Your name and Address

Date

Dear MSP XXXX

**Shared Prosperity Fund**

The Cultural Sector in Scotland has benefited from European Structural and Investment Funds and we hope that Scotland will continue to benefit from the Shared Prosperity Fund when it is established.

The role of the cultural sector in city deals and economic planning is often over-looked. The Scottish Enterprise ‘Scotland is Now’ film; which is designed to encourage businesses to invest in Scotland, promotes the work of the cultural sector. How can Scotland ensure that the cultural sector is part of the investment plan, when it is one of the assets communities will often look to capitalise on to drive inclusive growth?

It’s well known that cities and towns can become prosperous due to the vibrancy generated by the cultural sector. It is vital that future industrial and economic place-plans consider the cultural eco-system of the area and what kind of support it may need to prosper. Considerations that would be key would include:

* Is there equal access to music education in schools in the area?
* Is there is local theatre and cinema?
* What opportunities can the landscape offer, what support does it need for long-term environmental protection?
* Are the creatives networked?
* Do the creatives have any funding to experiment or a workplace to work from?

In relation to the implementation of the Shared Prosperity Fund; I support the main recommendations made by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

* The UK Shared Prosperity Fund should at least match the £2.4 billion a year that currently flows to communities across the UK as a result of EU Structural Funds. It must be additional to existing local growth funding and provide certainty for investment by using long-term funding cycles.
* The fund should be allocated based on need and targeted according to the economic measures that matter for people’s living standards – the employment rate and earnings – and devolved to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and parts of England with strong governance arrangements.
* To promote inclusive growth and enable places to respond flexibly to local priorities, the fund should operate as a ‘single pot’, enabling capital and revenue streams to be co-ordinated, so that investments in enterprise, economic growth and good jobs can be combined with programmes to ensure that people on a low income are connected to new opportunities.

The Culture sector has benefited from European Structural Funds and Investment funds. In 2018 Scottish Natural Heritage were awarded approximately £5million from the Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund (NCHF) which will support the development and promotion of natural and cultural heritage assets in the Highlands and Islands which have the potential to create local economic and social benefit. Funding for Scottish Natural Heritage is welcomed, though there is some concern that funding has not been distributed to more than one Cultural project or out-with one geographical area.

From a basic analysis of the European Structural Fund spend 2017/18 the funding appears to be top-down in design. Furthermore, funding does not appear to have been focussed on SMID postcode initiatives, allocating funding to those who need it most. Structural funds allocated from the EU may not have had a focus on improving the outlook for those who need it most. As outlined above I agree with Joseph Rowntree Foundation that the Shared Prosperity Fund should focus on allocating funds to those areas who need it most and that connections should be in place to ensure that funds create opportunities for those on low incomes.

I would also like to draw your attention to the Cultural Development Fund which has been launched as part of the UK Industrial Strategy. As you will be aware; Scotland is involved in the UK Industrial Strategy; Creative Industries Clusters Programme; with successful bids incorporating research and development partnerships between academia and industry in Edinburgh and Dundee.

In June 2018 Arts Minister Michael Ellis launched a £20million fund for culture, heritage and the creative industries to benefit towns and cities across England. Areas will be able to bid for up to £7 million for several projects to help regeneration, create jobs. This could be for new spaces for creative businesses, bringing historic buildings back into use or redeveloping museums and art galleries. The investment will help to grow local economies and increase access to arts, heritage and the creative industries.

The Cultural Development Fund marks a new approach for the UK government investment in culture and creative industries in England. Rather than investment going to a specific venue or artform, the funding will go to geographical locations, including cities or towns in rural areas.

The Cultural Development Fund was announced as part of a UK wide programme at a meeting at Glasgow School of Art; where Scotland’s cultural sector were led to believe they would benefit. It was later confirmed that the funding would be for England only. I encourage the Scottish Government to launch a similar cultural fund; as part of industrial and economic plans for Scotland to make up for Scotland being unable to take advantage of the UK programme.

Yours sincerely,

Name