

## **Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee**

### **Creative Scotland – Regular Funding 2018-21**

#### **Written submission from Andrew Menzies**

Honourable Committee Members my name Andrew Menzies and I work as a Driver/Guide with the Travelling Gallery. The Travelling Gallery is a gallery of Contemporary Art in a bus that tours Scotland twice a year, taking a different exhibition each time to communities all over Scotland from Bettyhill to the Borders, Dunbar to Oban, Maybole to Aberdeen and everywhere in between as well as all accessible islands around the mainland and has been doing this since it started in 1978.

I write to you not just as an employee but also as a supporter of the Travelling Gallery and all that it stands for. I was a visitor of the gallery for many years before I was lucky enough to be employed as a Driver/Guide. I have worked in Local Government, in various roles, since the late 1990's. First with the Corporation of London at the City of London School for Boys, then with East Renfrewshire and West Lothian in Libraries and now with the Travelling Gallery which operates under the aegis of the City of Edinburgh Council with funding from Creative Scotland as a RFO.

Over the last fifteen years as a Public Servant and as a patron of the Arts I have witnessed, and suffered, first hand from the increasing deterioration in Arts provision due to budgetary pressure and misguided 'rationalisation'. This brings me to the current situation at the Travelling Gallery and the proposed reduction in funding from Creative Scotland. I believe that this decision has been made in ignorance and that Creative Scotland have not taken sufficient time, or measures, to properly investigate, assess and consider what it is that the Travelling Gallery does and how it manages to achieve so much on the relatively small budget it receives.

The Travelling Gallery is the only mobile Public Gallery of Contemporary Art in the world. There may be other 'Art Buses' but they are either commercially run by Art Dealers or community Art initiatives run by charities. Scotland's Travelling Gallery is unique in that it offers all the people of Scotland the opportunity to engage directly with professionally Curated exhibitions of Contemporary Art in their own communities.

The Travelling Gallery has only managed to continue for forty years because it has maintained the highest standards in Curation, Exhibition and Interpretation as recognised and audited by Creative Scotland. As an organisation it has always attracted and employed highly talented individuals. As a Gallery it has always championed emerging Artists, many of whom have gone on to enjoy great success both at home and abroad. Artists such as Martin Creed, a former Turner Prize winner, and Rachael MacLean who represented Scotland at last year's Venice Biennale.

Why then is such a unique, world class Arts Initiative facing the real threat of being 'shut down' when it should be celebrated?

The Travelling Gallery has never had the luxury of 'Marketing' and has survived due to the network of local contacts it has built up over the years but with the loss of dedicated Arts Officers, across Scotland's Local Authorities, it has had to work harder to promote its service. Despite this the Travelling Gallery has continued to engage with the largest demographic of any Gallery, Contemporary or otherwise, in Scotland, if not the world. A budget cut as small as £3,000 at this time would be the end of this unique and valued service, never mind the proposed cut of £30,000 per year. Is it really Creative Scotland's intention to destroy all that it has helped build and sustain over the last forty years? I would ask our elected representatives to encourage Creative Scotland to reconsider their Budget proposal before it is too late. Keep the Travelling Gallery 'on the road' for another 40 years. It is Your National Public Gallery of Contemporary Art ... in a Bus!