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31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

Dear Robert

I would like to thank you for your work as Chair of Creative Scotland, and for the leadership that CS has provided to the sector during the covid-19 pandemic. I am writing to you as the Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for Culture, as we reach a critical time in our efforts to control the covid-19 pandemic.

New cases in Scotland have more than doubled during the last week. This is one of the sharpest rises we have seen during the pandemic.

We always knew that cases were likely to rise as restrictions eased. However, the scale of the increase is of real concern.

You are aware of the incredible efforts that have been underway throughout this year to rollout vaccination. While vaccination has significantly weakened the link between new cases and serious health harms, it has not been completely broken. Please continue to encourage people in the arts, screen and creative industries to get both doses when offered.

Scotland's health and care service is under considerable pressure and there is a risk that if the surge continues or accelerates – increasing pressure on hospital beds and ICU admissions – then we cannot rule out having to reimpose some restrictions.

We do not want to return to more stringent measures, but this is yet another fragile – and potentially very pivotal – moment in our journey through the pandemic.

We are asking all sectors – as part of a collective wider effort – to step up their efforts to reduce the spread of the virus.

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This means taking all possible proactive steps to promote and reinforce the baseline measures, the promotion of advisory precautionary measures and sector specific good practice for the culture sector.

There are four areas that are still required by law:

- it continues to be the law (unless for some specific exemptions), that face coverings must be worn in all the same indoor settings as they were before 9 August and face coverings continue to be required on public transport; in response to concerns from the performing arts sector we are, however, urgently reviewing the regulations about face coverings so that the sectors' needs can be met while balancing public health protection;
- as before, hospitality (restaurants, cafes, bars, pubs, hotels where food/drink consumed on the premises) and also now since the opening of the night-time sector, entertainment venues (nightclubs, dance halls, discos and sexual entertainment venues) are required to collect the contact details of customers so that Test & Protect can continue to contact-trace positive cases;
- as before, businesses, services providers and places of worship must have regard to SG guidance about measures to minimise risk of exposure to coronavirus relating to their business, service or premises; and
- organisers of outdoor events of more than 5,000 people outdoors and 2,000 people indoors will still require local authority permission before they can go ahead, as this will allow us and local authorities simply to be assured of the arrangements in place to reduce the risk of large scale gatherings.

For the arts, screen and creative industries sector this means continuing to promote the legal requirement to wear a face covering and following relevant guidance, including [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer businesses and workplaces - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-safer-businesses-and-workplaces/pages/1-10.aspx) and [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): reopening of cultural performances and events guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-reopening-of-cultural-performances-and-events-guidance/pages/1-10.aspx)

Alongside this we urge organisations to continue implementing measures which will help us suppress the virus including:

- support staff to self-isolate if they are asked to do so by the NHS;
- regular testing of staff to help break the chains of transmission;
- support staff to work from home some of the time to reduce the ability of the virus to transmit; and
- keep your premises as well ventilated as possible.

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I recognise the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on the culture sector and the tremendous efforts that the sector has made to implement the mitigations required to reduce transmission as it reopens, to make these venues as safe as possible for their audiences and their workforces. I thank you for your support to date and would ask that you continue to prioritise this area going forward. By working together, we can ensure organisations remain open and our economy recovers from the effects of the pandemic.

I would be grateful if you could share this correspondence with key contacts in the sectors you support, to ensure this important message is cascaded as widely as possible.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angus Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

**Angus Robertson**

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