to enable our young people to move forward with strength from the challenges presented by Covid-19. For example in Edinburgh Collective's programme for young people, in partnership with Edinburgh Young Carers 12-15 year old group, creates opportunities for the young people to work together with contemporary artists and other practitioners to explore their creativity in an inclusive and supportive environment, providing vital and sustaining opportunities during lockdown.
- **Supports everyone in our community to contribute and participate** through valuing their potential over their economic worth. For example, Glasgow-based Project Ability provides a platform for disabled people to develop skills, increase their confidence, realise their potential and identify as artists at a local level and internationally.
- **Transforms our local economies** by emphasising sustainability, local production and sourcing, building on communities' skills and resilience in actions that anticipate the EAG's call for embedding of the Circular Economy and positive behavioural change. For example, Inverleith House, at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, will soon re-open as Climate House. It will bring together artistic and scientific strategies to address the challenges of climate change.
- **Supports cultural venues as an anchor for communities** and footfall for our local economies. For example the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness and the refurbished CCA in Glasgow, both provide a central focus for place-making in their very different neighbourhoods.
- **Supports outward-looking values** and places dialogue with international peers at the heart of their work, supporting Scotland to take its place in the world and attracting inward investment and tourism. For example the redeveloped Fruitmarket Gallery will provide free access to the best of national and international visual art in the very heart of Edinburgh. Festivals such as Glasgow International and Edinburgh Art Festival, bring Scotland's artists together with international peers, drawing global audiences to experience the best of this country's artistic talent.

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