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Emyr Bell
North East Arts Touring Ltd
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Our ref: 202000038527
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Dear Emyr,

Thank you for your email of the 19th of May regarding the current status and activities of North East Arts Touring (NEAT) amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Firstly, let me assure you that we understand that these are challenging and uncertain times, and recognise the personal and professional impacts for artists, practitioners and organisations during this period. It is heart-breaking for me to see so many in our culture and creative sector so acutely affected by the coronavirus crisis. While our primary concern is for people's health, we are working hard to support those who make this hugely important contribution to our society as they navigate these difficult times.

We are working closely with partners, agencies and stakeholders to monitor the ongoing impact of the pandemic and ensure that consistent, high-quality information is easily available. The Scottish Government and Creative Scotland are being as flexible as possible with grant conditions for the sector so they can be repurposed for resilience across Scotland.

I welcome your dedicated work and your commitment to adapting your working practice to continue to support your local communities. It captures the essence of the Culture Strategy for Scotland published earlier this year that sets out the Scottish Government's commitment to value, protect and nurture culture – precisely as you are doing. We are enormously grateful for the valuable contribution volunteers make to the lives of individuals and communities across Scotland especially during these testing times – without volunteers, many of our communities would simply cease to function.

The Culture Strategy recognises that culture is central to Scotland's wellbeing and cultural, social, economic and environmental prosperity. It presents an extended view of culture which includes the everyday and emerging, the established and more formal, celebrating culture as part of every community. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to experience culture's empowering and transformative potential. We want to ensure that everyone in Scotland can take part in culture throughout their lives and that culture in and from Scotland enriches the lives of people and communities across the country, and we are therefore committed to supporting the future of arts and culture in our rural communities.

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I think the recovery period for this sector will likely be long and slow, but rest assured I will continue to work with our public agencies and the sector to prepare for reopening when it is safe to do so, and will take the necessary steps to facilitate recovery.

I hope that together we can mitigate the impact of this crisis ensuring that culture the length and breadth of Scotland can adapt to these unprecedented and challenging circumstances.

Kind regards
Fiona Hyslop

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