

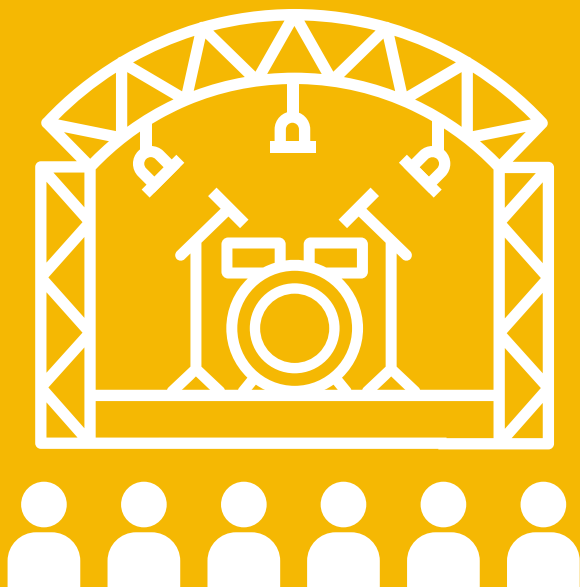
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# ARTS FOR US ALL

**PUTTING CULTURE AND CREATIVITY  
AT THE HEART OF NATIONAL RENEWAL**

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ALISON COLE, NATHAN LLOYD AND FLORA DODD



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# INTRODUCTION

BY ALISON COLE

The Fabian Arts and Creative Industries unit – a mini thinktank within a thinktank – was set up at the Fabian Society in November 2023 to develop bold new ideas for culture policy inspired by progressive values.

Our policy ideas and proposals are shaped by the belief that the arts – from dance to digital creativity – have an essential role to play in the new government’s project of national renewal and in the delivery of its five core missions. Along with health, education and technology, the arts are one of the cornerstones of a fair and flourishing society and an open, dynamic and innovative nation. They have also proven themselves to be remarkably powerful engines of economic growth and regeneration, transforming the everyday lives and fortunes of places and people.

In opposition, Keir Starmer spelled out the magnitude of the challenges facing the country should Labour win power: “If you think our job in 1997 was to rebuild a crumbling public realm. That in 1964 it was to modernise an economy left behind by the pace of technology. In 1945 to build a new Britain out of the trauma of collective sacrifice. Then in 2024 it will have to be all three.”<sup>1</sup>

It is no coincidence that at these times of urgent national rebuilding, the arts have been at the heart of Labour's reforming political agendas. As prime minister, Starmer can draw on the lessons of 1945, 1964, and 1997 – all years in which the arts played a pivotal role in recovery and renewal. When Arts Council Britain was founded in 1946, it supported a flourishing of excellence across the arts, while the 1951 Festival of Britain enlisted the 'inventiveness' of arts, design and architecture, in tandem with science and engineering, to counter austerity and rationing. Simultaneously, a new national land fund secured culturally significant properties for the National Trust as a memorial to those killed in the war. In 1965, Jennie Lee's seminal White Paper on the Arts<sup>2</sup> embedded the arts in state education, and ensured equality of access and opportunity across the country, with excellence and access going hand in hand. In 1997, as 'Cool Britannia' unleashed the power of the creative industries, Labour secured free admission to national museums and galleries, built Britain's 'soft' power across the world, and – in a declaration of intent – repurposed the Department for National Heritage as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The creative industry sector now accounts for £125bn, almost 6 per cent, of the UK's gross value added. And, vitally, the arts continue to replenish our spirits and spark joy and inspiration, giving us the tools for both personal and national renewal.

These are just some of the reasons why it is essential that everyone has access to a high-quality arts education and cultural

experiences, whether as participants or consumers, as amateurs or professionals – no matter where they are born or where they live. This government has committed to ensuring that geography, socioeconomic status, and other demographic factors do not limit opportunities for talent to thrive or the chance to have life-changing encounters. Our policy proposals focus on a quality arts education for every child, a revival of the public realm and a sense of place, and a reinvigorated arts funding system that embraces devolved decision-making, in the knowledge that culture can be uniquely empowering and liberating.

Our proposals also build on the work of previous Labour secretaries of state, from the first ever arts minister, Jennie Lee, to the long-serving culture secretaries, Chris Smith and Tessa Jowell. They draw on the principles that underpinned Labour's landmark policy of free admission to our national museums and galleries, a policy that has been embraced by all governments since. They also evoke the spirit of Danny Boyle's memorable opening ceremony at the 2012 Olympics, which so potently distilled the humane and inclusive vision that Jowell championed. Looking back recently, *The Guardian* summed it up with these words: "This was Britain as a rich, diverse, multicultural, imaginative, inventive nation comfortable with its identity and capable of reconciling its contradictions. We were traditional yet modern. We were powerful yet caring. We were orderly yet anarchic. We had a vast back catalogue of world-changing culture from which to draw. We knew how to

put on a good show. And we had a sense of humour.”<sup>3</sup>

The government needs to help rekindle that spirit as well as fuel our role as a creative and cultural superpower at what is now a critical juncture. The arts have had to weather the public spending cuts imposed following the 2008 financial crisis, the damage inflicted by the Covid pandemic (albeit mitigated by the Tory government’s welcome Culture Recovery Fund) together with the self-inflicted harms of Brexit. And they are now facing a full-blown crisis in local council discretionary funding, compounded by the cost of living and energy crises. Without the profound impact of National Lottery funding for the arts, heritage, charity and tourism sectors, introduced by the Conservative government in 1994, survival of even the fittest would have been nigh on impossible.

Our policies therefore bring together the key financial resources, recommending a full funding review and, where, necessary, a sharp refocus. We would like to see urgent investment in a talent and skills ‘pipeline’ fund, as well as the bringing together of the arts and creative sectors with science and technology, to accelerate research and development underpinned by the necessary tax credits. We want to ensure clear pathways for those who wish to access higher education, professionalise their skills or deepen their involvement. We would like everyone to feel that the arts are for them, in whatever form they take. And we would also seek to repair the severed connections with Europe, to enable artists and creative



practitioners to move freely across borders and engage in the fertile exchange of ideas – as well as to allow the frictionless trade of cultural artefacts.

Our cultural and creative sectors have continued to project Britain's influence and reputation around the world at a time when many of the values that underpin our society are being challenged. Our 'soft power', however, cannot be taken for granted. At a time when other global leaders are investing in creative industries skills, creative subjects and a liberal arts education, the UK has fallen behind. Regular arts funding has been at standstill since 2010; creative education has been decimated in our state schools; universities are closing creative courses and implementing savage redundancy programmes; and the tradition of a free liberal education in arts schools beyond the foundation year has been lost. Reforming the curriculum to include arts and creative subjects is now an urgent priority, as is the forging of major new private-public partnerships to stimulate creative growth and sector renewal, in the knowledge that public money will have to stretch further and new funding models will be required.

Most importantly, the arts are key to many of the values and approaches we hold dear – and those that we believe the employers and societies of the future will most demand. They are 'full spectrum' subjects, vital to the development of independent critical and creative thinking, visual and verbal literacy, oracy, self-confidence, initiative, resilience,

collaboration, resourcefulness, and invention. The world needs confident, capable, and compassionate individuals, fully armed with creative, critical, empathetic, and analytical skills – such as problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, communication, focus and flexibility. With technology, and in particular AI, now forcing the next world-changing leap, the arts should be central to the government’s new industrial strategy. And, fundamentally, they should be at the very heart of a broad and ambitious vision for education, lifelong learning, equity and opportunity, as well as individual fulfilment and wellbeing.

These policy contributions include several that helped inform Labour’s Sector Plan for the Arts and the Creative Industries and its election manifesto. Our initial focus has been on creative education, universal access, and a full financial review, encompassing potential new funding models. A summary of the proposals is presented below. They are grouped under three headings, with individual chapters setting out individual policy proposals.

## **Summary**

### **PART 1 - Starting young: arts and culture in schools**

#### ***Embedding arts and creativity in the curriculum***

A commitment to high quality, regular arts and cultural education for all children must help deliver Labour's fifth mission in government: to break down barriers to opportunity. This chapter contains several policy ideas and proposals, ranging from a Teach First for the arts to the twinning of schools with their local arts organisations.

#### ***A National Music Education Service***

The establishment of a National Music Education Service, consisting of an England-wide coordinating body and a network of local organisations to improve access to high-quality music education for every child and all the benefits that flow from that.

#### ***Box It Up***

With object-based learning and handling linked to better long-term retention of ideas and concepts, the government should require museums, galleries and other appropriate institutions to provide a loan-box scheme for primary school

## **PART 2 - The arts where we live**

### ***Arts for us all***

Encountering great art and historical objects in all their extraordinary richness and diversity can be incredibly inspiring, empowering and even transformative. This policy proposes bringing art to where people are – in their homes, towns and communities – by making museum and gallery loans easier and promoting an open data policy. We also propose a culture pass for young people.

