

## It is our collective responsibility to do our best to engage politicians with the case for supporting the arts - but how?

### **\*WHAT DO WE WANT TO CONVEY TO MP's?**

These are 5 key points we want them to leave with:

1. We need central government grant-in-aid arts funding to stay at the current level.
2. The combination of DCLG and DCMS cuts is having a crunch effect, particularly outside London.
3. The arts, unlike some other areas of government spending, are both vital for economic growth and have substantial social benefits.
4. We are already a very lean sector and further cuts will inhibit growth, particularly in the creative industries.
5. With the Spending Round fast approaching, can you help us make the case to the Treasury?

### **\*WHAT MIGHT THEIR KEY CONCERNS BE?**

There are 2 key concerns that every MP will want answered:

**Q:** Does this matter to any other constituents / voters?

**A:** Yes. The publicly funded arts are behind every great British TV programme, book, festival and film. And on a local level we are working with schools, hospitals and community groups [use your own examples] to make their constituency great.

**Q:** National and local budgets are tight. Why should you be protected and not the army/NHS/schools?

**A:** It is not an either/or. The arts are central to public life and drive growth, innovation and regeneration. The amount spent nationally on the arts is already small; investment in the sector will boost the economy as well as national wellbeing. We

work alongside many public services – for example, with the NHS on mental health, or in poorly performing schools – to drive efficiency and enhance outcomes.

### **KNOW YOUR POLITICS**

- Labour currently doesn't have an arts and culture policy – they are still working on basis of their election manifesto. Keep an eye out for developments on this. Offer to help to inform their policy.
- Conservatives are less interested in culture and social inclusion – emphasise their value in economic terms if that is what they listen to.
- Read up about your local MP (and their interests)
- Keep up to speed with your local authority Chief Officer
- Keep ACE engaged with what you are doing- MP's can apply pressure on ACE and get involved/intervene on our behalf
- Keep pressure on about the imbalance of geographic spread of funding

### **MAKE IT LOCAL**

- Know you local community and the issues facing it – discuss
- Make yourself known in local business networks - example: Exeter Cultural Partnership has achieved buy-in from local businesses
- Make sure they know what is happening in their constituency in the arts – invite them along
- Flag up social value – tell them stories about things you've done and the impact they had locally

### **BUT KNOW THE WIDER PICTURE TOO**

- Keep pressure on about imbalance of geographic spread of funding
- Keep up to speed with national policies – know where local fits into the national picture
- Academic networks can help to underpin value and provide useful evidence as leverage

### **MAKE IT PERSONAL**

- Tailor your argument: Every MP is individual—they will campaign for a wide variety of issues and respond to different arguments in different ways.

- If they have spoken in Parliament or in the papers about healthcare, mention any work you might be doing alongside the local health service.
- If they campaign on education issues, make sure you mention the work you might be doing with teachers and students.
- Ask them what they enjoy - find out what they care about. E.g. Apparently George Osborne goes to the theatre...
- INVITE KEY PEOPLE TO COME TO YOUR EVENTS – have a hit list mailing list. Keep the pressure on. Keep it friendly. Be irresistible.
- Don't complain or whinge, instead provide ideas, give recommendations, and ask for a specific action. Be passionate.

### **KEEP IT RELEVANT**

- Focus your remarks on what's happening in the constituency
- Use practical, every day examples of what's going on in the community and how the arts links to it

### **MAKE AN ECONOMIC CASE**

- Making the economic case is absolutely vital – be armed with the stats
- Give local examples of success stories – e.g. Banksy Dismaland created a £20m income for Weston Super Mare
- Provide stats about for every pound invested in art brings £x return
- Use numbers: As far as possible, back up your arguments with numbers, evidence and data.
- Use infographics that highlights the economic impact on the constituency – be visual, it's the visual arts
- Work as a collective – feed into select committee, engage with regional issues

### **STATE THE IMPACT YOU/YOUR ORG HAS ON COMMUNITY**

- Tell them about your impact on your community
- Give examples of work you do with young people / the community / the jobs that you provide or your relationship with local businesses or universities  
Use infographic that shows the social impact of your organisation and share it at the meeting

