



EQUAL MEDIA & CULTURE CENTRE FOR SCOTLAND

An open letter to First Minister John Swinney and Angus Robertson, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture.

We write to express our **deep concern** at the recent events surrounding the Scottish Government's inability to provide clarity on the promised £6.6m Grant-in-Aid funding to Creative Scotland, directly **resulting in the unplanned closure** of their Open Fund for Individuals.

The Open Fund for Individuals is known to support artists, writers, musicians and many other creatives. The potential closure of this fund not only affects the cultural output of our nation, but the wellbeing, financial stability and livelihoods of hundreds of individuals. The irony that the loss of this vital fund was announced during the Edinburgh Festivals, an annual celebration of arts and culture which in 2022 was worth **£639m to Scotland**¹, was not lost upon the Scottish arts and culture sector, who mobilised to protest the cuts.

As a result of the sector coming together to call for the funding situation to be clarified and funds reinstated, alongside significant media coverage and public outcry, you then announced in the Programme for Government that the £6.6m in funds would be made available to Creative Scotland.

In an already precarious funding environment, the Scottish Government's recent actions have only served to create further uncertainty around funding, exacerbating the prevalent, systemic inequality within the Scottish Cultural landscape.

Our research shows **60% of Scotland's theatre companies are led by men**, and only **2% headed by women of colour**². In addition, **67% of women** in the creative industries **have considered leaving** their industry due to lack of work/life balance, stress or lack of access to promotion opportunities³.

Furthermore, **women and marginalised groups are adversely affected** by the **precarity of work** in the arts and culture sectors⁴ and failing to provide certainty around funding which is already budgeted for exacerbates this prevalent **inequality**. A 2017 survey by Creative Scotland found that **44% of women** in the sector felt that their gender was a barrier to progression, compared with just

¹ BOP Consulting 2023. *Economic Impact of the Edinburgh Festivals*. Available at: https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/assets/old/Edinburgh_Festivals_Impact_Study__digital__original.pdf?1687855168

² The Equal Media and Culture Centre (2023) *Diversity at the Top*. Available at: <https://emcc.engender.org.uk/publications/mediandiversity.pdf>

³ Kenny, M., Liu, S., McKay, F., and Thomson E. (2021) *I Just Didn't See Anyone Like Me: Women's experiences in Scottish media, creative and cultural industries*. Available at: <https://emcc.engender.org.uk/publications/7.-i-just-didnt-see-anyone-like-me.pdf>

⁴ Kenny, M., Liu, S., McKay, F., and Thomson E. (2021) *I Just Didn't See Anyone Like Me: Women's experiences in Scottish media, creative and cultural industries*. Available at: <https://emcc.engender.org.uk/publications/7.-i-just-didnt-see-anyone-like-me.pdf>

12% of men⁵. This uncertainty comes at a time when the sector, particularly women and minority groups within it, are in desperate need of support – not a further lack of it.

While we welcome the news that the Scottish Government is to release the £6.6m Grant-in-Aid funding to Creative Scotland, allowing them to **reopen the vital Open Fund for Individuals**, we seek assurances that the **promised £25m** funding for the culture sector in 2025/26 will be fulfilled, and that the **pledged annual £100m investment for the culture sector** will be delivered by 2028-29⁶.

Further, we call upon the Scottish Government to **acknowledge systemic gender disparity** in the culture sector. We ask that the Scottish Government **actively addresses the inequality experienced by women** by employing **gender budgeting** when designing funding solutions for the culture sector.

We welcome your response on this urgent matter.

The Equal Media and Culture Centre for Scotland

10 September 2024

About us

[The Equal Media and Culture Centre for Scotland](#) (EMCC) provides research, monitoring and advocacy for gender equality in the media, creative and cultural industries across Scotland.

[Engender](#) is Scotland's feminist policy and advocacy organisation, working to secure women's political, economic and social equality with men. Our aspiration is for a Scotland where women and men have equal access to and enjoyment of rights, resources, decision-making and safety.

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⁵ Creative Scotland (2017) Arts and Diversity Survey Summary Report

⁶ Scottish Government, 2024. *Delivering the International Culture Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/inspiring-connections-scotlands-international-culture-strategy/pages/7/>