

Dundee University withdraws support from art project

FUNDING: Money will be used to support 'asceticism and philanthropy', says artist

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Dundee University is no longer supporting controversial art project The Glasgow Effect, it has been claimed.

Ellie Harrison, the artist behind the £15,000 stint which would see her confined to Glasgow for a year, has now decided to remove the university's name and logo from her website.

Writing in her newsletter, the DJCAD lecturer added that she would have to take unpaid time off to complete the project after originally being promised paid leave.

The Glasgow Effect launched on New Year's Day and is described as a "durational performance", aiming to explore how an artist's career, social life, family ties, carbon footprint and mental health would be affected by staying within the city's boundaries.

Ms Harrison's project, which is being funded by Creative Scotland, has previously come under fire for promoting "poverty safari" and being apparently unclear about how the money will be spent.

The artist has now outlined how she plans to distribute the money.

Ms Harrison stated: "Having initially agreed to support this 'research project', the university has now finally requested that I take special leave (without pay) from March 1 - December 31 in order to complete it.

"The university has also stated that because 'the stipulated focus of the research contained within the original project application has partially shifted to include a critique of the university and the way in which it operates', it will no longer publicly support the project.

"The university's name and logo has now been removed from where it appeared online.

"It does mean, however, that it is now down to me to decide what to do with the money.

"Without being too prescriptive, I intend to spend it in a way that allows me to explore two of my ongoing interests - asceticism and philanthropy, and the relationship between the two.

"Firstly, by continuing to live in the thrifty fashion to which myself and many other artists are accustomed I aim to use just half the money to live off.

"I hope to achieve this with the added challenge of not travelling in any vehicles (other than my bike) for the whole year.



Dundee artist and lecturer Ellie Harrison, whose project is no longer being supported by Dundee University. Picture: Colin Mearns.

"This should leave the other half of the money for me to invest in projects and campaigns which I care passionately about.

"I will be building on my training in campaigning for systemic change to invest in things which offer long-term positive outcomes for the people of Glasgow and beyond.

"This will include some match-funding to create a project manager role to develop the Radical Renewable Art and Activism Fund project in the city, and other exciting things I'm starting to investigate."

A Dundee University spokesman said: "We consider this to be an external project, which we have allowed Ms Harrison time to pursue."

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TIMELINE

The troubled birth and times of Ellie Harrison's The Glasgow Effect

● December 31 2015: The Glasgow Effect is launched on Facebook and receives online criticism.

● January 5 2016: Ellie Harrison announces she is using her £15,000 grant from Creative Scotland to pay her employer, Dundee University, to hire a replacement lecturer, while she herself continues to be paid by the university.

● January 6: Creative Scotland say The Glasgow Effect funding plan goes against the rules. Courier reporter Graeme Ogston goes to the artist's Glasgow home but she refuses to speak to him.

● January 7: Ms Harrison defends her controversial art project when she finally breaks her silence on political website Common Space. She describes herself as a "middle-class punching bag" and says she does not regret changing the project name to The Glasgow Effect (some felt the name was patronising to the city).

● February 3: Ms Harrison organises a ticketed only event for selected people to explain her art project. The Courier was unable to obtain tickets.

● February 15: After a month of silence Ms Harrison posts some online polls on her Facebook page, asking whether more time means better teaching and if more money makes better art.

● February 23: Despite refusing to clarify how the funding will be spent, or what art will be produced, Ms Harrison tells The Courier her project will "draw attention to the economic system".

● March 17: Ms Harrison says Dundee University is no longer supporting her and she must take unpaid leave for her year-long art project. She gets the £15,000 grant and can decide how it is spent.

● December 31 - The project is set to finish.