### ***Futureproofing our heritage***

Our workforce needs to be equipped with the correct skills to maintain and future-proof our heritage. We also propose educational measures to inspire the next generation to engage and value our heritage.

### ***A new deal for libraries: books and beyond***

Reinvesting in expanded library services nationally and a universal library card could provide everyone, from early years to the elderly, with an attractive multipurpose space that has culture and community, digital studios and streaming services, literacy and information at its core.

## **PART 3 - Paying for the arts**

### ***A full financial review and new funding models***

We propose a comprehensive financial review of arts funding, not only to ensure that distribution bodies pursue the most effective strategies, but also to identify new coalitions and new approaches. This section contains several proposals, ranging from a government review of Arts Council England to the creation of a ‘smart fund’.

### ***Introducing a city tourism charge***

A key new funding source for the sector could be achieved by formally granting metro mayors the power to implement a ‘progressive city tourism charge’ on hotels and tourist accommodation in England. This would be locally administered and distributed to support cultural infrastructure and cultural place-making.

### ***A talent ‘pipeline’ fund***

Generous fiscal incentives for the creative industries should come with strings attached, with a small share of the tax relief cultural industries receive invested in a new skills and talent ‘pipeline’ fund. This policy could help ensure that government commits to maintaining/increasing such incentives, envisaging a ‘virtuous circle’ approach, with commercial growth feeding back to the grassroots.

### ***A closer relationship with Europe***

Britain's relationship with Europe is fundamental to our future cultural prosperity. We welcome the government's intention to look afresh at the post-Brexit arrangements. Resetting that relationship for the arts, including rejoining Creative Europe and establishing a visa waiver arrangement, would have a profound impact.

*“Human creativity is part of the  
continual renewal and unfolding of life:  
art and evolution go hand in hand –  
we are all makers of the future.”*

—

Antony Gormley, Fabian Review, July 2024

# **PART 1**

STARTING YOUNG:  
ARTS AND CULTURE IN SCHOOLS

# CHAPTER 1

## EMBEDDING ARTS AND CREATIVITY IN THE CURRICULUM

The arts (music, dance, drama, art, design and technology, and craft) should be fully embedded in a reformed national curriculum – and valued as an essential part of a broad and balanced education. Already, the Labour government has committed to a creative education for every child, starting with an immediate change to school accountability measures to end the exclusion of the arts, and a review of the national curriculum to better include creative subjects.

This would be a dramatic turnaround. During the 14 years of Conservative government, the arts were eroded in state-maintained schools. This has led to a situation where arts education has increasingly become the preserve of the privileged few.

The EBacc and Progress 8, accountability measures introduced in 2010 and 2016 respectively, exclude the arts from the longlist of subjects which pupils are encouraged to take at GCSE level. Both are a performance measure for schools, rather than a qualification for pupils.<sup>4</sup> They have resulted in the deprioritisation of the arts, and a 47 per cent reduction in the number of arts entries at GCSE between 2009/10 and 2022/23.<sup>5</sup>



Given the devaluation of the arts by the recent Conservative governments, it is perhaps unsurprising that the number of secondary school arts teachers (excluding dance, for which data was unavailable) fell by 21 per cent between 2011/12 and 2022/23.<sup>6</sup> Recruitment targets for both music and art and design have been consistently unmet. Between 2010/11 and 2022/23, the vacancy rate for art and design teachers more than tripled and teacher recruitment in music fell by 56 per cent.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to find data for the number of arts specialists in primary schools, but it is recognised that the majority of generalist primary teachers lack confidence in teaching the arts effectively.<sup>8</sup> The rigour and construction of the arts curriculum as it stands also needs to be addressed.

The undervaluing of arts education in our state-maintained schools and the cuts it has faced demonstrate a stark inequality in provision. Private schools invest substantially in arts and culture provision, and promote a broad curriculum that allows children to pursue their passions and strengths and to build their skills and confidence. For many children, school also acts as a gateway to arts and culture.

To broaden participation, improve education and tackle inequality, it is vital that the arts are restored in our state schools and that curriculum reform also applies to multi-academy schools.

Such reform should ensure that every primary school spends a

minimum of 10 per cent of each school day on arts subjects. The arts are as rich and varied in their scope as English language and English literature. In other words, each arts subject straddles many dimensions; for example, creative, expressive, theoretical and historical. The arts should not therefore be confined to niche areas or regarded solely in terms of ‘enrichment’: they are some of the best interdisciplinary and crossdisciplinary tools at a teacher’s disposal, enabling many lessons and children to spring to life. They are both empowering and inclusive, and are proven to aid wellbeing, personal and social development and academic attainment.

## **VISUAL LITERACY: A FOURTH PILLAR OF LEARNING**

The government should incorporate visual literacy into a modernised school curriculum and help establish a solid academic methodology for its use in UK schools and programmes.

Visual literacy means being able to critically observe, question, analyse and articulate what one sees and develop the language and oracy skills needed to communicate key visual information effectively. Works of art and images provide the best route in, because they distil visual information and ideas, provide focus according to intention, and often guide interpretation and emotional connection – helping people to look purposefully and meaningfully. Art UK’s ‘Superpower of Looking’ programme deploys this methodology and is currently being rolled out

nationally in primary schools.<sup>9</sup>

A visual literacy education can also enhance careers of all kinds. For example, the New York Police Department has taken part in programmes devoted to close observation of museum paintings to help officers discover and communicate pertinent visual information, notice things they may have missed, and recognise the biases that distort decision processes. In a similar way, trainee medics have been taken to museum sculpture collections, to help them look more acutely and thus avoid, for example, diagnoses based on cursory assumptions.

The teaching of visual literacy is now even more vital. The visual world that children encounter in their everyday lives has become ever more sophisticated, with images now perhaps the most accessible, immediate, powerful, and easily manipulated form of communication. The value of visual literacy programmes in teaching children how to navigate and interrogate images in terms of online know-how and safety is beginning to be recognised.

Further research into how the guided observation and discussion of artworks in schools can support the development of visual literacy and oracy skills is recommended, together with an evaluation of how the acquisition of these skills can improve the life chances of children and young people.

## **INCORPORATE ENGLAND'S AND THE UK'S INTANGIBLE HERITAGE INTO A REFORMED CURRICULUM**

The UK is rich in traditions including crafts, customs and celebrations. Basket weaving, thatching, tartan making, pantomime, morris dancing, Scottish and Welsh traditional dance, Sheffield carols and wassailing have all been practised for centuries. Thousands of people across the country participate in these activities every year, yet they are not yet recognised as 'intangible cultural heritage' and afforded protection.

The Conservative government intended to ratify the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage but it never did. The Labour government should not only support the ratification of the convention and the addition of British heritage to the protected list, but go one step further by incorporating our intangible cultural heritage into a reformed school curriculum for England. Traditions, customs and celebrations should be taught in a cross-curricular way, informing children's understanding of the development of the arts across history.

## **INTEGRATE ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN NON-LESSON TIME**

School is the main access point for the arts for many children, yet young people from the most disadvantaged areas are least likely to be able to access cultural activity inside school.<sup>10</sup> The integration of arts activities into non-lesson time would offer an

important opportunity for extra learning and exposure to different art forms.

Arts activities and visiting professionals should be integrated into Labour's planned breakfast clubs, and wraparound care should include arts and cultural activity options. All schools should have arts assemblies at least once a week and singing assemblies should happen regularly. Every primary school should ensure that daily story time for early years foundation stage and reading time for KS1–KS2 occurs. Books and quiet spaces should be available during wraparound care, lunchtime and breaktime.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY METRICS**

Labour has pledged to review accountability measures and has announced that the EBacc set of subjects and Progress 8 performance measure will in future include one creative or vocational subject. This is a welcome move. But while this change restores value to the arts subjects by putting them on par with current EBacc and Progress 8 subjects, it will also be vital to ensure that pupils are able to consider taking a creative subject at GCSE and A-level. There must be teachers to teach these subjects, facilities and resources within schools, and further encouragement and rhetoric from school senior leaders and the government that the arts and vocational subjects are valuable, worthwhile and a crucial part of a high-quality, broad education.

We also welcome Labour's pledge to introduce Ofsted report cards, instead of one-word judgements. We believe another way to encourage high quality arts education within schools would be to include a specific arts section on these report cards.

## **TEACH FIRST FOR THE ARTS**

Targets are not being met for the recruitment of arts teachers.<sup>11</sup> The difficulty in recruitment and retention contributes to arts being squeezed out of the curriculum and the reduction in pupil numbers choosing to take arts subjects beyond KS3.<sup>12</sup> Becoming a teacher should be a financially and creatively attractive career choice for recent arts graduates or artists who want a career change, whether that is a generalist in primary school or a specialist in secondary schools.