- Tell them the importance of culture in the local community and what will be lost with further cuts to arts and local government budgets

### **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCES – AND USE THEM**

- Work with local press and media, make sure what you do is profiled
- Raise awareness not only TO your audience, but THROUGH them too – encourage them to bring a friend along, or an influential business-person, or councillor
- Involve audiences in advocacy - Ask them to write to their MP and telling them how important the arts (and your organisation) are to them.
- Create a campaign – make sure people know what you do – get attention
- Advocacy – check MP schedules for visits to your area - try and get dates in diary to visit your organisation
- Plan in advance – MP's have visits booked months in advance

### **\*OTHER USEFUL INFO FROM THE WHAT NEXT WEBSITE<sup>1</sup>**

Many MPs will have never been lobbied by the cultural sector before, and few will understand the way we are funded.

The sector is supported by a complex funding ecology: national public subsidy (chiefly Grant in Aid via the Arts Council and direct funding from the Treasury), funding from local authorities, National Lottery money, philanthropy and earned income from commercial endeavour.

Despite an increase in National Lottery funding, the sector has faced significant cuts. Grant in Aid for the arts distributed through Arts Council England fell by £106 million from 2009/10 to 2013/14. This equates to more than a third of core national arts funding being lost.

Lottery funding must remain additional to core government spend. It cannot replace it – and it doesn't. The two sources of funding serve very different purposes – with Grant in Aid providing the back-bone of the sector and Lottery filling the gaps- such as supporting capital, training and projects.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.whatnextculture.co.uk/>

Over the last five years, Local Authorities in England have cut funding to arts and museums by £57 million in cash terms. In real terms this equates to a removal of almost a quarter of local funding for arts and museums.

Local authorities provide a higher proportion of overall funding for the arts outside London. Over the past five years, on average, Local Authority cuts to arts and museums have been disproportionate.

### **The arts – key to our economy**

The creative industries are the most rapidly growing part of our economy; but this growth only occurs in clusters around subsidised arts organisations. (NESTA Creative Clusters project, ACE NPO list and DCMS Creative industries statistics, 2014).

One in twenty people in the UK depend on the arts for their livelihood, through working as artists, directors and producers to technical support, media and the creative industries and associated trades in a largely British supply-chain. (Creative Industries Federation, June 2015)

The industry adds over £7.7 billion to the UK economy. For every £1 the government spends on the arts return £5 to the Treasury. (Arts Council/CEBR, June 2015).

Arts are a major contributor to night-time economies and drive regional regeneration. Turner Contemporary alone contributed over £30 million to Margate's economy and a 30% increase in rail passengers to Margate station (Kent County Council 2014). Houses in an area of high cultural provision are worth around £26,000 more on average (CEBR, 2015).

Apprenticeships in the creative sector have seen the fastest growth in uptake over the last 5 years; four times faster than any sector (Creative SkillSet, 2015)

### **THE ARTS – KEY TO OUR SOCIETY**

Arts centres are at the heart of our social life and also one of the biggest draws for tourists visiting the UK. (VisitBritain, 2014).

77% of adults take part in the arts at least once a year and almost twice as many people visit the theatre every year in London as watch Premier League football. (DCMS, December 2014 and National Theatre/SOLT, July 2014)

Our success in the arts is the major contributing factor to our consistent position as the number one in soft power in the world. (ComRes/Facebook July 2015)

4 of the top 6 activities most conducive to human happiness and wellbeing are arts related (LSE, 2015)

Students from low-income families that take part in arts activities are 3 times more likely to gain a degree. (CaQerall, 2009)

### **ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT**

VASW hosted a consultation on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015 with Exeter MP Ben Bradshaw to ask him for guidance on how the visual arts community can engage with MP's and communicate with them.

He was given a list of questions and his responses to those questions have been collated above, divided into categories after the meeting to capture the key points arising. The What Next site also holds some useful information so that has been incorporated into this document where appropriate to underpin it. (Mostly marked with an \*)

The information has been collated and presented by Carolyn Black, on behalf of VASW.

