

Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development

September 1, 2022

Neil Gray MSP
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Minister,

Impact of Cost Crisis on the Contemporary Art Sector

I am writing to you to share with you the impact of the Cost Crisis on members of the Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN), and to ask you to make an immediate and strategic response in supporting the cultural sector with these challenges through emergency funding support.

Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) connects and champions Scotland's contemporary art community. Our 300-plus named organisational and individual members work at the heart of communities from Shetland to the Scottish Borders and from East Lothian to the Western Isles. They include Scotland's leading galleries, artists' studios, workshops and production facilities that support artists to pursue their livelihoods. These are responsive and flexible institutions that anchor local communities and open their doors and activities to their neighbours and visitors alike.

I know that the Scottish Government is well aware of the cost of living and energy crises across Scotland and we have been speaking to your officials about the impact on our sector. Our organisational members are reporting significant challenges in relation to operational and utility costs that threaten their ability to deliver and in some cases their survival as cultural organisations. Individual artists already on low incomes are facing the cost of living crisis alongside dramatically increased costs for carrying out work as freelancers and sole traders.

The emergency support provided during the pandemic was instrumental in maintaining the cultural sector at a time of overwhelming challenge. Our members stepped up to support communities across Scotland during this time, working online and supporting families and isolated individuals through safe outreach activities, while opening their doors to provide safe and welcoming environments for local communities and visitors when guidance allowed.

As you are aware, Scotland's gallery and museum sector operates on a free-at-the-point-of-access model, driving local engagement and generating vital tourism revenue. In these challenging times, our members who work across the country with schools, young people and families now face an existential crisis to keep their doors open and their facilities in operation at a time when access to warm, safe and positive environments will be most needed. Our members' critical support for artists through workshop and studio provision is also required, as individuals on low incomes face high business costs and cost of living challenges.

To share some examples:

A long-established workshop and studio facility, whose current engagement projects include work with young people at risk of homelessness, now faces a rise in energy costs from circa £31000 to circa £74000. They must consider a range of significant options to reduce costs whilst still meeting legislative and safety requirements, for example to maintain safe hot water systems to prevent legionella.

An art gallery with a specialism in working with children and young people has advised us they face 4800% increase in their standing charge for electricity. Already their figures for April 2022, when usage is lower than in the winter showed their costs increased by 167% for gas and 209% for electricity.

In Orkney, The Pier Arts Centre in Stromness reports their bill will increase from £3,135.15 to £10,969.81, a 250% increase. Their estimated cost of electricity for the 24-month contract is £189,497.53. The gallery will need to look at measures such as reducing opening hours.

As you are aware, this national crisis is taking place in the context of stand-still funding for the culture sector over the last decade: a real-terms decline. Local Authorities have slashed culture budgets across Scotland. A 2020 report from Audit Scotland shows real-terms spend on culture and related services has reduced 13.8% since 2013-14, while demand for services has increased.

The lesson from the pandemic is that additional emergency support for culture works, and it works best when it is planned, strategic and implemented across the sector according to need rather than on an ad-hoc or incremental basis. I urge you to work with colleagues across the cultural sector and with Creative Scotland to develop a programme for emergency support.

Alongside the work that I know the Scottish Government is undertaking to call for the deeper structural changes that are required, I urge you to work with the incoming Prime Minister, UK Government colleagues, and officials at the Treasury and DCMS towards an emergency package.

We continue to gather information from our members and will share this with your officials.

Yours sincerely,



Moira Jeffrey
Director, Scottish Contemporary Art Network