

Board of Trustees
Nottingham Castle Trust
Lenton Road
Nottingham
NG1 6EL

02 December 2021

Dear Prof. Ted Cante, Chair, Nottingham Castle Trust,

We were compelled to write this letter following a period of ongoing and growing concern for the impact that the actions of Nottingham Castle Trust are having on the arts and culture sector in the region.

CVAN EM is the Contemporary Visual Arts Network for the East Midlands, working alongside 8 other regional networks to amplify voices, debate, and democratic change across the sector. We are part of the national Contemporary Visual Arts Network, an organisation where visual arts meet policy change. CVAN EM celebrates and supports arts and culture in the region, fostering an inclusive long-term future for the sector, emphasising equity and access for all arts workers.

Over the past 4-months Nottingham Castle Trust has caused irrecoverable harm to its staff, volunteers, freelance practitioners and arts workers who have invested their expertise, energy and emotional labour in Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery. There has been an evident disregard for staff health and wellbeing, highlighted by well-publicised accusations of bullying, discrimination, unfair dismissal, and mismanagement - demonstrating how Trustees of Nottingham Castle Trust have abused their position of power.

Nottingham Castle Trust has failed to hold itself accountable to its employees and the communities that it serves. The actions and inactions of Trustees continue to damage the reputation of Nottingham Castle, and in turn the arts and culture sector within the city and the wider region. The more you hurt the reputation of this important landmark site due to poor Governance the more this impact is felt by the artists and arts workers who have been engaged by Nottingham Castle, weakening the integrity of the organisation's commissioning and exhibiting potential, reducing the support from international and national partnerships and diluting its ambitions for a leading world-class, inclusive exhibition programme and visitor experience.

CVAN EM regrets not writing this letter sooner, following the alarming mishandling of the racial abuse and physical assault of Freelance Curator Panya Banjoko, which took place onsite on 17 August 2021. We acknowledge the collective act of bravery undertaken by the 7 employees of colour responding to the incident in question and share their disappointment in your response as you continue to evade the issues and taking accountability. Likewise, we recognise the actions of former CEO Sara Blair-Manning in making public allegations of bullying and harassment by Trustees. We act on behalf of the arts and culture sector in the East Midlands and stand with the employees of Nottingham Castle, and the people of Nottingham who have raised a [public petition](#) for the Board to immediately step down as trustees of Nottingham Castle Trust.

Beyond this point, CVAN EM offers assistance in areas where we can support democratic organisational change.

We await your response.

Yours sincerely,

Contemporary Visual Arts network East Midlands

Colette Griffin (Regional Director)

Angelia Bartram (Regional Chair)

Paula Orrell (National Director)

Daniel Sean Kelly (CVAN EM Steering Group Member)

Mercè Santos Mir (CVAN EM Steering Group Member)

Peter Bonnell (CVAN EM Steering Group Member)

Ruchita Shaikh (CVAN EM Steering Group Member)