Labour should introduce a scheme like Teach First designed to encourage arts graduates to start a career in teaching. A Teach First for the Arts scheme could place arts graduates into state schools in areas of high child poverty and low social mobility to increase academic outcomes and provide access to opportunities in our most disadvantaged communities. With a tendering exercise for Teach First post-2027 now launched, a new arts pathway within the scheme could be considered.

## **ARTS PUPIL PREMIUM**

Labour should introduce ringfenced funding for the arts in

primary school, based on the PE and sports premium. Initially, this premium provided £150m annual funding to primary schools, an average of nearly £9000 per school. The arts premium should match the current PE and sports premium rate. Schools could use the funding however they wished; for instance, to increase the engagement of all pupils in arts education by funding school trips, employing part-time specialist arts teachers or purchasing new equipment. The Conservatives promised an arts premium as a manifesto pledge in 2019 but did not deliver.

An arts pupil premium could be particularly beneficial for pupils already in receipt of pupil premium. The additional funding per pupil could finance free instrument lessons, for example.

## **TWINNING**

For many children, the main way of accessing the arts is through school. There is therefore an opportunity to enhance a child's engagement with the arts via schools 'twinning' with local arts organisations. Engaging with arts professionals as well as subject teachers inspires young people – it shows children what is possible and provides them with all-important mentors.

There are already impressive examples of schools twinning with arts organisations. In September 2020 the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment moved into Acland Burghley School in north London. Since then, Acland Burghley and the OAE

have fostered a close relationship that benefits both parties and the local community, with a new financial model that supports both the orchestra and the school. New opportunities for pupils created by the partnership to date include access to concerts and rehearsals, creating joint school events (musicals, concerts, open days etc) and a young producers' programme, in which pupils gain experience in arts event production. According to an evaluation undertaken since the orchestra moved into the school, the GCSE pass rate has risen from 24 per cent to 77 per cent,<sup>13</sup> and in summer 2023 the school registered the highest attendance in Camden.<sup>14</sup>

Twinning arts organisations with schools does not have to replicate the OAE/Acland Burghley model directly. After all, many schools do not have the space to house a residence scheme. Whatever model a school adopts, it should be focused on community connections, increased participation in the arts, and wider opportunities for children.

## **A NEW NATIONAL SONGBOOK**

Singing is one of the most accessible forms of music-making. It requires very little, if any, equipment and can be done in a regular classroom. In 2007, the last Labour government introduced a national singing programme, Sing Up, which aimed to ensure that every primary school-aged child took part in high-quality singing activity every day.<sup>15</sup> Sing Up received £10m funding per year between 2007 and 2011, and £4m in



2012. This funding was cut by the coalition government, and in April 2012, Sing Up became a not-for-profit organisation.

At its peak, Sing Up reached 98 per cent of primary schools<sup>16</sup> and by the end of March 2011, the scheme was working in partnership with every music service in England.<sup>17</sup> However, since the central funding for Sing Up was cut, opportunities to sing in school have diminished<sup>18</sup> and it is widely reported that a lack of confidence among teachers to teach music and singing is a barrier to delivering a high quality music curriculum.<sup>19</sup>

To reinvigorate singing in our state primary schools, aid teachers' musical confidence and help democratise music education, we suggest that the new Labour government endorse a new 'national songbook'. The songbook would first and foremost be a national participatory scheme for all primary schools, to encourage group singing and song writing and to provide a new corpus of songs for children and communities to sing together, which could sit alongside songs specially composed for the project by the greatest songwriters of today.

Participating schools and young people would be given digital resources and guidance on how to write their own songs, and workshops would be provided for staff's continuing professional development. These songs would be entered into a national competition, with winners chosen from each of the nine regions in England by a panel of industry leaders.

This new national songbook could be both physical and digital, and distributed across England.

The scheme would be delivered through private foundations and publishing and broadcasting partners, with government providing the framework and support.

## **A CHILDHOOD ARTS GUARANTEE**

A commitment to high quality, regular arts and cultural education for all children must play a key part in Labour's fifth mission in government: to break down barriers to opportunity.

A cornerstone of this commitment should be a guarantee that every child will participate in key artistic and cultural experiences by the time they leave primary school. We propose a childhood arts guarantee called 11 by 11 to help put some flesh on the bones. This guarantee would give all children the opportunity to participate in arts, culture and our shared heritage, removing the class ceiling which prevents many children from participating currently. It would inspire a new generation of artists, improve wellbeing and help create the ideas of the future.

11 by 11 would guarantee the opportunity to:

1. Learn a musical instrument.
2. Act in a drama.
3. Visit the best art, culture and heritage (natural and built), locally and nationally, with at least one visit a year.
4. Use a library and read for pleasure.
5. Learn a traditional or contemporary dance style.
6. Sing in a choir.
7. Learn about great artworks and artists, including authors, poets, performers, composers etc.
8. Watch and review a feature film.
9. Use digital tools to create an artwork, podcast, photography or video.
10. Perform or display artistic talents, for example in school plays and performances, music ensembles and exhibitions.
11. Help design and paint a mural at the end of year 6, which could serve as a legacy work for the next generation of children.

## CHAPTER 2

### A NATIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION SERVICE

There is a substantial body of evidence underscoring the importance of music education, with studies showing that engagement with music, and the arts more widely, significantly improves wellbeing<sup>20</sup> and academic attainment.<sup>21</sup> Despite these benefits, music education has been decimated in state-maintained schools by successive governments between 2010 and 2024, leading to a ‘stark picture of erosion and inequality’.<sup>22</sup>

The EBacc and Progress 8 accountability metrics, introduced by the coalition government in 2010, have led to music and the arts being squeezed out of the curriculum.<sup>23</sup> There is now a workforce crisis, with music specialist teachers leaving the profession in droves: the last Conservative government failed to meet its own recruitment targets. Previous Fabian research found that in state primary school settings, teachers feel they do not have the skills and confidence to teach music effectively and believe that both the quality and quantity of music in school is much reduced.<sup>24</sup>

Music education hubs overseen by Arts Council England, with funding from the DfE, replaced local authority run music services in 2012 in response to the National Plan for Music

Education.<sup>25</sup> These hubs are designed to be ‘partnerships that support, deliver and enable access to music education for young people and young people within a local area’.<sup>26</sup> Hubs work with schools and other partners to provide whole class, individual and small group instrumental and vocal tuition, ensembles and musical opportunities.

Thousands of children miss out on these hub-led music education opportunities – including many of those who would benefit most. There is a postcode lottery in provision. Hubs face workforce shortages and struggle to recruit, and teachers who do work for hubs report low salaries and a lack of professional respect.<sup>27</sup> Yet brilliant work is being done by hubs within a difficult context, and hardworking hub employees are not to be blamed for the shortcomings in music education. The issues faced by hubs are partly the result of sustained real-term budget cuts. In September 2024 ACE’s Music Hub Investment Programme reduced the number of hubs by almost a half, from 116 to 43, in a move, they stated, to increase consistency, quality and breadth.

To address this deteriorating situation, Labour committed to a National Music Education Network in its manifesto. We recommend going one essential step further: to reduce fragmentation in music education and increase access and opportunity for all children, a National Music Education Service should be introduced.

The service would act as an umbrella body within which each of the new 43 hubs would sit. It would offer national leadership and consistency in bringing together the music sector and schools – without stifling local identity, innovation and knowledge. The responsibility for coordinating the service could continue to sit within Arts Council England or as part of a different organisation. For example, the Welsh National Music Service is administered by the Welsh Local Government Association.

A National Music Education Service should:

- Commit to a core mission of ending fragmentation by reducing the complexity of the current structure. There would be an explicit obligation for all publicly funded schools to engage with the NMES, as many are already doing with local hubs, to ensure seamless provision.
- Prioritise engaging underrepresented groups. The NMES would require hubs to set out how they will increase participation in high-quality music education for under-represented groups – with provision for children with special educational needs, both in mainstream and special schools, a particular focus. The NMES should also require hubs to engage with children in the early years foundation stage (in schools and other settings).

- Create a music education workforce guarantee. A workforce guarantee, in the form of a charter incorporated into the funding agreements between the coordinating body of the NMES and local organisations, should set out guidelines on what teaching by well-trained and well-paid staff looks like in the hubs. It should offer secure work for all staff, rather than zero-hours contracts – with the necessary flexibility on hours, for example, built in.
- Provide robust and appropriate accountability measures and data gathering to ensure that public money is spent effectively and the quality of music education across the country is recorded and evaluated.
- Create a national instrument library, including adapted instruments, so that every child can learn an instrument of their choice.
- Provide a network – a ‘landing point’ for parents, teachers and carers detailing NMES services, including a hub-finder tool, teaching resources and instrument banks.

