



Member of the European Parliament

To Sir Peter Bazalgette  
Chair Arts Council England  
Arts Council England – National office  
21 Bloomsbury Street  
London  
WC1B 3HF

Wednesday 12th of November 2014,

Dear Sir Peter Bazalgette,

Re: Geographic funding imbalance

Following on from the excellent pioneering research conducted by GPS Culture into geographic imbalance of lottery and public funds we were pleased to read the report of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, published on Wednesday 5th of November, highlighting Arts Council England's investment trends. As you are aware, the committee found a clear arts funding imbalance in favour of London at the expense of tax-payers and lottery players in other parts of the country, which must now be urgently and transparently rectified in order to rebuild sectoral and stakeholder confidence in the institution.

In particular, Paragraph 51 of the report discusses imbalance in more detail:

*"[...]Combining this direct DCMS expenditure with that of Arts Council England produces a benefit per head of population in the capital of £68.99 compared to £4.58 in the rest of England (6.6% of London levels). [82] 'Figures are also given for overall National Lottery funding for the arts since 1995: by 2 September 2013, Arts Council England had distributed almost £3.5 billion of these new funds across England, of which London received £1.35 billion (39.1%). This translates as £165.00 per head of population in London, compared to £46.77 per head in the rest of England.'"*

As Labour members of the European Parliament representing the North West region, we would like to express our concerns and call on Arts Council England to commit to a quick and appropriate response to this situation. A recent study in Greater Manchester, for example, found that Manchester cultural organisations "employ 961 FTEs and support a further 1,191 FTEs, equating to a total employment impact of 2,152 FTEs (...) and generate £38.30m of Gross Value Added per annum, and support the generation of a further £48.64m, equating to a total GVA impact of £86.93m." (*The Impact of Manchester's Cultural Organisations*, Nick Merriman, October 2014).

The NW Labour team holds a unique position within the political sphere as two of us are highly experienced arts specialists. Theresa Griffin was previously Director of Communications and Research at Arts Council England North West. Julie Ward, meanwhile, has recently entered politics having spent nearly 40 years working in the arts and now seats in the Culture and Education committee of the European Parliament. Afzal Khan brings a wealth of experience in working with diverse communities and cultures, e.g. as chief executive of Manchester Mela Arts Festival. All three bring a valuable industry perspective as well as a commitment to arts as a tool for personal and collective empowerment and social cohesion.

We believe that ensuring a coherent and dynamic cultural ecology and a fairer investment in culture in ALL parts of the country is necessary to ensure the rights to equal access to culture and the local development of all the regions. This will be particularly important as plans for the devolution of powers to the regions becomes manifest over the next few years. The recent announcement concerning Greater Manchester is most welcome in this respect and will set the tone for other cities and regions. Arts Council England should therefore ensure it is well-aligned with this new and exciting shift away from the dominance of the capital city.

As already mentioned, the implications of the cultural investment imbalance between London and the rest of the country on the cost of access to culture for citizens were already highlighted in GPS Culture's analysis of Arts Council England's investment plans 2015-18, *Hard Facts to Swallow* published on October 10th, as well as in its report on policies regarding Lottery funding, the Arts and Community in England, *The Place Report* published in March 2014 (<http://www.gpsculture.co.uk/>).

With specific regard to the Select Committee's report, we welcome and share many of the report's recommendation, in particular:

- that Arts Council England needs to redouble its already significant efforts at brokering cultural partnerships involving businesses, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, universities and international organisations, particularly within the EU, which might provide additional funding sources.
- that government has a clear responsibility to articulate its overall policy for the arts and culture. It should do so in a way that provides clear guidance on the delivery of public benefit from public funds in respect of such issues as the additionally principle to be applied to Lottery funding and the broad equity of geographic and social distribution that needs to be achieved.

In the context of austerity measures and huge funding cuts to the arts and culture sector over the past few years, we appreciate efforts made by Arts Council England to continue developing the sector and improving the transparency of its decision-making. Nevertheless, the Council must now do more to redress the geographic balance.

Aside from the issue of access to culture and geographic unbalance, it is important to recognise the potential of culture for growth and development in the UK and Europe's cities and regions. Focusing on the need to further develop local partnerships, we would like to emphasise that cities and regions not only provide the bulk of funding for culture in most areas of Europe, but they also act as laboratories for cultural and creative experimentation and innovation, and play a key role in the development of cultural and creative clusters, and



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have been crucial in the regeneration of cities such as Liverpool, Newcastle, Bristol, Leeds and Birmingham.

We also understand that the historic and challenging question of rebalancing cultural investment cannot be efficiently tackled without a collective and political effort to put culture and arts at the top of the political agenda and demonstrate the contribution of culture to the sustainable development of societies as well as to individual fulfilment and well-being. This point has also been well-made by Ban Ki-Moon in his call for culture to form a sustainable development goal for the UN.

As MEPs we aim to make the case for culture at EU level and ensure a better connection between local, national and European funding opportunities. Joining up the dots between institutions, governments and the electorate is also crucial.

We look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "T. Griffin", is positioned above the name of the signatory.

Theresa Griffin, MEP

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Afzal Khan", is positioned above the name of the signatory.

Afzal Khan, MEP

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Julie Ward", is positioned above the name of the signatory.

Julie Ward, MEP