

Derek Mackay MSP,
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Dear Derek Mackay,
Literature Programmes in Scotland

I am writing to ask you to ensure continued financial support for literature programmes in Scotland in the forthcoming budget.

The Society of Authors represents over 10,000 authors writing in all fields and genres. We have over 700 members in Scotland including Council members Ian Rankin and JK Rowling. We have a very vibrant branch run by local members: the Society of Authors in Scotland, which holds a huge and varied series of events including this September's brilliant ScotsWrite weekend conference.

While I appreciate you face difficult decisions when balancing the budget, the argument for investment in culture is strong. The Government has identified the creative industries as one of five "world-leading sectors" for special attention in future planning. The creative industries are growing at twice the rate of the economy as a whole. Investment in culture introduces people to the arts, supports those creative industries and future growth.

Scottish literature puts Scotland on the international map and attracts business through publishing, bookselling and cultural tourism. Scotland has more than 100 publishing houses, producing over 3000 new books a year, employing over 1600 people, and generating an annual turnover of c£150 million. The country's 45 plus book festivals include the world's largest, and book festivals attract millions to local economies. A third of visitors to Scotland cite history and culture as a key motivation to visit, especially overseas and long-haul visitors.

Investment in culture does not only benefit artistic endeavours: it stimulates the whole economy. Innovation cannot flourish without a strong cultural environment which encourages and rewards imagination and creativity. Our Council member Neil Gaiman says:

I was in China in 2007, at the first party-approved science fiction and fantasy convention in Chinese history. SF had been disapproved of for a long time. At one point I took a top official aside and asked him what had changed? "It's simple," he told me. "The Chinese were brilliant at making things if other people brought them the plans. But they did not innovate and they did not invent. They did not imagine. So they sent a delegation to the US, to Apple, to Microsoft, to Google, and they asked the people there who were inventing the future about themselves. And they found that all of them had read science fiction when they were boys or girls.

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There are important health benefits too: a 2013 study conducted by the Scottish Government shows clear and significant links between cultural participation and improved health and wellbeing.

All these benefits are provided at very little cost-Scotland's arts and culture sector is one of the most efficient and dynamic in the nation. At £293million, total spending on culture, tourism and external affairs represented less than 1% of the 2016-17 Scottish budget. In 2015/16 Creative Scotland's Regular Funded Organisations attracted £109million of extra investment from sources other than public funds and created 1.62 million public participation opportunities. In 2015, 92% of adults in Scotland participated in a cultural activity and Scotland's Creative industries contribute £4.6billion GVA to the Scottish economy, supporting 73,600 jobs.

Given the huge added value the cultural sector brings to Scotland's economy, society and business community, public investment in culture offers outstanding value for money.

Literature is a success story for Scotland and we are asking the Scottish Government to invest in Scotland's literature for the future. Cuts to the public funding that supports the literary infrastructure in Scotland - the bedrock of a cultural offer recognised worldwide for its quality - will undoubtedly lead to the disappearance of many irreplaceable arts organisations and literary infrastructure which support our readers, storytellers, writers, and publishers.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Solomon
Chief Executive

President Philip Pullman CBE
Chief Executive Nicola Solomon

The Society of Authors is a company registered in England No. 19993 and an independent trade union