

Campaign begins to save WASPS studios

Local artists studios in Gorgie/Dalry are said to be under threat of closure as a campaign to save them begins.

The studios which are situated in two large industrial buildings formerly owned by the council are used by around 40 artists and local creative businesses. The buildings changed hands in 2021 when Working Artists Studio Provision Scotland (WASPS) bought the property, but the organisation is now threatening to close and sell it due to escalating maintenance costs.

Multi-media artist Jill Martin Boualaxai is one of the creatives based in the studios. She said: "When the building was bought by WASPS in 2021, we understood it was under the proviso it remained as an art space. After years of uncertainty, it was such a relief to feel safe and secure. We were also told the studios would be renovated. For us to now be threatened with eviction less than two years later feels underhand. There appears to be little regard for the challenges we already face where funding, commissions and sales of work are so tough to secure. The suggestion that our studios could be sold from under us has caused a lot of anger, stress and anxiety within our community."

Chair of local arts and cultural organisation, Gorgie Collective, Katriona Gillespie, emphasized the acute need for resources for artists and creative professionals based in the local area: "Gorgie-Dalry is already one of the most

culturally disengaged areas of the whole city and we have been historically under-resourced in the arts. We do not receive our fair share of cultural funding and these studios are one of the only assets we have in the area that actually supports the livelihoods of local artists. It is unthinkable that they should be closed and we are appealing to our local representatives to support the campaign to save the studios.”

Sighthill/Gorgie Councillor Dan Heap said: “A number of local artists and residents have been in touch with me asking for my help to keep the studios open. Gorgie-Dalry has limited cultural provision as it is, so the possible closure of these studios is deeply concerning. I have raised this issue at the Council’s Culture and Communities committee as an emergency motion and will be speaking at the committee next week to push the Council to do what it can to ensure the continued operation of the studios and provide additional resources for local artists in my area.”



PHOTO Marius Alexander Photography