A National Music Education Service cannot be created for free, but it would not cost significantly more than the current cost of music education hubs, providing their budget is adjusted for inflation. In its first year, a National Music Education Service would cost a minimum of £100m, equivalent in real terms to the

2011 budget for hubs. On top of this, a national instrument library could cost around £25m. This amount was promised by the previous Conservative government in June 2022 yet has gone unspent. The service should have a long-term funding settlement, to allow it to realise its full potential, with annual allocations made well in advance of each financial year. Annual allocations should increase each year to account for inflation.

## **Welsh National Music Education Service**

The Welsh National Music Service was established in 2022 and is responsible for implementing the National Music Plan for Music Education. The service brings all key partners together (including schools, music services, other education services and the wider arts community) to ensure that every child can easily access a musical path, whether they want to sing, play or compose. As laid out in the national plan, the service is responsible for setting up a national instrument and equipment library, coordinating professional learning support, developing initiatives on diversity and inclusion and ensemble development.

The Welsh National Music Service is led by the Welsh Local Government Association which is responsible for governance arrangements and allocating funding.



## CHAPTER 3

### BOX IT UP: MINI-MUSEUMS IN THE CLASSROOM

For many children, the main point of access to cultural institutions such as museums, galleries and heritage sites is through school trips and it is broadly accepted that cultural learning experiences can significantly benefit children's development.<sup>28</sup> Visiting a museum enriches a child's life experience: it broadens their horizons by giving them the chance to experience something out of the ordinary and introduces them to new places, people and objects.

However, school trips – and therefore the opportunity to experience the wonder of museums – are in decline as schools struggle with budget cuts. A survey by the National Foundation for Educational Research on behalf of the Sutton Trust found that 50 per cent of senior leaders reported cutting school trips in 2023 due to financial pressures, a rise of 21 per cent compared to 2022.<sup>29</sup>

This is an issue of equity, accessibility and opportunity, with 68 per cent of senior leaders in the most disadvantaged schools having to make cuts to trips, versus 44 per cent in the wealthiest.

In a climate that makes funding and coordinating school trips difficult, one way for the benefits of hands-on engagement with local and national heritage to be realised is through a museum loan box service. Such schemes allow a museum's artefacts to be explored within the classroom, giving children the opportunity to engage with their local cultural and heritage offering in an immediate way.

Examples of this type of scheme already exist and are successful. Since 2018, Leeds Museum and Art Galleries have run a membership scheme, loaning boxes of artefacts to local schools and offering teachers curriculum support, teacher training and access to local resources. This is part of the Leeds Cultural Curriculum, a specially tailored curriculum that teaches children about the arts and heritage of Leeds.<sup>30</sup> In August 2022, it was reported that the Leeds Cultural Curriculum reaches around half the primary schools in the city.

The new government should require all publicly funded museums, galleries and other appropriate institutions to provide a schools loan box scheme for primary schools. Funding could come from DCMS and DfE, with support from charitable foundations.

'Box It Up' would allow pupils in every school to handle, access and engage with objects in the classroom and connect with local and national history and archaeology – as well as providing a tool for multidisciplinary learning. Variations on this approach

include the Museum of London's 'mini-museum' boxes of Roman materials, provided to state and special schools in London.

The 'Gold Box' scheme in Leeds currently costs £2,200 per school, which includes 10 loan boxes per year, as well as 10 workshops, resources, and teacher CPD days. Based on this, we estimate an England-wide scheme for all primary schools would cost £37m. As part of this scheme, galleries and other institutions should also provide easily accessible material from their exhibits and archives, such as high-resolution images, to all schools.

Importantly, a loan box scheme must not replace school trips for children who attend state-maintained schools.

## **PART 2**

THE ARTS WHERE WE LIVE

# CHAPTER 4

## ARTS FOR US ALL

In December 2001, Labour established free admission to the UK's national museums and galleries, following a successful four-year campaign under culture secretary Chris Smith. Central to this achievement was the VAT policy – formulated by the Art Fund in collaboration with the Charities Tax Reform Group – which allowed all charging museums<sup>31</sup> to drop admission fees and still reclaim VAT as a business.

This landmark policy has been maintained and funded by successive Labour and Conservative governments ever since and has become a cornerstone of British cultural values at home and abroad. It is spoken of in the same breath as the generous culture passes that our European neighbours have introduced for their young people [see page 39]. But unlike schemes for young people, free admission opens doors to all.

Our Arts for All policy proposal builds on that achievement. It recognises that after 14 years of austerity and during a cost of living crisis many young people and families cannot afford to travel to their nearest national museum or gallery or to otherwise share in our nation's extraordinary cultural wealth, up and down the country, in cities and in towns. The policy helps to underline the new government's manifesto commitments

with a view to democratising culture.

Encountering great art, historical objects and cultural experiences in all their extraordinary richness and diversity can be incredibly inspiring, empowering and even transformative. This policy proposes bringing art to where people are, as well as widening access and participation to the arts, and consists of three elements:

- An open data policy for our publicly funded museums and galleries – ensuring high-resolution images of great art can be freely downloaded at home and in the classroom.
- A distribution and dissemination directive applied to all publicly supported arts organisations, to ensure that they increase the number of loans to public buildings and spaces. This would be enabled by a fresh review of the government indemnity scheme, presently managed by the Arts Council, to make it much easier to loan and exchange artefacts and artworks.
- A culture pass or equivalent for young people, to enable wider participation in the arts, across all the many art forms and experiences.

## **EXTEND FREE ACCESS TO FREE DIGITAL IMAGES FOR EVERYONE**

The government should require all the UK's nationally funded museums and galleries to adopt an open data policy, directing them to offer high-resolution images, free of charge, for all out of copyright works via their websites, together with accompanying metadata. This open-data model will facilitate study, scholarship, access, play and creative applications, making their collections more accessible and sharable. For best practice, we can look to the highly successful Rijksmuseum model.<sup>32</sup> The National Gallery of Washington has a similarly enlightened scheme.<sup>33</sup>

At present, access to high-quality images is hampered by administration fees and bureaucracy – websites do not always publish high-resolution images, permissions can take months, and the reproduction fees act as a discouragement to scholars and publishers. The costs of administering the present systems also means that image fees rarely provide a meaningful source of income to museums and galleries. In the case of major commercial applications, partnership terms could be negotiated instead.

Many of the objects in national museums and galleries are in the public domain – including most of their greatest masterpieces – which means that copyright is no longer applicable: they are, in essence, public property. The accompanying metadata on website images should make it clear which images this applies to.

## A case in point

The National Gallery of Art Washington allows open access to works of art that it believes are in the public domain for both non-commercial and commercial use, under Creative Commons Zero.<sup>34</sup> If such a scheme were adopted in the UK, it would remain for individual museums to decide what restrictions, if any, they want to impose regarding commercial use. In the Washington example, all public domain images can be used without the gallery's authorisation, and can be downloaded at [nga.gov.objects](https://www.nga.gov/objects) pages. The gallery states: "The National Gallery of Art serves the nation by welcoming all people to explore and experience art, creativity, and our shared humanity. In pursuing this mission, we make collection images and information available to scholars, educators, and the general public to support research, teaching, and personal enrichment; to promote interdisciplinary research; and to nurture an appreciation of all that inspires great works of art."



## **TAKE ART TO EVERYONE, WHEREVER THEY ARE**

The government should also require all publicly invested arts organisations to have a broader dissemination and distribution strategy for their objects. This should include taking objects to public buildings and spaces where people naturally congregate and providing learning opportunities for the people viewing them. Recipients could include schools, libraries, GP surgeries, hospitals, town halls, community hubs, courts, and shopping centres. The British Museum is taking a fresh look at the concept of the ‘universal museum’, modelled on a ‘lending library’, to enable universal access. The National Gallery’s National Treasures bicentenary programme demonstrates how loans can act as catalysts for local sponsorship, artist interventions, and increased footfall, as well as highlighting the benefits of working closely with partners and communities to avoid a top-down approach. The Government Art Collection could also be shared much more widely on this basis, and is well-equipped to do so: its collection is designed to be loaned and therefore does not include fragile objects.

To enable this, the government should instigate a fresh review of the government indemnity scheme, currently administered by Arts Council England, so that insurance arrangements for loaning and touring objects are easier and cheaper and more focussed on environmental requirements, enabling more objects to tour the UK. The present system is universally regarded by museum and gallery professionals as unnecessarily onerous and not eco-efficient.

## **A CULTURE PASS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The government should also explore the potential of a culture pass, a programme which has been launched in several European countries in recent years to give young people access to arts and culture destinations and materials, with schemes operating in France, Germany, Spain, and Italy. These are primarily available to young people on their 18th birthday and have significantly increased their participation in culture while at the same time providing financial support to the cultural sector. The longer-term goal is to inculcate a habit of engaging with arts and culture. The passes are accessed via a website and an app, and delivered by government in partnership with major sponsors, complementing a range of discount offers and promotions from partnering cultural organisations.

