

OPEN LETTER

Closure of the
Open Fund For
Individuals

21 August 2024

Open Letter to First Minister John Swinney, Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes & Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs & Culture, Angus Robertson

We, the undersigned representatives of Scottish arts organisations and festivals, are writing to express our grave and deep concern over the Scottish Government's failure to provide certainty surrounding the £6.6 million Grant in Aid budget for Creative Scotland.

In direct consequence, Creative Scotland has announced the abrupt closure of the Open Fund for Individuals, the primary route to public funding for Scottish Artists to develop their projects.

The closure of this vital fund is nothing short of a crisis for the Scottish arts community and directly contravenes the government's own Action Plan 2023ⁱ, which states: *"it is vital that all eligible organisations and practitioners have the opportunity to apply for support"*

The Open Fund for Individuals is not just a financial resource—it is the cornerstone of independent artistic creation in Scotland, supporting the livelihoods of countless artists. Without it, many artists are left without the means to continue their work.

This risks sending a stark message out to the world: Scottish arts is closed for business.

In the same month as the global spotlight is on Scotland's vibrant cultural scene through the Edinburgh Festivals, this cessation of support for local artists is particularly devastating.

The consequences of this situation are grave:

1. Sector Health and Wellbeing: Independent artists are the heartbeat of Scotland's cultural ecosystem, and many rely on public funding not only to create and innovate but also to sustain their everyday lives. The sudden closure of the Open Fund leaves them without crucial financial support, putting their wellbeing and livelihoods at serious risk; and directly contravenes both Creative Scotland's and the Scottish Government's commitments to Fair Work.

2. Drain of Talent away from Scotland. The emotional and financial strain and the removal of funding places on artists will result in artists choosing to live & work elsewhere to

sustain their practices. This is highly detrimental to Scotland particularly when the creative industries are seen as a key growth sector, and forecast to grow by 4% by 2026.ⁱⁱ

3. Cultural and Economic Damage: The arts are a significant contributor to Scotland's economy and cultural identity. Without funding, the production of new work will slow to a trickle, leading to fewer performances, exhibitions, and community programs. This diminishes Scotland's cultural vibrancy and impacts local economies that benefit from a thriving arts sector.

4. Scotland is absent from International Stages: Without the creation of new work, Scottish Artists will no longer be invited onto International Stages - thereby putting at risk the financial sustainability of these individuals, the reputation of Scotland's Culture around the globe, but also The Actions outlined within the Scottish Government's Cultural Action Plan (2023, page 4), which states "and, *"we aim to open new markets and develop new audiences, supporting the Culture Sector's financial resilience"*.ⁱⁱⁱ

5. Scottish Festivals & Venues are at Risk: We note Angus Robertson's commitment to Scotland's Festival ecosystem made on the 8th August^{iv}, as well as the Cultural Action Plan's commitment to our wider built infrastructure. It is therefore vital to highlight that the closure of the Open Fund directly impacts them due to the lack of Scottish Work being Created and the high risk of Scottish Work being absent from their stages.

6. Community Engagement & Wealth Building at Risk: Within your Action Plan (page 5^v) you highlight *"the intrinsic value of culture and its ability to deliver beneficial outcomes across Scotland's communities"*. The Open Fund for individuals supports the creation of work by and for these very communities - it also provides for the development of work that speaks of the experiences of Scotland's rich and varied communities. The closure of this fund threatens to strip Scottish residents of valuable cultural experiences, widening social divides and reducing the reach and impact of the arts as well as weakening Scottish Government's commitment to Community Wealth Building

The resilience of Scotland's cultural sector is not infinite. Artists cannot continue to bear the burden of delayed and inadequate support. We strongly urge the Scottish Government to recognise the severity of this situation and take immediate action to release the necessary funds to Creative Scotland, allowing the Open Fund for Individuals to be reinstated.

