Iain Munro 21/01/22

Chief Executive

Creative Scotland

Dear Iain,

**Visual Arts Sector achievements and ongoing needs**

Following the news of the Scottish budget last month, and as we begin 2022, I wanted to write to you to thank you for all the extraordinary hard work and advocacy at Creative Scotland throughout 2021.

**Our achievements**

During a challenging year, with Creative Scotland’s support, SCAN members have risen to the challenges despite the pandemic. As you know the visual arts sector consists of many small-scale organisations making a difference in their communities across the country. Amongst our members’ incredible achievements in 2021, Timespan in Helmsdale was shortlisted for Museum of the Year, the biggest museum prize in the world, for its work during the pandemic. And Climavore, a sustainability project developed by the artists Cooking Sections with Atlas in Skye, was nominated for the Turner Prize. Hospitalfield in Arbroath opened their redeveloped garden, restored fernery and new garden café, ensuring valuable access to outdoor space at a critical time for visitors. Fruitmarket re-opened after a major capital development and only last month Collective opened Observatory House, restoring and repurposing a listed building on Calton Hill. The visual arts sector in Scotland brings expertise that is recognised and invested in by stakeholders and constituents within and beyond culture and achieves a huge amount with leverage of its resources.

SCAN members have met regularly with policymakers to articulate the value of the arts. Over the summer we tailored or supported individual visits for MSPs to see the work of members directly, for example Shona Robison visited DCA to understand their work in wellbeing, Pam Duncan-Glancy heard about CCA’s work with the local refugee community. Jackie Baillie visited Cove Park to hear about their Climate Beacon project. Fruitmarket invited both Angus Robertson and Jenny Gilruth to see their expansion and hear about their international partnerships and ambitions, as well as their educational work.

SCAN members have been at the forefront of thinking around equalities in the sector, including Collective’s support of the Not Going Back to Normal manifesto for disabled artists and Jupiter Artland’s commitment to artists of colour evidenced by their artistic programme and the Jupiter Rising residency for early career BIPOC artists. SCAN’s own programme, SCAN Sparks, has shared the voices and experiences of creatives of colour.

In the media SCAN secured more than 80 items of coverage to articulate the work that culture has been doing during the pandemic. More than 50 pieces of coverage, including a Times front page, radio coverage and a slot on BBC Reporting Scotland, focused around our hugely successful re-opening campaign ArtUnlocks in April of this year.

SCAN also worked hard with UK partners across the visual arts, including the successful campaign to retain MGETR, making a huge difference to the medium-term sustainability of the visual arts and museums sector. We also worked with ArtUK on diversifying their Scottish content and with the Government Art Collection to diversity their collection ensuring that more artists from Scotland from diverse backgrounds are now represented in a permanent collection that is seen in government buildings and embassies worldwide.

Our members continue to work on Climate Change including the pioneering Climate House at RBGE. SCAN itself spent a wonderful muddy day during COP working with children from Carlibar Primary School in Barrhead, in an area of multiple deprivation, planting 300 native trees to mark our commitment to climate action.

**Looking Forward**

To continue to build on the sector’s achievements we need to work towards creating an environment that is as clear and certain as we can possibly make it despite the current challenges. As I have been approached by members with a number of worries in the last few weeks, I thought it might be useful to summarise members needs and concerns as we look ahead in 2022.

**Funding Framework**

Our most significant concern is how a new funding framework can be successfully delivered without significant new investment, there is little room for manoeuvre on current levels and real risk that valuable organisations may be locked out or existing inequalities be further baked in. Many project funded organisations feel they have been waiting in the wings for increased investment or stable funding horizons for too long now.

We believe that the time is now to make the positive case for a step change investment in the new funding framework of the order suggested by the CTEEA committee in December 2019, that is as part of an overall investment in culture of 1% of government spend. As independent bodies like the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery suggests a central role for culture in the wellbeing economy our members are well placed to deliver if appropriately supported.

We understand work on this is ongoing but as we have arrived at the final quarter of the financial year, many members are contacting me with worries about business planning. Issues focus on the difficulties in knowing how and when to allocate existing capacity and resources to allow for the organisational strain of making applications next year when the timetable is as yet unpublished. Smaller and project-funded organisations in particular are concerned that, without clearer horizons and the ability to set aside capacity for this, that they are facing an uneven playing field.

**Standstill Funding**

We are reassured that Scottish Government continues to place culture at the heart of its work. But standstill funding for our sector remains the most critical issue for our members. The long period of standstill funding is, in effect, a decade-long decline in support, and has considerably eroded resilience of the visual arts sector in the long term. The sector is stretched and cannot keep deliver more, better, or even at the same level on current budgets. Combined with historic disparities and anomalies of funding, the position is unsustainable. Issues like the cost-of-living crisis, the rise in inflation and especially increased energy bills will risk further depletion..

**Fair Work**

The sector is supportive of Fair Work and many organisational members are Living Wages employers. As you know artists and creative freelancers across the culture sector urgently need measures to address precarity and fair pay. SCAN has many artist members and a co-operative and close relationship with our affiliate members Scottish Artists Union. Members are concerned to ensure that the learning from the Fair Work research has appropriate synergy with the new funding framework and the expectations are clear and informed by the research outcomes. In particular they would welcome sector support mechanisms to help organisations prepare for the implementation of the Framework as soon as possible, to ensure there is level understanding of best practice and a chance to develop any necessary policy and practice before applications. As you know small organisations are extremely limited in access to HR support. We believe much needs to be done to support them to implement the framework in its fullest sense and to think through in what ways Creative Scotland support might also provide a gateway to best practice through providing access to, for example, HR expertise.

**Visual Arts Portfolio**

On a number of occasions, we have raised the implications of the way that Scottish Government emergency funding provided sector-specific support for some art forms but not all and that the unintended consequence of this may be to create imbalance of investment opportunities and development across the sectoral portfolio. We understand there is little leeway in your budget allocation, but bearing in mind lack of access to, for example, the touring fund, we feel that the time is ripe for a sector specific investment and development. Mitigation measures remain necessary for visual arts who may have lost significant earned income but not meet the very particular criteria of the new cancellation fund. Our members have worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic to ensure that they serve communities and as you are aware have been open, and free at the point of access, wherever possible during this time. We feel that the ongoing crisis should not be allowed to hinder the necessary development work in our sector.

**And thanks…**

Any reassurances that Creative Scotland can provide, and information sharing in general, will be hugely helpful to members. Those who have benefited from transition funding or emergency support and all of us who have received advice, support and advocacy from Creative Scotland colleagues are aware of what a difference it has made these last two years. We know the demands this has placed on your staff and are hugely grateful for the work they have undertaken on behalf of the sector.

I look forward to continuing to work with Creative Scotland colleagues as we approach the next set of challenges and to continuing sharing the excellent work of Scotland’s cultural sector with policy makers and the public.

Very best

Text, whiteboard

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Moira Jeffrey

Director

Scottish Contemporary Art Network