A British culture pass could be available at the age of 16 – a crucial time in a young person's life and schooling. Such schemes are not just a 'birthday present': they are driven by a belief that in times of increasing polarisation, cultural education through participation plays a crucial role in strengthening social cohesion and democracy.<sup>35</sup> Germany's Finance minister, Christian Lindner, also describes their pass as 'cultural start-up capital'.<sup>36</sup> The 'Kulturpass', launched in 2023 at an estimated government cost of 100m euros, initially offered €200 to every 18-year-old, later reduced to €100 due to budgetary constraints. It has since generated 32m euros for participating cultural institutions.

This policy proposes exploring a culture pass initiative along the German lines, which is well-considered in its structure and delivery mechanisms. For instance, it includes measures to support purchases through book shops, circumventing online giants like Amazon. With 14,000 cultural organisations involved, Kulturpass's 350,000 participants can choose to spend on products from a wide range of categories: books, concerts and theatre, cinema, museums, parks and exhibitions, musical instruments, sound storage media, sheet music and workshops.

For comparison, the French culture pass category for 18-year-olds, which launched in 2021, entitles holders to cumulative credit of up to 300 Euros, while the Spanish voucher, launched in 2022, offers 400 Euros and had nearly 60 per cent uptake in its first year. The French scheme includes subscriptions to approved services such as international cinema and French streaming channels, newspapers, and journals.

# CHAPTER 5

## FUTUREPROOFING OUR HERITAGE

It is clear that Britain's glorious built heritage matters to the public: between 2022 and 2023, the National Trust welcomed 24.1 million visitors at its pay-for-entry properties,<sup>37</sup> and English Heritage welcomed 5.5 million visitors to its historic sites.<sup>38</sup>

The wellbeing benefits of engaging with heritage and the historic built and natural environment are increasingly researched and documented. Historic England notes that heritage engagement can “play a key role in tackling mental ill health by reducing anxiety and stress, increasing happiness and contributing to life satisfaction.”<sup>39</sup> As well as this, it adds: “Heritage can encourage people to feel more positive about their local area, contributing to a stronger shared sense of place and increased civic pride.”<sup>40</sup>

Despite this, the heritage sector faces multiple challenges:

- Buildings are crumbling and require urgent capital investment.
- Buildings are being adversely affected by the consequences of climate change and need safeguarding

against erosion, flooding and extreme weather events.

- Buildings need to be retrofitted to help the UK meet net zero targets.
- The UK currently does not train enough people in the heritage, retrofit and construction skills needed to maintain historic buildings, and some traditional skills are on the brink of extinction.
- The workforce is not currently large enough to meet retrofit and repair demands.
- Fewer children are visiting heritage sites on school trips, reducing childhood inspirational educational opportunities, which may have encouraged future careers in heritage.

## **KEY FIGURES**

- The 2023 Heritage at Risk register, published by Historic England, has 4,871 entries – this means that almost 5,000 heritage buildings are identified as being the “most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development”.<sup>41</sup>
- Since 2013, 3,500 churches have closed, and thousands more are in such disrepair and subject to such

budgetary constraints that they face closure.<sup>42</sup>

- There are currently 146 heritage crafts on the red list of endangered crafts, of which 62 have been classified as critically endangered and 84 as endangered.<sup>43</sup>
- In a recent survey of 162 Heritage Pulse panel members, 78 per cent said they are currently experiencing cost or budget cuts. Of these organisations, 62 per cent said they believe the situation will only get worse next year. The cuts have been felt most in terms of opening hours and public access, education and community programmes, and building and technical maintenance.<sup>44</sup>

To address workforce issues, Labour has committed to reworking the apprenticeship levy into a ‘growth and skills levy’. This will increase the flexibility of how funds can be used, including, for example, courses in priority areas that teach green skills. These reforms were recommended by Historic England in its *Heritage and Carbon: Addressing the Skills Gap* report, but the report also recommends that a national retrofit strategy should be created. This strategy would necessitate a long-term approach to protecting our built heritage, packaging together ‘skills, training, funding, standards and advice’. Within this, industry standards should be updated and applied to support historic retrofit. The specific approach to retrofit should be local, with government supporting the development of local skills improvement plans and area-based schemes.

By addressing skills gaps and shortages, more workers would be qualified to work on heritage projects. This would not, however, address the issue of the immediate capital required to secure crumbling heritage buildings. This aspect could be tackled via a specially-designed National Lottery scheme [see our recommendations in the Paying for the Arts chapter.]

It is important that the current workforce is equipped with the correct skills to maintain and future-proof our heritage and that capital works are completed. Of equal importance is inspiring the next generation to engage and value our heritage – this begins in primary school. Our policy ideas, some of which we have already outlined above in our recommendations on the school curriculum, include:

- **Making school trips to local heritage sites (which might be as simple as visiting a local park, church or memorial) compulsory every year in primary school** as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- **Ensuring lessons on traditional crafts are available in schools.** Participants in a survey by Heritage Crafts stated that key issues within the heritage craft sector were market issues, training and recruitment issues, shortages of raw materials, and lack of demand for products/skills. The training and recruitment issues and the lack of demand for products and skills could be partially solved by introducing traditional crafts education.

- **Widening Historic England's Heritage Schools Scheme and ensuring the teaching of local heritage is compulsory in a reformed national curriculum.**  
Historic England's Heritage Schools scheme, funded by DfE, works by training one primary school lead teacher to embed local heritage into their school's curriculum, with support from Historic England regional staff, and to pass on their knowledge and training to other teachers in the school. Once the scheme is completed, the school is given the Heritage School Award. The scheme has already reached 400 schools but there are thousands of schools that are not participating. Labour should increase funding and roll out this scheme to more primary schools, particularly those in socially deprived areas.



# CHAPTER 6

## A NEW DEAL FOR LIBRARIES: BOOKS AND BEYOND

British libraries have undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, adapting to the evolving needs of their communities while leveraging advancements in technology and education. At a community level, there has been a concerted effort to modernise library services, enhance accessibility, and foster a culture of lifelong learning and literacy.

One of the most notable improvements has been the integration of digital resources and technology into library spaces. Libraries have embraced the digital age by offering e-books, online databases, and access to digital archives. This shift has built on libraries' historic role of democratising knowledge. It has allowed individuals from all walks of life to engage with educational materials and cultural resources at their convenience.

There are so many individual success stories, from Oxford's Westgate Library – one of the most effective business and intellectual property centres – to Suffolk's libraries with their innovative focus on health and wellbeing.

While libraries have borne the brunt of local funding cuts to cultural services, with many closures, they have still found

innovative new ways to meet community needs. Most libraries now host early years activities tailored to developing preschool language and communication skills, while partners such as The Reading Agency have placed reading for pleasure and literacy for all at the heart of the modern library. Each year, 700,000 children take part in the organisation's summer reading challenge, including over 48,000 early years children in 2023, supporting a new generation at a time when local resources are scarce. During the 2023 summer reading challenge, more than 133,000 children became library members for the first time, reading and borrowing over 14 million books, eBooks and audio titles throughout the summer months. Independent research<sup>45</sup> highlighted the significant impact on those who took part: reading more frequently, enjoying reading more, and feeling more confident doing so than those who had not participated. Children also experienced benefits to their mental wellbeing and the ability to manage negative emotions.

In Leeds, infants have access to play-boxes with toys and games specifically engineered to help boost literacy and numeracy skills, while in St Helens, a year-long partnership with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra gave pregnant and perinatal women and their babies a series of music courses to support their wellbeing.<sup>46</sup>

At a local level, there has been profound creativity on the part of libraries to reimagine themselves – with getting people through the door key to survival. Learning from initiatives will

be fundamental to building a new national agenda. Libraries' core purpose – lending books, sourcing knowledge and information, improving literacy and providing quiet spaces to research, write and read – should still be at the heart of their universal offer. But expanding that offer, in partnership with local authorities and librarians, will ensure that these vital institutions are futureproofed when it comes to changing habits and behaviours.

## **A UNIVERSAL LIBRARY CARD**

It is incumbent on the government to promote and perpetuate the sector's successes. This starts with access. Library membership should be assumed rather than applied for, with a universal library card supplied to every newborn British citizen. Raising awareness from birth that libraries are a statutory requirement, offering a range of free services locally in every community, will increase demand and not only provide enrichment but serve to ease the burden on other strained public services. Previous pilot schemes of automatic library membership found that parents unfamiliar with library services were unlikely to take their children, but when what libraries had to offer was promoted with tangible activities, there was a bigger increase in first-time attendance. Outreach strategies should be devised at a community level, with no top-down or one-size-fits-all approach, but promoting access to all and building visits needs to be at the heart of any national library agenda.

