

# Artist defends £15,000 grant that sparked abusive attack

Cash to be used solely for teaching, says Harrison

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THE artist behind a controversial project that will result in her living in Glasgow without leaving for a year has described the negative response to her plan as "overwhelming".

Ellie Harrison, an artist and lecturer who is based in the city, caused an uproar on social media channels Facebook and Twitter when it emerged a £15,000 grant from Creative Scotland would support a project that will see her not leaving the area for a year.

The majority of opinions expressed on the project online have been negative, with many questioning both the point and intention of the project and Creative Scotland's decision to fund it.

The Facebook page for the project also drew many abusive and insulting remarks towards the artist.

Creative Scotland published a statement supporting the work and Harrison acknowledged the "positive and negative" reactions to the project, which was initially called Think Global, Act Local.

The artist said it was a "provocative artwork" that was "designed to operate on many levels at once, and the questions about 'community' being raised on/off social media these last few days is certainly one of them".

She said the much-discussed money for the grant will go to the Duncan of Jordanstone art college in Dundee, where she works, in exchange for paid "research leave".

Ms Harrison said: "I have been careful to stipulate that the money



UPROAR: The Facebook page drew insulting remarks.

be used solely to cover my teaching responsibilities and that a post be advertised externally, in order to: a) create a job opportunity for a talented artist in Scotland; and b) provide the best possible experience for my students in my absence."

She added on the project's Facebook page: "Glasgow has been my home for seven-and-a-half years and to suddenly have a response like this to one of my projects has been quite overwhelming.

"You have given me so much material to digest, it will take the whole year to do so. I hope to follow up by meeting many of you when all the fuss has died down."

Ms Harrison, who has a long history of project-based work, has lived in Glasgow since 2008.

Her artistic work takes various forms, including installations and performance lectures, live broadcasts and campaigns.

The title of her latest project, The Glasgow Effect, is a well-known phrase for discussing the poor health and low life expectancy of the most deprived areas of the city. The project's Facebook page is

illustrated with an image of chips.

However, she stressed the project, which was initially called Think Global Act Local, is not primarily about poverty or deprivation in the city.

Ms Harrison said the bulk of her work in Glasgow will be setting up a "radical alternative" to existing funding systems, called the "Radical Renewable Art + Activism Fund."

She will also try and work with organisations such as Common Weal, So Say Scotland, The Only Way is Ethics, Creative Carbon Scotland (ArtCOP Scotland), Imagination Festival and Free Wheel North. She also published the full text of her application to Creative Scotland online.

She adds: "The fact that this university [Duncan of Jordanstone], like most others in the UK, now requires its lecturing staff to be fundraisers and is willing to pay them to be absent from teaching as a result, should be the focus of this debate."

Harrison's previous projects have included a confetti cannon to fire if there had been a Yes vote in the referendum, and a campaign to Bring Back British Rail, among many others.

She is to officially launch The Glasgow Effect later this month.

She is calling it a "action research project/durational performance".

Ms Harrison says that by setting this simple restriction to her current lifestyle, she intends to test the limits of a "sustainable practice" and to challenge the demand to travel placed upon the "successful artist".



PROPOSAL: Artist Ellie Harrison plans to live in Glasgow for a year. Picture: Colin Mearns