

## **Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2030](#): Review cultural funding arrangements to enable Scotland to contribute to the Venice Biennale in 2024, lodged by Denise Hooper**

### **Brief overview of issues raised by the petition**

The petitioner is calling for a review of the Scottish Government decision to pause their involvement in the Venice Biennale in 2024.

The funding provided since 2003 through the '[Scotland + Venice](#),' programme has enabled artists and architects to showcase their work at the international festival. The petitioner is concerned that the withdrawal of the programme funding for 2024 will have a negative impact on the perception of Scotland's cultural sector on the international stage.

### **Scotland + Venice**

Scotland + Venice is a partnership between [Creative Scotland](#), [British Council Scotland](#), [National Galleries of Scotland](#), [Architecture and Design Scotland](#), [V&A Dundee](#) and the [Scottish Government](#). Founded in 2003, the project was designed to promote the best of contemporary art and architecture from Scotland on the world stage.

The Scotland + Venice project participates in the [Venice Biennale](#), an institution founded in 1895. La Biennale hosts international art and architecture exhibitions, with 86 countries participating in the programme of events. The art and architecture exhibitions take place on alternate years.

Scotland + Venice uses [open calls on the themes of La Biennale](#) to commission pieces for display at the exhibition, which is open from May – November each year. The [2023 pieces](#) are based on the theme *A Fragile Correspondence*.

The Scottish Government and Creative Scotland have provided the following information on funding for the project over the last five years. The Scottish Government provided the information on Architecture & Design Scotland funding.

The funding provided through Creative Scotland is in two forms: Grant in Aid (GIA) funding from the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland's National Lottery funding. The National Lottery Funding is shown in a separate table.

Year	Scottish Government	Architecture & Design Scotland	Creative Scotland (GIA)	TOTAL
2023/24	£15,000	0	0	£15,000
2022/23	£50,000	£45,000	0	£95,000
2021/22	0	0	0	0
2020/21	£115,000	£5,000	£240,000	£360,000
2019/20	£90,000	£5,000	£67,342*	£162,342

\*Please note that the 2019/20 funding from Creative Scotland includes £27,342.77 towards project expenses. The rest of their funding in the table relates to awards.

	Lottery Funding		
	Total	Awards	Project Expenses
2022/23	227,575.06	149,000.00	78,575.06
2021/22	59,751.00	40,000.00	19,751.00
2020/21	1,125.00	-	1,125.00
2019/20	96,422.62	86,000.00	10,422.62
2018/19	360,754.63	335,000.00	25,754.63
Total	745,628.31	610,000.00	135,628.31

Please note that in 2022/23 £149,000 of the awards and £65k of awards in 2019/20 relate to the Venice Architecture Biennale rather than the Arts.

## Scottish Government policy

The Scottish Government have submitted written [evidence on the petition](#) to the Committee. Their statement notes that:

“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.”

It goes on to discuss how the review will take place, noting that the review should be underway by ‘summer 2023’ and that there will be opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the review process. The Scottish Government states that finding ways to engage in La Biennale in an ethical and sustainable way is a priority given the current climate crises. The statement

also discusses the difficult financial climate that needs to be taken into consideration.

The final comment by the Scottish Government recognises the importance of international engagement with the cultural sector and commits to “developing an International Culture Strategy” to ensure that this engagement can be supported. Any decisions on future engagement with La Biennale are likely to be in the context of this strategy. A [consultation on the International Culture Strategy](#) was published in February 2023. The introduction to the consultation notes that:

“The development of an International Culture Strategy will seek to provide greater coherence to how the Scottish Government supports international cultural activity. It will focus on the motivations of culture sector stakeholders in working internationally, while recognising that such work has wider impacts on Scotland's international reputation and relationships.

“However, the sector is currently experiencing significant concurrent challenges and the development of a strategy must be set in that context. It must support sectoral resilience, recovery, and long term development and be one way through which current challenges can be addressed.”

The current Scottish Government [Culture Strategy for Scotland](#), includes the following aim under the pillar of ‘strengthening culture’:

“Foster international collaboration and build on Scotland’s reputation for cultural excellence”

The strategy includes a number of examples of how the Scottish Government intends to realise this aim.

**Laura Haley**  
**Researcher**  
[07/08/2023]

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at [spice@parliament.scot](mailto:spice@parliament.scot)

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