

Scottish Government submission of 29 June 2023

PE2023/A: Review cultural funding arrangements to enable Scotland to contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024

The Committee has requested a response from the Scottish Government to Public Petition PE2030 which asks the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the funding it provides to 'Scotland + Venice' and ensure that Scottish artists can contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024.

The Scottish Government recognises the important international platform offered by the Venice Biennale to promote the best contemporary art and architecture from Scotland on the world stage. Through participation in La Biennale, Scotland + Venice aims to position Scotland internationally as a distinct, dynamic and diverse centre for creative excellence, fostering ambitious, innovative work in the fields of contemporary art and architecture, strengthened through international development, professional dialogue, public engagement and cultural exchange. Each year the Scotland + Venice partners commission leading artists and architects in Scotland to present new work within La Biennale's international exhibition of art/ architecture.

Scotland + Venice is a partnership between Creative Scotland, British Council, National Galleries of Scotland, Architecture & Design Scotland, V&A Dundee and the Scottish Government.

The Board of Creative Scotland and the Scotland + Venice partners took the decision earlier this year to pause their involvement in the Venice Biennale in 2024. This allows for an important period of reflection and review. This has been a difficult decision to make especially given the project's significant achievements over the last twenty years. However, in the present financial and planning environment it feels necessary to review the current model of delivery, and to consider the project's position within the wider scope of international opportunities available to Scotland's art/ architecture communities.

The decision also acknowledges the impact that the project has on the environment and the need to consider how it can be delivered more ethically and sustainably into the future.

There is a commitment to review the project for future years to ensure that it meets sectoral and partner ambitions and that it is being delivered ethically and sustainably, especially in the context of the climate crisis. It is anticipated that the review process will be underway in Summer 2023 and opportunities to participate will be widely advertised.

The review will include a process of sectoral engagement to explore new approaches to the project for the longer term while also looking to identify opportunities for artists and curators to experience the Biennale in 2024.

The petitioner asks the Scottish Government to review cultural funding. The Scottish Government understands that this is an incredibly worrying time for the culture sector and is engaging closely with Creative Scotland to provide support where possible for those organisations facing immediate challenges. However, the Scottish Government has an obligation to balance the budget each year. This is increasingly challenging in the face of rising costs and the need to support enhanced pay offers for public sector workers. To balance the budget with a focus on supporting public services, tackling child poverty and transitioning to Net Zero, limited funding must be prioritised to deliver the best value for every taxpayer in Scotland. This requires some difficult decisions and robust spending control.

Funding for Scotland + Venice comes from a variety of sources and the major funder is Creative Scotland. Creative Scotland use National Lottery funding as opposed to Scottish Government funding for this project. The Scottish Government provided £15,000 in 2023/2024 towards the Scotland + Venice project.

The Scottish Government is fully committed to supporting the Scottish culture sector's international interests and ambitions and is currently developing an International Culture Strategy to that end.

Yours sincerely,

CHRISTINA MCKELVIE

**MINISTER FOR CULTURE, EUROPE, AND INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**