Investment in expanded library services nationally has scope for providing everyone, from early years to older people, with an attractive multipurpose space that has culture, literacy and information at its core. One recent study<sup>47</sup> in the USA found that 43 per cent of gen Zs and millennials don't identify as readers – but about half of those non-readers still visited their local library in the past year. Black gen Zs and millennials visit libraries at particularly high rates. The universal appeal and value of a free-to-use, communal space with accessible wifi cannot be underestimated.

This phenomenon has not yet crossed the Atlantic, most likely because British libraries have commonly lacked the resources to promote the benefits that have been apparent to American young people. With half of the 30 per cent cuts to local authorities' real terms capital and revenue expenditure between 2009/10 and 2019/20 falling on library services, many are operating with reduced hours and far more limited resources – including rudimentary social media marketing – than their American equivalents.

## **SILICON CORNER**

Every community will always require a free-to-access pathway to the internet. Libraries, therefore, have a permanent function on which to build: access not only to physical books, but widening the availability of e-books, digitised archives, audio-visual content, cultural artefacts; access to innovative

creative training (from IP to coding); and providing space/retraining for education in the skills of tomorrow. It would, in effect, mean that every library has a ‘silicon corner’ providing free-to-access facilities specific to tech, and ensuring – through ‘hosts’ and ‘genius guides’ – that we no longer have digitally dispossessed segments of the population.

Such a policy would require new coalitions, in which there is already an active interest from prospective partners. Apple, Google and BT could invest in providing SME and start-up advice as well as providing the services to develop expertise. As the BBC re-evaluates its role, there is scope for the broadcaster to be a catalyst on the high street, integrating local radio and newscasting into libraries (with considerable savings to be made for the BBC selling off its antiquated sound studios). This could inject new vigour into local journalism and ensure that a vital element of our community media environment is built on rather than eroded.

## **AV PODS/NATIONAL STREAMING SERVICE**

There is also potential for partnerships with private and philanthropic funders to finance a free-to-use ‘national streaming service,’ unifying existing schemes such as BFI Replay with other partners. Initial talks with leading arts organisations, including the Royal Opera House, garnered enthusiasm for screening their content free-of-charge within libraries for the purpose of education and enrichment.

As a model, this expansion of libraries' universal offer would still allow local flexibility for incorporating other community-facing elements. For instance, some libraries already provide services that relate to other policy areas, such as healthcare, for example, health and wellbeing advice, blood pressure testing, social prescription, and reading therapy. In law and order, the role libraries could play in rehabilitation programmes for first-time offenders could be more constructive than other forms of community service. However, libraries need to retain their core identity and purpose; community services must surround a compelling cultural, information and educational offer.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to facilitate this revitalisation of our libraries, we propose:

- A specific 'libraries and community digital' minister sitting between DCMS and DLUC. This should be someone with previous experience of delivering on big infrastructure projects across national and local government who can focus solely on this project, managing different interests in the sector together with the needs of local communities. The first priority would be to collect consistent and robust data as the foundation for evidence-based decision-making.

- A trailblazer scheme focusing on Manchester's libraries with the cooperation of Manchester mayor Andy Burnham. This would require a ballpark investment of £10m raised via private finance match-funded with a dedicated National Lottery strand via the Community Fund (see below). It would finance both the proposed regeneration of infrastructure and the establishment of a partnership consortium.
- Explore redirecting a portion of the National Lottery Community Fund to both contribute directly to the initial proposal and potentially provide a permanent new funding stream for new programmes. Last year, the fund distributed £615m via 13,858 grants. The £5m intended for the initial "trailblazer scheme" would amount to 0.8 per cent of that amount. In 2007, the Community Fund focused heavily on the Community Libraries project, worth £80m: 45 of these libraries received more than £1m in October of that year alone. So library-focused initiatives are already well within the fund's remit and could be considered a rationalisation in relation to the specific aims of the fund.

The right to freely pursue knowledge, and equity of access, should be the core principles of any library, which can be interpreted much more broadly given the scope of new media and means of accessing information and inspiration. Our ambition for libraries is to ensure they are equipped for the

future while conserving and revitalising their historic public purpose. Technology must be at the heart of renewing libraries and expanding access to learning, culture and literacy, in all media, to all.



## **PART 3**

PAYING FOR THE ARTS

# CHAPTER 7

## A FINANCIAL REVIEW

Our arts and creative industries are vital to our global standing. Their contribution to our economy and culture is huge. Yet, at the same time, budgets have been stretched to breaking point.

There is an urgent need for a full financial review, not only to ensure that arts distribution bodies pursue the most effective strategies, but also to identify new coalitions and new approaches. In particular, we need to understand the interdependency of the arts, the creative industries and digital innovation; only then can we take a modern approach to policymaking for the sector.

We will need financial models that have sustainability and growth baked in, with redistribution mechanisms that feed and nurture artists and the grassroots.

The three central pillars of this review will include the redeployment of National Lottery funding, a comprehensive assessment of Arts Council England's focus and processes, and a reinforcement of the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts' original remit of supporting the arts in its mix.

## REDEPLOYING LOTTERY FUNDING

A review of National Lottery funding should be the starting point of any financial review of the arts and heritage sectors. It should determine the scope for reprioritising existing spend and the allocation of funds to support future revenue growth. Since its launch in 1994, the National Lottery has raised £48bn for good causes with approximately 685,000 awards granted across the UK.<sup>48</sup> Everyone has benefited from lottery funding, whether through investment in cultural and local infrastructure or via grants awarded to thousands of communities around the country. This funding has become a vital part of financing the arts and cultural health of Britain, and the allocation of that funding has never been more important.

Currently, the National Lottery Distribution Fund (NLDF) allocates:

- 20 per cent to the arts (distributed across Arts Council England, Crea-tive Scotland, Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the British Film Institute).
- 20 per cent to sport (distributed across Sport England, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales, Sport Northern Ireland and UK Sport).
- 20 per cent to heritage causes (distributed via the National Lottery Heritage Fund).

- 40 per cent to charitable, health, education and the environment (distributed via the National Lottery Community Fund).

A lottery review would look at the NLDF and identify how it can best address the crisis in arts and heritage capital and infrastructure funding across the country, as well as ensure the future sustainability (including energy efficiency) of some of our greatest cultural buildings (with a general backlog in capital works and equipment dating back to the 1990s and 2000s). One key change could be to temporarily adjust the level of allocation to Arts and Heritage by 5 per cent, to 25 per cent of the NLDF share overall. (There is a precedent for such reallocations – for example, the 2012 Olympics.) This 5 per cent would be deducted from the 40 per cent earmarked for the Community Fund as a time-limited switch. All capital fundraising over an established threshold that includes such lottery support should have an endowment built into it, so that in future every grant is self-sustaining.

The government should also look into the possibility of deploying the many streams of funding distributed by the Community Fund in a more strategic way, so as to deliver greater impact and support local cultural infrastructure more effectively – libraries being a natural beneficiary of such a change.

## REVIEW OF THE ARTS COUNCIL

As part of a wider financial review of arts funding, we proposed an immediate and full review of Arts Council England.

Since it was founded over 75 years go, the Arts Council has regularly revised its activities and priorities in response to changes in society, the arts and public policy. This review would consider how best to position and support Arts Council England to face the opportunities and imperatives of the next decade.

The review would look into the Arts Council's position as a funder of arts organisations and a facilitator of exper-tise and partnerships across a small number of key objectives, including broadening access and supporting excellence and ambition. It would review both its place in the overall funding of arts and culture and its effectiveness.

Key areas of focus should be:

- How the Arts Council can serve the cultural and creative needs of institutions of national and international significance, together with those of smaller organisations that are rooted in their communities.
- How to maintain and support the arms-length principle, ensuring that the Arts Council's funding decisions are free from political interference from the government of the day.

- How the Arts Council can work most effectively with local and mayoral authorities to meet local and civic needs, and whether consideration should be given to greater devolution in funding and decision-making.
- How well the Arts Council has adapted to supporting the museums and libraries sectors as well as the arts.
- Whether the Arts Council’s current grant application processes, assessment frameworks and funding cycle processes are fit for purpose, and whether there is a case for longer funding cycles.

The review would be managed from within departmental resources. The previous government initiated a review of the Arts Council, but it was paused when the 2024 general election was called.

## **PROTECTING THE ARTS IN NESTA**

The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) was established in 1998 with a remit to “promote talent, creativity and innovation in science, technology and the arts”. The way it was funded was radical – a one-off endowment of £250m from the National Lottery ‘good causes’ pot, later supplemented by a further £75m spread over six years.

