



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

CREATIVE SCOTLAND UPDATE – submission to the Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland’s Culture and Tourism Sectors

Creative Scotland has been providing monthly updates to the Committee on our ongoing response to, and the impact of, the COVID-19 pandemic. Our previous update for January 2021 included a detailed review of our COVID-19 response activity since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, as a contribution to the Committee’s ongoing inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland’s Culture and Tourism sectors. This update provides further information on activities since January, and builds on the previous updates, providing an overview of our response to the crisis to date.

All previous monthly updates to the Committee can be found [on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

1.1 Creative Scotland’s ongoing COVID-19 response

Our [previous update](#) for January contained a timeline overview of the key actions and activities for Creative Scotland’s COVID-19 response (including Screen Scotland) since March 2020. Our February update is below. It should be noted that alongside this COVID-19 response, our ongoing support continues through other non-COVID specific funding programmes (for example Regular Funding, Open Funding, and a range of smaller more targeted [funding programmes](#)) and through our ongoing advocacy for, and promotion of, the work of the sector.

The following focuses on key COVID-19 response actions only, in line with the scope of the Committee’s inquiry:

2021

- *11 February*: £9m new funding announced by the Scottish Government for a further [Hardship Fund for Creative and Screen Freelancers](#), bringing the total value of direct hardship support for individual creative freelancers to £17 million (excluding Bridging Bursaries totalling £4.3m).
- *16 February*: we announced that 26 organisations received grants of between £100K and £300K through the £6m [Culture Collective programme](#) for creative practitioners, organisations and communities to work collaboratively to develop ways of responding to the impact of the ongoing pandemic in local areas.
- *18 February*: £2.1m of [Youth Arts Funds](#) awarded to 92 projects across the country to help ensure children and young people continue to have access to creative opportunities. (Part of the £4m Scottish Government Youth Arts funding package delivered by Creative Scotland).

- *24 February*: 82 venues receive £4m through the second round of [Grassroots Music Venues Stabilisation Fund](#). 85 venues across Scotland have now received a total of £6.2million through the Fund. £2.2m was awarded in the first round in September 2020.
- *2 March*: £9m [Hardship Fund for Creative and Screen Freelancers](#) re-opened for new and repeat applicants to help address the financial hardship being experienced by freelancers as a result of COVID-19. People can apply for individual awards up to £2,000, plus access costs. We experienced requests totalling £7.3m within the first 24 hours and, when demand reached £8m within 48 hours, we paused the Fund to enable those who may need longer to apply, to make their applications with the time and support required, and to ensure funding remains available for them. The fund will re-open on 15 March and we anticipate it will quickly reach capacity.

The majority of applications are from those who received support from the previous Hardship Funds and whose details are registered on our systems. All applications, new or repeat, are being quickly processed to enable swift payment.

- Upcoming: we announced in December the [Touring Fund for Theatre and Dance](#) to support COVID-safe touring work in 2021 once Scottish Government COVID-19 restrictions allow, supported by £600,000 National Lottery funding. The deadline for applications was 05 February 2021. 43 applications were received, with a total ask of £2.5m. Recipients will be announced by the end of March.

We continue to issue regular progress updates on these COVID-19 emergency funds and promote them widely through our digital, social and media channels. These are available to read on the [News](#) section of our website.

1.2 COVID-19 Research and Insight

We have conducted a [COVID-19 Sector Survey](#) to understand the impact of the pandemic on Scotland's culture sector and the ongoing issues it has created. The survey closed to respondents on 08 January and the findings were published [on our website](#) last month. We received 606 survey responses from 181 organisations and 435 individuals. From those responses:

- People reported substantial financial losses as a result of COVID-19. Half of organisations and 56% of individuals stated that their losses made-up more than 50% of their projected income for 2020. More than two-thirds of organisations had used business cash reserves as a result of COVID-19, and a third had used more than 75% of their cash reserves.
- Organisations reported facing a range of challenges. Less than a quarter have been able to continue operating since COVID-19 restrictions have been in place. They report high numbers of staff being kept on furlough.
- High numbers of organisations report losing out on UK and international partnerships and collaborations and over half were unable to offer commissions or support services to artists and creative practitioners.
- Although some individuals report being able to continue their work as artists, creative practitioners, or freelancers, over two-thirds had been unable to

deliver planned performances, exhibitions, or screenings. More positively, over two-thirds of both organisations and individuals have been able to continue working on development and planning with COVID-19 restrictions in place.

- Importantly, nearly two-thirds (64%) of individuals reported that they are experiencing additional health and wellbeing challenges arising from COVID-19 and working from home. Nearly half of organisations reported that their employees are experiencing additional health and wellbeing challenges.
- Turning to prospects for 2021, both organisations and individuals remain concerned about prospective projects being developed without delays, presenting work within COVID-19 guidelines and being able to maintain effective partnerships and collaborations. When asked about business sustainability, nearly all organisations are concerned about returning to previous levels of revenue generation, prospects of remaining solvent and about public willingness to return as audience members. Most are concerned about being able to maintain commitments to freelance and contracted staff, the possibility of losing staff, and being able to manage staff effectively under new working conditions.
- When asked what change would make the biggest difference to their ability to operate effectively in the coming year, organisations cited: clarity of guidance; successful vaccine rollout; lifting of COVID-19 restrictions; funding support; the return of audiences; and the re-opening of venues and events. Responses from individuals broadly followed the same themes and also noted proposed support for a Universal Basic Income.

