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Scottish Contemporary Art Network

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Our ref: 202000085687
Your ref: Letter in response to guidance on the Cultural Organisations and Venues Recovery Fund

07 October 2020

Dear Claire,

Thank you for your letter of 8 September regarding the Cultural Organisations and Venues Recovery (COVR) Fund.

You raise a number of important points in your letter and I will do my best to respond to each in turn. But first of all I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for meeting with me last month, I found our meeting very informative and helpful. I also appreciate your continued constructive engagement with Creative Scotland and my officials. We are going through an extraordinarily difficult time and it is important that we work together to try to find solutions.

You are correct to note that the COVR Fund will work differently to the Performing Arts Venue Fund and the Grassroots Music Venue Fund. These two funds were announced at an earlier stage as these two sectors have been identified as being particularly hard hit by the continued lockdown restrictions – there is still very little prospect of them opening. These two funds are exceptions, undertaken on a sector-specific basis because of the recognition of the significant impact the lock down was having upon organisations in these sectors that are dependent upon ticket revenues – the approach going forward will not be based on sector specific funds. The scope of the different funds mean they won't function exactly in the same way but you can be assured that Creative Scotland will deliver them all along the same principles of fairness, transparency, diligence and quality assurance.

With regards to your point about the need to take account of the wider economic picture, the COVR fund is intended to support organisations to avoid insolvency and prevent job losses and this support is only available for spending in this current financial year. The focus on preventing job losses relates to employees within organisations as well as sustaining freelance opportunities. Organisation will have to evidence the role they play in enabling these opportunities.

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We have taken on board feedback on the requirement to show plans for financial sustainability beyond March 2021. Applicants are now only required to demonstrate that they were financially sustainable pre-COVID. This is part of requirements for the new state aid rules.

I appreciate the time-scales around all of this have been far from ideal. These are unprecedented issues with great urgency attached to them – at the same time some very difficult decisions have to be made. I am pleased you have continued constructive discussions with colleagues in Creative Scotland over the past week and I am assured they are listening carefully to feedback around these issues. I hope you will continue to engage with them and my officials. As you note, it is important that this process is fair and equitable and that it follows the highest standards of quality assurance. We will continue to work closely with Creative Scotland to ensure that is the case.

Kind regards
Fiona Hyslop

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