This is a necessary first step towards securing the future of the arts in Scotland, but alone it is not enough to reverse decades of shrinking support. It is now more vital than ever that the Scottish Government follows through on its promises to "more than double" investment in arts and culture and we seek urgent clarification on the timeline and mechanisms for delivering the pledged £100m increase in funding by 2028-29

We look forward to your prompt response and positive action on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

LJ Findlay-Walsh (Artistic Director) Sam Eccles (Executive Director)	Take Me Somewhere Festival
Nicholas Bone (Artistic Director) Anna Hodgart (Producer)	Magnetic North
Karl Taylor (Artistic Director) Nat Walpole (Communications Manager)	BUZZCUT
Matt Addicott (Artistic Director)	Platform
Judith Doherty (Chief Executive & Co-Artistic Director) Deborah Crewe (Director of Finance and Development)	Grid Iron
Mhari Robinson (Executive Producer)	Independent Arts Projects (IAP)
Dawn Taylor (Artistic Director & CEO) Aidan Nicol (Producer)	Manipulate Arts
Catriona Duffy and Lucy McEachan (Co-directors)	Panel
Vicky Rutherford-O'Leary (Executive Producer) Christine Devaney (Artistic Director) Leigh Robieson-Cleaver (Administrative Producer)	Curious Seed
Annie Hazelwood (Programme Coordinator) Kristen Nelson (Archivist) Alex Misick (Projects Producer) Sam Harley (Schools and Youth Coordinator) Luna Issa (Common Ground Project Coordinator)	Centre for Contemporary Arts Glasgow (CCA)
Kenny McGlashan (CEO)	Youth Theatre Arts Scotland
Alice McGrath (Creative Director)	Red Bridge Arts
Jennifer Bates (Creative Director/CEO)	Solar Bear Theatre Company
Jim Hollington (Chief Executive) Tony Mills (Artistic Director)	Dance Base
Rhona Matheson (Chief Executive) Jennifer Phillips (Head of Artist Development) Judith Anderson (Head of Development & Operations)	Starcatchers
Sarah Gray (Producer)	Scottish Theatre Producers
Marion Bourbouze (Head of Marketing) Belinda McElhinney (Chief Executive) Pamela Walker (Senior Producer) Fiona Ferguson (Creative Development Director)	Imagine

Tony Reekie (Executive Director)	Catherine Wheels
Al Seed (Director)	Al Seed Productions / Waypoint-1
Jo Verrent (Director)	Unlimited, UK wide commissioning organisation for disabled artists
Martin Joseph O'Neill (Artistic Director)	The Stove Network
Jo Timmins (Artistic Director) James Preston (Executive Producer)	Lyra
Tom Forster (Programmer & Producer)	Summerhall
Jill Smith & Kathryn Boyle (Producers)	Feral
John Harris (CEO & Artistic Director)	Red Note Ensemble
Caitlin Skinner (Artistic Director & CEO)	Stellar Quines
Carolyn Lappin (Executive Director)	YDance
Kresanna Aigner (CEO / Creative Director) on behalf of the board and team of FBA	Findhorn Bay Arts
Claire Halleran	Envelope Room
Robyn Wolsey and Heather Fulton (Co-directors, Maternity cover)	ATLAS Arts
Emma Ruse (Chief Executive)	Framework Theatre Company
Cicely Farrer (Programme Manager) Lucy Byatt (Director)	Hospitalfield, Arbroath
Cora Bissett	Freelance Theatre and Film Director.
Tzipporah Johnston (Executive Director)	Door in the Wall Arts Access CIC and Neuk Collective
Robert Softley Gale (Artistic Director) Mairi Taylor (Executive Director)	Birds of Paradise Theatre Company

