



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Mr John Swinney MSP  
Deputy First Minister of Scotland  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

17 January 2023

Dear Deputy First Minister,

We are writing to you today to give you a full picture of the present situation with respect to the Scottish Men's Sheds Association (SMSA) and the Scottish Men's Sheds Movement.

In 2009, Scotland, like many western countries, did not have a health movement which voluntarily engaged men over the age of 18. It took four years to open the first Scottish Men's Shed in Westhill, Aberdeenshire, which you will recall visiting in 2013. During that visit, you were interested to see if this provision could be 'scaled' across Scotland.

Due to the success of this first Shed, and the subsequent scaling of it across Aberdeenshire, thanks to a full time dedicated Shed Development Officer, other communities and regions across Scotland became interested and sought to replicate the success of this unique engagement model. The Scottish Men's Sheds Association charity was created in 2014 and attracted Scottish Government start-up funding to scale it up again in 2016.

Since then, the SMSA has continued to refine its Shed development pathway and created the first member-led health movement for men in Scotland. Presently, the SMSA has over 3,100 male and female members who support the charities aims and objectives, and the 10,000+ men who now make up the Scottish Men's Sheds Movement across all 32 local authorities.

Presently, there are over 200 Men's Sheds with 66 of these in development, and 8 are new post-pandemic. The SMSA is the central co-ordinating hub of the movement and therefore the proposed decision not only to not scale up support but to stop core funding altogether is regrettable and poses a serious risk to the sustainability and future development of Men's Sheds across Scotland.

The SMSA's patron and Scotland's ex Chief Medical Officer Sir Harry Burns, the four-year research by Glasgow Caledonian University on Shed sustainability, and the Scottish Government's own short life working group research all support the SMSA's development plan over the next three years. None of these development proposals looks to outside corporate funding but rather like in the most successful countries (Australia and Ireland) who have statutory core and developmental funding they are benefitting from unprecedented growth, health and fiscal savings.

A national core hub association is vital to the sustainability and continued growth of what has become Scotland's largest male health member-led movement and what has been described as one of the greatest mental and physical health developments of this generation.

In that context, while we appreciate the pressures on the Scottish Government's budget overall, we are asking you to revisit the present core and developmental funding for the Scottish Men's Sheds Association so that they can continue to build upon the needed requirements of the Scottish Men's Sheds health movement for the people of Scotland, rather than putting unsupported pressure on these thousands of volunteers and see a collapse of this national treasure that they have worked so diligently and passionately to create.

Kind regards,

Liam McArthur MSP



Alexander Burnett MSP



Alex Rowley MSP



Kenneth Gibson MSP



Paul McLennan MSP

Neil Bibby MSP

Douglas Lumsden MSP

Miles Briggs MSP

Alexander Stewart MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Sue Webber MSP

Tess White MSP

Murdo Fraser MSP

Roz McCall MSP

Graham Simpson MSP

Claire Baker MSP

Craig Hoy MSP

Maurice Golden MSP

Brian Whittle MSP

Liam Kerr MSP

Annie Wells MSP

Jamie Halcro-Johnston MSP

Paul Sweeney MSP

Audrey Nicoll MSP

Willie Rennie MSP

Beatrice Wishart MSP

Douglas Ross MSP

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP

Jackson Carlaw MSP

Sharon Dowey MSP

Finlay Carson MSP

Martin Whitfield MSP

Monica Lennon MSP

Foyso! Choudhury MSP

Paul O'Kane MSP

Sarah Boyak MSP

Colin Smyth MSP

Donald Cameron MSP

Jackie Baillie MSP

Daniel Johnson MSP