

Fiona Hyslop
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

22 June 2020

Dear Ms Hyslop,

Please protect Scotland's publishers, writers & booksellers

My name is Peggy Hughes and I am the Chair of Literature Alliance Scotland (LAS), which is Scotland's largest literary membership network, representing the principal literature and languages organisations in Scotland.

I'm writing on behalf of our membership to highlight the severe difficulties being experienced by our small creative businesses and to ask you to protect Scotland's literature, languages and publishing sector by investing in Publishing Scotland's strategic renewal fund.

Writing and publishing has been of fundamental cultural importance to Scotland for centuries. Since the 1300s, Scottish writing has changed the world, and today writing and publishing is the second largest sub-sector of the creative industries in terms of turnover in Scotland (based on 2017 data). The value of literature is now rightly recognised in Scotland's Culture Strategy as being essential to our health and wellbeing.

The publishing sector is mainly composed of 100 small publishers on very tight margins. They, in turn, support thousands of authors, illustrators and freelancers and are often their only source of income.

While we welcome the Scottish and UK Government's intervention of new financial schemes to help businesses as well as the new Bridging Bursary from Creative Scotland to help writers and artists in immediate need, the current models of assistance do not address the potentially devastating situation facing Scotland's entrepreneurial publishers.

The closure of bookshops, tourist venues and heritage sites are severely damaging the sector. This is leaving publishers struggling with unique difficulties for the rest of this year with books either in production, but with expensive print bills attached, and no outlets to sell them in; or with stock tied up in (closed) bookshops, and with vastly reduced shelf space for the rest of 2020 as the publishing output of the UK is squeezed into a few months.

The cancellation of the Edinburgh International Book Festival – along with many other book festivals across Scotland and the UK - will also have a serious impact on sales throughout the summer period.

Publishing is a seasonal business, tied to the rhythms of the year. The unprecedented upset to those rhythms poses a catastrophic threat to the whole future of the industry in this country.

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In short, the recovery through autumn and into 2021 is looking very difficult.

Publishing businesses in Scotland are non-traditional, complex models that straddle business and the creative economy. We would welcome a discussion on how the sector / publishers can be supported with dedicated financial assistance that maintains cashflow, provides income and resilience to the writing community, and - more importantly - renews the sector for the future with a sense of purpose in sustaining communities and reducing inequalities through grassroots access to culture via libraries, bookshops, schools, events, book festivals, and online delivery of education.

Without the right support we are extremely concerned that the Scottish publishing industry will be decimated. Without publishers there will be very few new books and many illustrators, agents, freelancers and, of course, the authors themselves will be severely impacted by having no outlet for their creativity, no route to audiences and no income.

We call on you to act now and urgently protect the future of Scotland's publishers, writers and booksellers by supporting the Publishing Scotland renewal fund.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



**Peggy Hughes,
Chair**

Literature Alliance Scotland members

Association for Scottish Literary Studies (ASLS)
Association of Scottish Literary Agents (ASLA)
CILIPS (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland)
Cove Park
Edinburgh International Book Festival
Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society
Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust
Florida State Universities Library
The Gaelic Books Council
Indie Authors' World
Moniack Mhor
National Library of Scotland
Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust
Playwrights' Studio Scotland
The Poetry Association of Scotland
Publishing Scotland
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (Publishing)
The Saltire Society

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Scottish Book Trust
Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)
Scottish Society of Playwrights
Scottish PEN
Scottish Poetry Library
Scottish Storytelling Forum
Scottish Writers' Centre
SLAM (Scottish Literary and Arts Magazines)
Society of Authors in Scotland
Stirling Centre for International Publishing and Communication @ Stirling University
Universities Committee for Scottish Literature
Wigtown Festival Company
Writers' Guild of Great Britain (Scottish Region)

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