

Christina McKelvie MSP
Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

April 3 2023

Dear Minister,

I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister for Culture, Europe, and International Development and to introduce Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN).

SCAN is the member-led network which connects and champions Scotland's contemporary art community. Our 300 organisational and individual members work at the heart of communities from Shetland to the Scottish Borders and from East Lothian to the Hebrides. They are a network of free at the point of access galleries, community organisations, and venues together with individual artists and educators and the artist-led initiatives, agencies, workspaces, and production facilities that support artists to pursue their livelihoods.

We look forward to working with you in your new role, and particularly welcome First Minister Humza Yousaf's recent undertaking to "bring culture and the arts into the heart of policymaking." As you know Scotland's Cultural Strategy envisages cross-portfolio working, and we look forward to engaging with you on how this might be achieved in the context of the forthcoming refresh of the Cultural Strategy Action Plan. SCAN engages regularly with Scottish Government on policy development and advocacy for the contemporary art sector. We are grateful for the critical support provided for the sector during the pandemic and for the Cabinet Secretary's recent engagement with DCMS and Treasury on the issue of cultural tax relief which supports so many galleries and museums across Scotland. We are part of regular meetings between Scottish Government officials, Creative Scotland, and fellow sector support organisations. We work with other sectoral partners, public and philanthropic funders such as Museums Galleries Scotland and Art Fund and are currently engaging with the Government Art Collection to support the acquisition of artworks by Scotland's artists into the UK government collection. We meet with members of the Scottish Parliament to share the work of our members, through parliamentary events, arrange opportunities for elected members to meet artists and arts organisations in their constituency, and share regular communications and consultation responses. In January we gave evidence to the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture Committee's session on the draft Scottish Budget.

You will be well aware of the many benefits that culture brings to Scotland, in terms of the visitor economy, international dialogue, community wealth building, wellbeing and placemaking. The most recent comprehensive data shows that in 2021-22 those visual arts and multi-art form organisations regularly funded by Creative Scotland welcomed 2.7 million people to their exhibition programmes alone. They worked with 35 thousand participants on events and activities and employed more than 1700 people across Scotland. The RFO network supports 5000 FTE jobs across the culture sector as a whole.

Our organisational membership, and employment in the sector, is of course wider than the Creative Scotland funded organisations. We work with many local authority gallery members, from Inverness and Aberdeen to the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, which welcomed more than 300 thousand visitors in 2022, and with the contemporary art teams in our national collections. We also work with Scotland's leading commercial galleries who support Scotland's artists to exhibit worldwide and who work at international art fairs from New York to Hong Kong to ensure that Scotland's artists are acquired by important collections across the world.

Scotland's world-famous artists provide new thinking, creative expertise and inspirational ways of engaging with communities. Our organisational members transform their core funding into significant cultural programmes, community assets and capacity, international partnerships and support for artists. Their programmes drive additional investment from public, philanthropic and other funders and support economic activity into Scotland's rural areas as well as its towns and cities.

Our members' projects address social needs from the employability of vulnerable young people to the social isolation of our older communities. Just last month University College London published a [summary](#) of more than 70 research papers published on the topic since 2017, which establish that arts activity is linked to longevity and health outcomes across different life stages, including more positive health and social behaviours in children and young people, better mental health in adulthood, lower risks of depression and dementia in later life, lower levels of chronic pain and frailty, and even a longer life. We know that these benefits are crucial for Scotland's future.

Despite the many achievements of our sector, your appointment takes place at a time of real challenge for our members. While the envisaged 10% cut for Creative Scotland was reversed by the former Deputy First Minister after a public campaign, to date there has been no Costs Crisis support for the cultural sector, nor actions to mitigate the effects of around 14% long term, real terms reduction in funding. Individual artists are facing high energy costs and rent increases and the challenges created by Brexit. Many of our members must maintain permanent public buildings, meet exponentially increased energy costs, and will meet the increase in the Real Living Wage together with pay settlements for their workers benchmarked against the Scottish public sector pay deal.

We know that culture can help unlock the potential for a better future for Scotland. This will require a well-supported sector, healthy infrastructure, and positive avenues for joint working between the culture sector and the Scottish government for the benefit of the nation.

I would be delighted to meet with you to discuss how the culture sector can best work together with you and your officials, and to host a visit to some of our members to enable them to share directly with you the impact of contemporary art in their own venues and local communities.

If I can be of any support in sharing more detailed information with you and your team please do not hesitate to contact me directly on moira@sca-net.org

Yours sincerely



Moira Jeffrey

Director SCAN