

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Department for Communities

### COVID-19 CULTURE, LANGUAGES, ARTS AND HERITAGE SUPPORT PROGRAMME 2020-21

*Published at 12.00 noon on Monday 26 October 2020.*

**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister for Communities):** My Department has been working at pace to bring forward funding schemes to support the culture, languages, arts and heritage sectors. I recognise the profound and pressing challenges for organisations and individuals in the sectors and have worked hard to ensure the allocation of funds by the Executive to address these.

I have already approved the release of £3million to Arts Council to manage oversubscription to their current funding scheme for individual creatives in recognition of the significant hardship that self-employed and freelance individuals are currently facing.

I am today releasing a further £15.75million to Arts Council, and heritage and indigenous language partner bodies. Details of how to apply to Arts Council's support fund for organisations and to a Heritage Recovery Fund will be available from Wednesday 28 October 2020.

I will announce further allocations in the coming weeks, with the aim of dispersing the total Executive Covid-19 funding allocation of £29million by 31 March 2021.

This paper sets out the rationale, further details of the approach to supporting these vital sectors, and the wide ranging benefits they deliver to our society, communities and individuals.

#### **Value of these Sectors**

The culture, languages, arts and heritage sectors make a substantial contribution to our local economy, our quality of life, health and wellbeing, and in shaping our standing as a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

These sectors have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and we are at risk of losing a quarter of the GVA they generate, as well important skills and of our valued cultural infrastructure crumbling.

These sectors need to be supported urgently, not just to protect economic and social benefits, but also in recognition that they have a vital role to play in helping us all understand the impact of the pandemic, reconnect with one another and find ways to emerge from this crisis fresh and refocussed, ready to tackle social challenges.

## **Engagement**

In developing a policy framework to support these sectors, my Department has engaged widely with partners across central and local government, as well as arm's length bodies and people from the sector, to ensure that funding can be distributed quickly, fairly and in ways which maximise its impact.

## **Release of £3million**

Arts Council are already delivering a £5.6million Covid-19 Creative Support Fund which has so far opened for calls for applications from arts organisations and creative individuals in two tranches. The second tranche call for applications from creative individuals was significantly over-subscribed and so I have approved the release of £3million from the £29million Programme budget to provide much needed support.

## **Support Schemes**

My Department has now finalised proposals and approvals for funding schemes to support these sectors with the remaining £26million budget.

All proposals are premised on demonstration of need and ability to deliver defined outcomes now and in the longer term.

The majority of the budget will be used to meet immediate needs, with a focus on stabilising sectoral organisations and supporting self-employed individuals working in these sectors. The remaining funds will be allocated to new projects to create momentum and begin to deliver social renewal with a new focus on tackling poverty, social exclusion, isolation and deprivation.

Delivery partners' administration costs to manage these grant schemes will be deducted from scheme allocations.

All schemes will include proportionate due diligence to manage the potential for duplication with other funding sources and ensure funding awards are prioritised to achieve value for money.

## **Sectoral Organisations**

New funding programmes to support the culture, arts and heritage sectors will be available from 28 October 2020.

Sectoral organisations which apply for support will be expected to demonstrate that their primary purpose is to create, present or support across a range of areas, including visual, performing and traditional arts, music, community arts, creative industries, heritage, and independent museums, libraries and cinema amongst others.

Commercial organisations, including those which not have previously received public funding, will be eligible to apply for support provided they are viable and their primary purpose relates to these sectors. However, they will compete for funding with non-profit organisations by demonstrating the contribution they make, and the benefits they deliver to our wider creative infrastructure and communities

## **Individuals**

A further call for applications to the Arts Council scheme to support individuals will also open shortly and will provide support to those who have not yet received funding from previous calls. Individuals will be required to demonstrate that a significant proportion of their income is derived from creative activity and that as a result of this having been lost, are facing financial hardship.

This third tranche of funding for individual creatives will include higher awards for deaf and disabled creatives who have additional support needs.

Support will also be available to individuals working in the heritage sector.

## **Indigenous Languages Culture and Heritage**

I am also today releasing funding to support individuals, organisations and groups working in our indigenous languages sectors.

This will help to support cultural development, for example music and tuition; develop ways to promote communities' cultural and linguistic heritage; provide local community services through the medium of their indigenous languages; and help develop partnership working (including urban and rural joint projects) within their communities to focus on social renewal and outreach for a wider audience.

Partner bodies will release details of funding support on 4 November 2020.

## **Local Government Sectoral Organisations**

Allocations will shortly be made to local councils to provide them with funding to support these sectors and the arts and heritage organisations for which they are responsible – this will also ensure a geographical spread to the support.

## **Renewal Projects**

I am keen to catalyse new, renewal activity in addition to stabilising these sectors and this will be achieved through allocating the remainder of the Programme budget to new project ideas.

The Community Foundation in partnership with the Rural Community Network will shortly be calling for applications from organisations – not limited to those traditionally working in this space – for proposals for culture, language, arts and heritage projects.

The University of Atypical will expand their successful Deaf & Disabled Artists Programme and the Architectural Heritage Fund will expand their successful Community Enterprise Catalyst scheme.

Funding will also shortly be allocated to National Museums, Libraries and to our Creative Learning Centres via NI Screen, to deliver partnership projects with the community to reach new audiences. I will also allocate additional funding to Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships to allow communities to take forward cultural, language, arts and heritage projects to spark momentum at community level.

## **Cultural Strategy**

This emergency has highlighted the need for a more strategic and sustainable approach to the sector. I have asked my officials to develop a Culture Arts and Heritage Strategy to set out an ambitious vision for how these sectors must adapt in the post-Covid-19 landscape in order to thrive and deliver longer term social and economic benefits. I will bring further proposals on this forward in due course.

I hope that you will join me in welcoming this much needed investment for the culture, languages, arts and heritage sectors.