1.3 Engagement with the Sector and future planning

We continue to meet regularly with the Sector Development Bodies¹ and the Scottish Government to map the ongoing impacts being felt due to the pandemic, to discuss the needs of the sector to help manage the challenges, and to look to a process of recovery and renewal for Scotland's art and creative sector.

We are also working collaboratively with the sector bodies to develop a collective approach to cultural advocacy, to use our collective communications to raise awareness, appreciation and understanding of the value of participation in creativity and culture, also underlining the social, economic and value that creativity and culture deliver to us as individuals and as a society. A Programme Board, including representatives from the culture sector, continues to meet to discuss this work, and we intend to roll out our new approach in the coming months.

1.4 Scottish Government Draft Budget 2021/22

The Scottish Government announced its draft budget for 2021/22 on 28 January. At the same time Creative Scotland was informed of our Grant-in-aid budget for the coming year which will remain broadly stable at £60m.

¹ Arts and Business Scotland, Craft Scotland, Cultural Alliance, Culture Counts, Federation of Scottish Theatre, Festivals Edinburgh, Literature Alliance, Publishing Scotland, SCAN, Scottish Music Industry Association and TRACS

We issued a [statement in response](#) welcoming the budget outcome, particularly in the context of the ongoing pandemic and the severe economic pressures that it is bringing to bear.

We also recognise the significant levels of additional funding that the Scottish Government has made available to date, in the form of emergency funds to directly address the impacts of COVID-19. This has been vital to provide some stability for the sector.

The Creative Scotland Board met on 24 February and discussed the draft budget. Support for a fourth year of Regular Funding was confirmed, and individual grant allocations communicated to the 121 organisations in the network. Work is now underway to agree contracts based on activity plans for the year ahead.

2. Screen Scotland response to COVID-19 and Update

2.1 Hardship, Development and Resilience Support

From March 2020, Screen Scotland worked to deliver – alongside Creative Scotland – the Screen Bridging Bursary Fund as well as two new development funding routes under the Broadcast Content Fund and Film Development and Production Fund.

As COVID-19 and resultant restrictions on movement/work continued into the summer of 2020, £1.5m funding was provided by the Scottish Government to further support freelance screen practitioners working in all parts of Scotland’s screen sector who were experiencing ongoing financial hardship due to the loss of income as a result of the pandemic. Applicants to the [Screen Hardship Fund](#) were able to apply for a hardship bursary of up to £2,000 plus additional support for those needing it to cover access costs. There have been three rounds of further hardship support to date, while the fourth (mentioned earlier, encapsulating the arts, screen and creative industries) is currently paused after £8m of its £9m total was applied for within two days.

2.2 Support for Festivals

Screen Scotland honoured its 2020/21 Regular Funding commitments, including where planned activity could no longer take place, due to COVID-19. This included film festival, distribution and exhibition activity. The festival sector was swift to embrace new ways of working. For example, [Glasgow Film Festival](#) is currently taking place as an exclusively online event.

2.3 COVID-19 Safe Working Guidelines

A number of high-profile productions are underway in accordance with safe working guidance. BBC Scotland’s [Guilt](#) starring Mark Bonnar and Jamie Sives recently finished shooting its second series on location in Glasgow and Edinburgh, while UKTV’s Naval Crime drama series [Annika](#) starring Nicola Walker continues filming in Scotland, primarily in locations surrounding Loch Lomond.

2.4 Film Education during COVID-19

This month will see our new Masters level module in Film Education for teachers and film educators commence online at Queen Margaret University. As the use of digital

tools becomes more prevalent, there are major opportunities to expand the reach of film education, and Screen Scotland will continue to pursue these opportunities.

2.5 Other Screen Scotland developments through 2020/21

While delivering the COVID-19 related support detailed above, Screen Scotland has also continued to deliver on its remit to be the dedicated body for Screen in Scotland, working with Creative Scotland's partner agencies – Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council - to deliver enhanced support to companies and practitioners across all elements of film and TV, and to foster sustainable growth within the sector.

Key recent milestones include:

2.5.1 Studios

Working with colleagues in Glasgow City Council (GCC) and the Scottish Government, Screen Scotland supported GCC's bid to redevelop areas within the [Kelvin Hall as a television studio](#) and drama production space. The new facility secured £11.9m of funding in January 2021 (£7.9m from the Scottish Government and £4m from GCC) and the first drama production will shortly commence filming in the Kelvin Hall, with the full redevelopment taking place over the remainder of this year.

2.5.2 Skills & Talent Development

Following extensive consultation with the sector, broadcasters, training providers and public partners, Screen Scotland will publish its Skills Strategy in April of 2021. This strategy will be open-ended and provide for the delivery of flexible tactical interventions devised and delivered with industry through the establishment of a series of outcome-focused working groups.

New entrant scheme [ScreenNETS](#) based at Screen Academy Scotland and supported by Screen Scotland is currently recruiting for the next intake of trainees. TV researcher scheme [Rad](#), which provides an 8-month paid placement with a Scottish production company, also recently closed for applications.

Upcoming productions [Shetland](#) series 6 and 7 and Amazon's oil rig drama [The Rig](#) - which will soon begin filming at Leith's Bath Road Studio - are both recruiting for trainees. STV Productions are also recruiting for trainees for their upcoming drama [Screw](#).

In conclusion

Creative Scotland and Screen Scotland recognise the resilience, adaptability, and invention that Scotland's art and creative sector continues to show in the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. This has been helped enormously by the emergency funding support provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery, in addition to stable ongoing core funding.

This has been a lifeline for many and serves to underline the vital contribution that art and creativity in all its forms makes to life in Scotland and the crucial role it needs to play in our national recovery and renewal.

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