Irene Kernan	Craft Scotland
Claire Lamont	(freelance Actor and Theatre Maker)
Ben Harrison (Co-Artistic Director)	Grid Iron and Freelance Director, Performer and Producer.
Bryony McIntyre Barry Esson (Co-directors)	Arika
Hayley Durward (Chief Executive)	Citymoves Dance Agency
Max Slaven (Director)	David Dale Gallery & Studios
Severine Wyper (Executive Producer) Matthew Lenton (Artistic Director) Eleanor Scott (Producer)	Vanishing Point
Kate Grenyer (Director)	Fife Contemporary
Anita Clark (Director) Sara Johnstone (General Manager)	The Work Room
Charlotte Mountford (Director)	Lyth Arts Centre
Natasha Gilmore (Artistic Director) Jo Walmsley (Executive Producer) Elle Taylor (Production Manager) Nicola Denman (General Manager)	Barrowland Ballet
Ellie Davies & Alison Burnley (Co-Executive Producers)	Riff Raff Producing CIC
Lucy Gaizely Gary Gardiner Louise Irwin	21Common
Douglas Irvine (Artistic Director) Laura Penny (Producer) Sophie O chojna (Marketing and Development Manager)	Visible Fictions
Simon Hart (Director & CEO)	Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival

Lynne Hocking (Volunteer Chair of the Board)	Applied Arts Scotland Independent creative practitioner
Seona McClintock (Creative Director & CEO)	Theatre Gu Leòr
Pete Lannon (co-artistic director)	SUPERFAN
Karl Jay-Lewin (Creative Director), Liz Egan (Finance & HR Director), Ruth Kent (Participation Lead) , Alison Burnley (Producer), Jon Davies (AIM Culture Collective Co-ordinator), Mie Roche-Nishimori (Office & Internal Operations Lead), John Lyndon (Marketing & Communications Lead)	Dance North Scotland
Annabel Cooper (Co-Director)	Sanctuary Queer Arts
Jenny Brownrigg (Curator/Researcher)	GSA
Kirsten Body, Catriona Meighan, Richard Bracken, Nicola Gear, Lorna Campbell (committee)	Circus Artspace
Katrina Brown (Director) Chloe Reith (Curator)	The Common Guild
James Mackenzie (Artistic Director)	ZOO Venues
Amy Marletta (Creative Director)	Upland
Tina Fiske (Director)	CAMPLE LINE
Fiona Bradley (Director)	Fruitmarket
Kim McAleese (Director) Eleanor Edmondson (Curator)	EAF (Edinburgh Art Festival)
Charlie Wood (Director)	Underbelly
Beth Bate (Director)	Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA)
Dani Rae (Managing Director)	Assembly Festival

Alex Marrs (Programmes & Communications Producer)	Cove Park
Charles Pamment (Director)	theSpaceUK
Lyndsey Jackson (Deputy Chief Executive)	Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society
Moira Jeffrey (Director)	Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN)
Jan-Bert van den Berg	Artlink Edinburgh
Louise Stephens (Creative Director/CEO) Rona Munro (Chair)	Playwrights' Studio, Scotland
Catherine Gillespie (Manager)	Scottish National Jazz Orchestra
Tessa Giblin (Director)	Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh
Richard Birkett (Festival Director) Siobhan Carroll (Open Programme Convenor) Diana Stevenson (Festival Manager)	Glasgow International (GI)
Amanda Nicoll	Cumbernauld Theatre Trust
Amy Liptrott (Director)	Aberdeen Arts Centre
Sorcha Carey (Director)	Collective, Edinburgh
Linda Crooks (CEO & Executive Producer)	Traverse Theatre
Joan Clevillé (Artistic Director, Scottish Dance Theatre) Liam Sinclair (Executive Director) Andrew Panton (Co-Artistic Director Dundee Rep)	Dundee Rep & Scottish Dance Theatre
Kate Nelson (Director)	Nutshell
Anne Gallacher (Director)	Luminate
Rhea Lewis (Co-Director)	Project X Dance

ⁱ A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan: December 2023, page 3:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-scotland-action-plan/pages/3/>

ⁱⁱ , Skills Development Scotland 2023:

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/areffkbq/sectoral-skills-assessment-creative-industries.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-scotland-action-plan/pages/4/>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.scot/publications/strategic-partnership-for-scotlands-festivals-open-letter-from-culture-secretary-angus-robertson/>

^v <https://www.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-scotland-action-plan/pages/5/>