NESTA's legislative status and the management of the endowment were significantly altered in 2012 using powers in the Public Bodies Act 2011. As part of the coalition government's public bodies reform programme, NESTA became an independent charity with the endowment transferred into its sole funder, the NESTA Trust.<sup>49</sup> NESTA's fixed assets have now grown to just under £500m. Its charitable objects still prominently include the arts.<sup>50</sup>

The National Lottery Act 1998 described NESTA's statutory mission as "helping talented individuals (or groups of such individuals) in the fields of science, technology and the arts to achieve their potential; helping persons to turn inventions or ideas in the fields of science, technology and the arts into products or services... contributing to public knowledge and appreciation of science, technology and the arts."<sup>51</sup> The act defines the arts as "(a) architecture, design or crafts; (b) the film, audio-visual or broadcasting industries; and (c) the music industry."<sup>52</sup>

Early NESTA initiatives funded a broad range of artistic endeavours, from experimental theatre projects to support for emerging artists and creative enterprises. Its restructuring as an independent charity in 2012 has meant that, while NESTA continues to do meaningful work, the mechanisms to hold it accountable for fulfilling all of its aims in a proportionate way are limited. In 2019, the charity's focus began to move away from the arts. The chief executive's statement on NESTA's

website says: “We will now focus our energy and resources on three innovation missions: a fairer start for every child; a healthy life for all, and a sustainable future where the economy works better for people and the planet.”<sup>53</sup> In summary, NESTA has “...evolved from the UK’s first ever publicly supported endowment... into an independent innovation agency with a more socially focused vision.”<sup>54</sup> This shift, outlined in NESTA’s new 2030 strategy, means that the charity now has a comparatively limited focus on the arts.

There is potential within the current oversight mechanisms of NESTA to encourage a renewed focus on the arts, with appropriate funding attached. NESTA’s average annual spend from 2019 to 2023 was £26.5m. Unlocking a third of that sum per year for the arts, together with active solicitation of more arts applications, would re-establish the founding relationship between the arts, science and technology. The arts could also play a role in all of NESTA’s current missions.

Government still holds a key responsibility in the governance and oversight of NESTA via the appointment of the ‘protector’ by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). Ministers should create joint oversight by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as well as DSIT. These departments should jointly appoint the protector and act as guardians of the endowment’s, and the NESTA Trust’s, core purpose.



## **EXTENDING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TAX CREDITS**

Germany, France and Italy all include research and development in the arts, humanities and social sciences within the scope of R&D tax credits. A report in 2020 for the DCMS found that 55 per cent of organisations within the creative industries had embarked on what the OECD would describe as R&D in the previous three years, but only 14 per cent would have qualified for tax relief under the current UK definition.<sup>55</sup>

The OECD defines R&D as: “Creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge”. The UK’s definition, however, states “R&D for tax purposes takes place when a project seeks to achieve an advance in science or technology. It cannot be an advance within a social science, like economics, or a theoretical field, such as pure maths.” Arts and humanities are also explicitly excluded. At least 23 other countries, including Germany, France, Italy, South Korea and Mexico, recognise R&D in the arts, humanities and social sciences for the purposes of tax credits.

The government should expand the criteria for R&D tax credits, embracing the OECD definition. Supporting the expansion of R&D tax credits is not only economically sound, but it builds on the last Labour’s government’s introduction of the scheme in 2000, renewing the commitment to expanding

research and development across all sectors.

## **A 'SMART FUND' – A MECHANISM TO PAY CREATORS AND PERFORMERS**

Ministers should consider a levy that compensates artists whose original work is copied, stored and shared through electronic and technical devices. This would reflect the 'virtuous circle' principle embodied in other policy proposals in this report (eg pipeline and progressive city tourism charge). Promoted by the Design and Artists Copyright Society, alongside a wider coalition of organisations, such a 'copying' levy would be both pragmatic and impactful. In France, for example, a quarter of the funds raised from devices supports over 12,000 cultural projects a year.

The 'smart fund' proposes a levy of 1 to 3 per cent of the sales value of each individual electronic device that enables the consumption of such creative content. It is targeted at manufacturers and would generate a central fund of £250m to £300m per year. The fund would be distributed to creative practitioners to provide them with a sustainable livelihood as a result of their content creation and would also fund sector grassroots initiatives.

Artists and performers are already supported internationally, with over 45 other countries providing compensation for work that is copied or stored via private copy levies. The negative

economic impact of such a levy would be minimal given that many of the tech companies that sell in the UK are already subject to copy levies in other countries.

## **MUSIC VENUES TICKET LEVY**

Over the last year, 125 grassroots venues have closed, with 38 per cent of small venues reporting a loss despite an increased demand for tickets. Promoters, artists and industry bodies all back the introduction of a ticket levy on arenas that will fund grassroots music venues. The Music Venue Trust has championed a French-style system, where there is a centralised pot of approximately €200m (£172m) that venues, artists and promoters can apply for, funded by a levy on the gross value of tickets sold at big venues. Some artists have already been known to apply a ticket levy voluntarily. The band Enter Shikari donated £1 from every ticket sold to their OVO Arena Wembley show in February 2024 to grassroots venues. Such an artist-led levy on ticket sales is potentially a more favourable model than having arenas themselves pay the costs. The National Arenas Association has reported that if arenas themselves were forced to pay such a cost it would sacrifice 20 per cent of their profits. The introduction of this artist-led model would need to be compulsory, with a defined threshold, requiring the DCMS to legislate for it. Sector leaders would prefer a new charitable organisation to manage the fund, with a board of industry figures and experts responsible for the strategy and distribution of the money raised.<sup>56</sup>

## CHAPTER 8

### A PROGRESSIVE CITY TOURISM CHARGE

Beyond our package of policies to refinance the sector, a key new funding source could be promoted by formally granting metro mayors the power to implement a ‘progressive city tourism charge’ in England. This would go into a large central funding pot that would be locally administered to support cultural infrastructure. Examples already in place abroad include countries such as Germany, Spain, Belgium, Canada and France (where there is a set amount of between three and 10 euros per person) and San Francisco (where it is a charge of 8.6 per cent per night).

The Conservative government stated as recently as September 2023 that it had no plans to introduce such a levy and had made no assessment of the impact it would have.<sup>57</sup> But there have already been measures approximate to such a charge, implemented by metro mayors in Manchester and Liverpool via business improvement districts (BIDs). Manchester introduced an ‘accommodation BID’ known as the ‘city visitor charge’ in April 2023, with a rateable value on accommodation businesses of £75,000 within Manchester city centre and a small part of Salford. Given that Manchester is the third most-visited city in the UK, with a visitor economy of approximately £9.5bn, the 2022 business plan for Manchester estimates that the charge will

raise £3.5m–£3.8m per year between now and 2028.<sup>58</sup>

A similar accommodation BID was established in April 2023 in Liverpool. Unlike the Manchester BID, it applies to properties with a rateable value of £45,000+ with a cap of £50,000 per property and applies to the entire city. This levy was initially 1.6 per cent, but will rise to 4.5 per cent in 2024/25. It is expected to earn the city £939,000 in the final two years of the Liverpool BID's current five-year plan (2023–2027).<sup>59</sup>

National legislation would allow for metro mayors to introduce direct city tourism levies rather than via the establishment of BIDs, and would allow for greater control over the collection and distribution of funds from local hospitality, as well as generating considerable revenue returns. There is a strong 'circular economy' argument for the establishment of a levy that can be ring-fenced to support cultural infrastructure and placemaking: 73 per cent of tourists cited the UK's cultural offer as a primary reason for visiting the country, with free admission being an integral attraction.<sup>60</sup> A levy of three per cent of the average room rate would be approximately £5 per night, an amount that would not place a substantial burden on the individual tourist but would make a generous contribution to the sector's annual funding.

The charge should be implemented on a percentage-based model. More expensive rooms generate more income, and if applied nationally on all hotels and tourist accommodation at

the 3 per cent rate, the levy would generate £600m per annum, which is the approximate culture spend of Los Angeles. The Local Government Association published a 2020 report which also outlined a 3 per cent model, suggesting that this is a reasonable rate<sup>61</sup> – although it did not include London, so the results are some-what skewed.

Levies, which are already the international norm, could unlock a vital new permanent funding source to support the nation's unique cultural and tourism ecosystem. If distributed on a per capita basis, then London would be spreading both its cultural and economic largesse around the country, helping soothe perceptions of a north-south divide and buttressing flagging regional infrastructure.

# CHAPTER 9

## CREATING A CULTURAL 'PIPELINE' FUND

The creative industries are one of our greatest national success stories, generating £125bn – nearly 6 per cent of the economy. But although these industries have proved remarkably resilient in the current economic climate, the vital arts and cultural infrastructure that supports them is crumbling.

### **A NEW APPROACH – LINKING FISCAL INCENTIVES WITH GRASSROOTS INVESTMENT**

The government should explore a new financial model that would, in effect, create a 'virtuous circle': major players in the sector would contribute to a pipeline fund for grassroots development in return for the government maintaining or increasing vital fiscal incentives to stimulate their growth. Such a fund could help address educational, skills and training needs and repair cultural infrastructure across the country, ensuring the development of home-grown talent and career pathways in one of the UK's fastest growing economic sectors.

