

# Fund for performing arts set up today

A targeted £10 million fund to support Scotland's performing arts venues has been announced by Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop.

Created as part of The Scottish Government's £185m Business Support Fund, the Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund will help venues who cannot yet reopen to their audiences due to the ongoing impact of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The fund will be run by Creative Scotland, who will publish full details shortly.

Ms Hyslop said: "Our theatres and performing arts venues and the talented freelancers who work with them are an essential part of the fabric of Scotland's culture and communities and promote our international reputation, and we are determined that they will survive and be able to thrive again.

"We reacted quickly to help culture and the creative industries from the earliest days of this pandemic, including through the £120m Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund, which is unique to Scotland. This new fund is the next step.

"Our performing arts venues effectively had to close overnight, with an almost complete loss of income. There is no doubt that in doing so they saved lives, and for that I am extremely grateful.

"As we navigate our way through the pandemic, we know physical distancing is vital to ensuring that we do not see a second

wave of infections, but we recognise the difficulties this presents for those in performing arts. This dedicated fund will be a vital lifeline to help performing arts venues continue to weather the storm. We are also actively considering support for grassroots music venues.

“We know the impact of this crisis will be long-term so ambitious action to support the future of these organisations, as well as our wider cultural infrastructure, is vital.

“We will continue to urge the UK Government to use their fiscal levers, such as significant borrowing powers, to back culture and creative industries with major investment. This will enable the Scottish Government to offer even more support to respond to this crisis and build for the future.”

Iain Munro, Chief Executive of Creative Scotland, said: “We welcome this £10m from the Scottish Government which will provide a critical injection of cash to help meet the immediate needs of Performing Arts venues in Scotland which have been so badly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

“It is significant, welcome and demonstrates the Scottish Government’s continued commitment to culture but we also recognise that organisations and individuals working across the wider cultural sector are facing extremely challenging circumstances which, in some cases, threaten their long-term viability.

“We will therefore continue to work closely with both the Scottish Government and other partners to explore every possible avenue for further support.”

The Tron Theatre in Glasgow received £76,000 from the Scottish Government’s initial support for the sector through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund (PERF) which helped thousands of businesses across the country.

Andy Arnold, Artistic Director at The Tron, said: “This new

dedicated fund is welcome news and should provide a morale boost to Scottish theatre and I hope will give a financial life line in the short term to many vital cultural organisations.

“Tron Theatre is also extremely grateful for the PERF award we received which will enable us to prepare our venue for re-opening and re-establishing our creative programme.”

Ministers also confirmed that the small B&B fund, which is part of the £185m Business Support Fund, will now be extended to cover those with a business account who have received no grant to date. The Small B&B and Newly Self-Employed Hardship Funds both remain open to new applicants until 10 July.

---

**Professional performing arts industry body, the Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) today warmly welcomed the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture’s announcement of a £10 million fund to help secure the future of live theatre and dance in Scotland.**

FST’s members have been hit hard by Covid-19. International tours were cancelled from the start of the year and by mid-March all theatres and arts centres were closed to protect the public. Throughout the lockdown FST members have stayed in touch with their audiences by streaming work, offering dance classes online and contacting vulnerable and isolated audience members to offer support. However almost all earned income, representing around 70% of turnover across FST’s membership, has ceased and physical distancing means future income is under severe threat.

Rhona Matheson, Co-Chair of FST and the CEO of Starcatchers, Scotland’s national arts and early years organisation, said: ‘We are delighted by the scale of this investment in the future of theatre and dance in Scotland. The Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund will benefit our sector ecosystem, helping

to secure jobs and livelihoods wherever possible all over the country. We are particularly grateful to Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Fair Work and Culture for her understanding of the challenges we face and for her work in securing this support.'

Liam Sinclair, Co-Chair of FST and Executive Director & Joint CEO of Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre Limited said: 'We know that pressure on public budgets is huge and we profoundly appreciate Scottish Government's recognition of the importance of live performing arts in people's lives. Our members make a difference here in Scotland and around the world and this investment is an essential element in helping us all to build back better.'

Jude Henderson, Director of FST, said: 'FST has been working hard since day one to make the case for our industry. Today's important announcement represents a fraction of the amount of the income lost to the sector this year and we look forward to working closely with Scottish Government and Creative Scotland on the next steps and phasing of this funding. We need to make sure that every pound counts as we rebuild a thriving theatre and dance sector which tells all of Scotland's stories.'

Speaking ahead of a Scottish Greens live discussion with artists on the future of the sector, the party's culture spokesperson Ross Greer said: "This funding is very welcome, but it will only buy venues more time, not prevent their closure entirely.

"Theatres and venues of all sizes in almost every community in Scotland have been devastated by this crisis and face an uncertain future while social distancing continues. We risk a post-Covid normal with cultural deserts across much of Scotland if venues close on the scale we're currently facing.

"£10m will buy venues and their staff time, which is vital with so many jobs on the line and the furlough scheme being

wound down later this year but with the number of venues now in crisis, this amount will not go far.

“The UK Government has done embarrassingly little to protect the arts during the pandemic compared with other countries. There is widespread international recognition that education, health and culture are key to wellbeing, but the latter has been largely ignored by the Conservatives so far, despite making up a huge share of our economy. If Scotland is going to take a different approach we need to step up, quickly.”