### **CREATIVE TAX RELIEFS**

The current tax reliefs for the creative industries were made permanent by the last Conservative government just prior to the

election, though some were due to be phased out in 2025. The sector campaigned very effectively for them to be maintained, in their present form and in perpetuity, on the basis that they have become a vital part of their overall funding models and ongoing resilience, especially due to the precarity of public funding. The theatre industry, for example, claims 40 per cent tax relief on some of its activities. The relief supports set-up costs, including the cost of rehearsals, costumes, set design, rigging, lighting, sound. These are some of the areas in which skills shortages are most acute. Such skills shortages cannot be addressed by organisations individually.

## **A PROPOSED COMPACT**

A compact could be established between the most profitable companies in the creative industry sector and government, whereby 100 per cent of any current tax relief arrangement is maintained for the duration of the next parliament, but any industry receiving, for example, over £100m in reliefs could contribute a small percentage to a pipeline fund to support the cultural ecosystem.

This top-sliced funding should be used by government, under the supervision of, for example, the Arts Humanities and Research Council, to attract private match-funding. This would be an opportunity to nurture, and engage with, a new cohort of future-oriented philanthropists and foundations, as it is essentially an investment in youth, skills, entrepreneurship and



creative development. This is a distinctive part of the proposal – something akin to the Wellcome Trust’s match-funding health interventions.

The pipeline fund should be distributed and administered on the ground by metro mayors to ensure that the relevant local creative industry needs are met. This could range from teacher training and resources to art and technical college bursaries, and from equipment and studios to skills training and apprenticeships, helping to ensure that social disadvantage ceases to be a barrier to a career in the digital and creative economies. The model is one of indirect redistribution, encouraging opportunity on the one hand, and maintaining growth and global competitiveness on the other.

Compare, for example, the construction industry, which has a levy underpinned by law. Its levy is used to ensure the industry has a skilled workforce by:

1. Supporting training development through grants and funding.
2. Promoting the construction industry and offering high-quality apprenticeships.
3. Identifying skills needs across the construction industry.
4. Developing occupational standards and qualifications.

# THE ‘PIPELINE’ MODEL

At present the creative industries benefit from a variety of tax reliefs, at a cost of £1.7bn to the Treasury (see table below).

TABLE 1: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES TAX RELIEF COST  
(Provisional data on accruals basis, 2021/22)

	NUMBER OF COMPANIES	NUMBER OF CLAIMS	RELIEF PAID
Theatre	705	725	£55 million
Orchestra	110	110	£11 million
Museum and galleries exhibition	185	190	£9 million
Animation	80	85	£21 million
High-end television	380	475	£829 million
Video game	320	345	£189 million
Children’s television	60	75	£27 million
Film	670	770	£517 million
TOTAL COST			£1.7 billion

A creative industries ‘pipeline’ model could:

- Ensure that existing fiscal incentives both encourage individual global competitiveness and feed back to the grassroots in the form of a youth and skills pipeline designed to support long-term, sustainable growth and home-grown talent.
- Help address inclusion, skills shortages, regional infrastructure, and a broken ecosystem in a holistic way.
- Better define the relationship between the generosity of existing tax incentives, growth and public good. (Of course, many creative organisations are also publicly funded.)
- Attract match-funding from new quarters.

## **A TEMPLATE FOR A NEW APPROACH**

This ‘virtuous circle’ approach – generous fiscal incentives with conditions attached – could be applied to other parts of the creative industries. It could apply to both existing fiscal incentives and any new incentives introduced in the future.

## **VAT REFORMS AND THE ART MARKET**

The art market has been making a strong case for zero-rating VAT on UK art imports to enable frictionless trade post Brexit. This would enable significant growth while also maintaining the UK's competitiveness.

At present, the UK art market is second only to that of New York. However, since the UK's departure from the EU, art imports have declined substantially and there has been a corresponding drop in the UK's share of the global art market, which fell to a low point of 17 per cent in 2021. The UK performed uniquely badly when most markets and the global art markets bounced back. Despite some recovery in the last two years, the market has continued to lose share.<sup>62</sup>

Some of the reasons for this are clear. On leaving the EU, the UK government took the decision to continue the import tax on art. But an EU seller has the option to sell in New York or Hong Kong, both of which are free of import taxes, or to sell in the EU with-out incurring cross-border taxes. Before its recent decline, the UK art market supported over 42,000 jobs and spent up to £3.3bn on ancillary services such as insurance and hospitality. The drop in Treasury revenue as a result of loss of imports is now greater than those generated from import VAT. The latter contribution has declined by over 9 per cent post-Brexit.<sup>63</sup>

## **A QUID PRO QUO**

A compact with, for example, the British Art Market Federation could ensure that a small percentage of every sale over an established threshold would go into a ‘pipeline’ fund in return for the revenue wins generated by zero-rated VAT on art imports. This could help fund, for example, art school bursaries – providing free or subsidised places to British students on degree courses beyond a foundation year – together with much-needed artist studio spaces.

# CHAPTER 10

## REDRAWING THE EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP

Our relationship with Europe is fundamental to our future cultural prosperity. We welcome the government's intention to look afresh at the post-Brexit arrangements that are currently in place across multiple policy areas. Resetting that relationship for the arts could have a profound and swift impact.

Brexit resulted in the loss of significant EU funding for the arts and culture sector and the status quo has done little to alleviate that gaping void. Firstly, as part of the first review of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement at the end of 2025, the government should reassess the benefits of rejoining Creative Europe.

In the short period of 2014 to 2016 alone, the programme provided the following:<sup>64</sup>

- A vital funding resource for 283 organisations within the UK creative industries, and cinema distribution for 115 UK films throughout Europe (With €18m of investment).
- Grants amounting to €57m, which represented 11 per cent of the programme's entire €520m, invested exclusively in UK cultural infrastructure.

- €40m invested in Britain's audiovisual sector, with 113 UK companies and 55 UK cinemas within the Europa Cinemas network gaining grants that totalled €22m.
- €15m for Creative Europe's Culture sub-programme, benefitting 115 cultural, creative and heritage organisations in the UK.
- €1.5m of direct investment in four UK organisations via the cross-sector strand, which encompasses the European Creative Hubs network and the Refugee Integration Projects.

There was little effort to replace the contribution Creative Europe made to the sector. The introduction of a UK Global Screen Fund worth £7m has been a drop in the ocean compared with what the programme provided.

Additionally, renegotiating visa arrangements will be a necessity as part of any new UK–EU arts package. In April 2021, the Incorporated Society of Musicians were among a chorus within the sector urging for a visa waiver agreement<sup>65</sup> and this remains a vital component of ensuring a fulsome recovery of our mobile creative industries. The same report documents a survey in which 85 per cent of respondents emphasised that cabotage limits for haulage vehicles will cause moderate or severe disruption for their business, with a further majority reporting a decline in EU trade due

Implementing new customs arrangements on cabotage and carnets will also have a substantial impact on the ease with which musicians are able to tour. UK music exports were valued at £2.9bn in 2019, falling to £2.5bn in 2021. While the Covid-19 pandemic was the principal cause of the contraction during this period, the slower recovery compared with our European neighbours has been attributed to post-Brexit barriers restricting ease of touring.<sup>66</sup>

As a triple-pronged approach to EU–UK arts and cultural collaboration, the priorities for renegotiation must be:

- Rejoining Creative Europe as an associate member.
- Ensuring a visa waiver agreement for artists and creative practitioners.
- Developing customs arrangements for cabotage, carnets and all other equipment that will ensure frictionless and cost-effective touring.

None of these policies would mean rejoining the EU or reintroducing freedom of movement, but they would represent a pragmatic and evidence-based approach to defending the interests of UK artists and unlock vital revenue that we have been denied in recent years.



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The unit's work has been guided by a small expert advisory board, chaired by Baroness Gail Rebuck, and has drawn on wide-ranging and stimulating discussions with people across the sector.

# ARTS FOR US ALL

ALISON COLE, NATHAN LLOYD AND FLORA DODD

The arts are one of the cornerstones of a fair and flourishing society and an open, dynamic and innovative nation. It is essential that everyone has access to the arts, whether as participants or consumers, as amateurs or professionals – no matter where they are born or where they live.

In this pamphlet, Alison Cole, Nathan Lloyd and Flora Dodd, of the Arts and Creative Industries Unit based at the Fabian Society, argue that the arts have an essential role to play in the new government's project of national renewal. Their policy proposals focus on a quality arts education for every child, a revival of the public realm and a sense of place, and a reinvigorated arts funding system that embraces devolved decision-making, in the knowledge that culture can be uniquely empowering and liberating.

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