



**COUNTRIES OF CULTURE  
WRITTEN EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY  
CHIEF CULTURE AND LEISURE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (CLOA)**

**1. Introduction – About CLOA and our reasons for submitting evidence.**

**ABOUT CLOA**

The Chief Culture and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) exclusively represents senior strategic leaders managing public sector cultural, tourism and sport services in England. It works closely with central government and key national organisations to influence the development of national policies and to lobby for positive change in the cultural and leisure sectors. CLOA currently represents the interests of over 200 members.

The Association is not only important in its own right, but acts as the hub for many of the influential professional organisations working in the leisure and cultural industries. It provides a unique vehicle for cross-fertilisation of ideas towards common goals and plays an important part in delivering a key agenda – a more equal and just society – creating the conditions for high quality art to flourish, enabling culture-led place-making and providing our citizens with high quality opportunities for culture and leisure which contribute significantly to quality of life.

**Our Reasons for Submitting Evidence**

As the membership organisation for cultural leaders whose strategic responsibility is the development of place-based approaches to cultural development, CLOA is uniquely placed to contribute to the debate on the scope of the enquiry. Members have first-hand experience of managing the impact of political, structural, economic and financial changes affecting the cultural sector and Councils, in diverse localities and across all regions.

Despite the willingness of members to lead and embrace the opportunities opened up by changing circumstances, there is genuine concern about the long-term impacts: on cultural capital; the health and wellbeing, resilience, quality of life and life-chances of local communities; and prospects for economic growth in some areas, particularly those facing considerable disadvantage. There is a concern that there are increasing divisions between

places where culture is recognised and embedded as a driver for change, and those where the case is less well developed.

## **2. The current funding situation for cultural sectors in the regions and sub-regions.**

The recent publication by Adrian Harvey for NLGN and Arts Council England, Funding Arts and Culture in a Time of Austerity sets out some of the ways in which local authorities, the arts council and cultural organisations are adjusting to the new financial climate.

In May 2015, CLOA produced a report of its annual survey of the Financial Settlement for Culture and Leisure 2015/16. Circulated during February 2015, the survey enquired about savings made over the past 3 years. This is the third survey CLOA have undertaken, and as such it has enabled us to:

- establish the aggregate level of funding reductions
- identify the effect on service delivery
- highlight trends where the savings are having the most impact
- understand how this is driving service transformation
- estimate levels of future investment
- provide an overview of how the sector is facing the ongoing challenges

52 local authorities responded to the request for information, representing just under 16% of the 326 local authorities in England. The overall picture of savings already implemented across culture and leisure services is as follows:

- 22% of responding authorities are already implementing savings of 15% and above. This compares to a figure of 17% respondents for 2013/14.
- 17% of the responding Authorities have either closed or decommissioned Library services within the last 3 years. 10% have closed Museum/Heritage Services, 7% have either closed or decommissioned Arts Services and 3% have either closed or decommissioned Archives.
- 60% of local authorities have needed to implement a reduction in grants to at least one service area. 14% of the responding authorities had removed or reduced community grants and aid above 15% for the arts.
- The biggest impacts on staff reductions cited by responding local authorities were based around sports development (17) and libraries (16).
- In terms of a focus on commercialisation, it is evident that sport and leisure services are more commercially astute. 71% of respondents indicated that they now seek to recover of some/all operating costs and/or now secure a surplus in order to improve bottom line trading. This outstrips any other sector with arts services citing the next highest return at 45%.

- Whilst at the time of the survey 36% of responding authorities had not yet confirmed the level of net savings for 2016/2017, 18% predicted further savings of above 15%.

### **3. The regional impact of local authority settlement on the cultural sector.**

There has been a longstanding lack of recognition by the cultural sector of the scale and significance of local government investment and this has contributed to the conditions, on top of austerity, which impact on local decision-making about priorities for investment.

CLOA members predict that the regional impact of diminishing local authority investment in culture will be felt disproportionately in those parts of the country where cultural infrastructure is already weak, and/or where wider socio-economic disadvantage and market failure have created a dependency on public sector investment. This means that some communities, and arguably those with most to gain from engagement in culture, will lose out.

Within regions, it is important to recognise that philanthropy and the market do not always step in where public sector funding diminishes, and this is particularly an issue for rural areas and places of socio-economic disadvantage. For example, there is no evidence to suggest that investment and growth in cultural developments in Liverpool and Manchester at the heart of the 'Northern Powerhouse' has generally filtered out as benefits to other parts of the North West region. Members anticipate that there will be an increasing gap between areas that are able to sustain a strong cultural infrastructure and places where, without public sector investment to maintain service provision (whether via local government, or through commissioning in the voluntary sector or private sector), engagement in quality cultural activity will decline due to lack of provision.

Despite the static settlement for ACE, many local authorities are predicting a substantial cut to services, including grant funding and commissioning, with reports of cuts of between 15% and 30%. There is also a move towards commissioning rather than grant-giving, which may impact adversely on some smaller organisations.

For many arts and heritage organisations, funding is a complex mix of grants, project funds, trading, commissions, sponsorship and philanthropy, with the latter in particular taking time and resource to mature. There are also impacts on confidence in capital investment, given the challenging financial climate and limitations of revenue funding. This may limit the sector's ability to innovate and generate new income streams.

#### **4. New funding models in the cultural sector, including use of Lottery funding.**

The cCLOA report on the Financial Settlement for Culture and Leisure 2015/16 shows that 96% of responding local authorities are working on new ways of delivering services, including:

- 79% - Externalising service delivery through a Trust (31 respondents)
- 76% - Transferring assets to a community group (29 respondents)
- 68% - Sharing services with another local authority (25 respondents)
- 65% - Sharing assets or co-location with another service provider (24 respondents)
- 57% - Externalising service delivery through a private contractor (21 respondents)

Other delivery options cited by respondents included setting up a Council owned trading company and increasing capacity by mobilising volunteers to provide some services.

We also asked respondents to estimate the value of savings made through adopting new ways of service delivery. There were a broad range of responses to this question; for many organisations it is too early to confirm, however some of those who were prepared to give figures cited between £140K-500K p.a, whilst others have estimated the value to be in the region of £1m - £3.5m over periods of up to 14 years. (It is worth noting that these figures do include leisure centres and parks).

Local Authorities have adopted a range of service delivery options and different models which fit with different communities. The financial savings are relatively modest given the scale of the services but, combined with the efficiencies that should be able to be secured in corporate support services, they make a genuine contribution to budget pressures. However, key to the long term success of what are generally very popular services is that local authorities retain sufficiently senior in-house leisure and culture expertise to drive forward the development of these 'outsourced services'; thus ensuring they remain relevant to the needs of the local authority and the community they serve. Horizon-scanning for new opportunities for partnership with other parts of the public sector is also an important function.

ACE's proposed changes to their funding mechanisms are warmly welcomed by cCLOA members and the new place-based investment funding has attracted particular interest. Creative People and Places has been particularly successful in widening engagement with sectors of the community with little or no previous experience of the arts. The Place-based investment, along with Great Places funding, should provide localities with the ability to take a more strategic approach to strengthening and growing their infrastructure, preferably with a focus on the growth of sustainable cultural businesses (in turn, empowering them to engage more readily with new audiences.) Lottery funding is a vital part of investment into local cultural activities, particularly to drive change in engagement activities.

Rural regions and other places with weak business sectors will struggle to raise the business rates they need to sustain services and to enable growth. This is a key risk for local government and therefore the cultural sector in those localities. To date, Arts Council England's commitment to local government, "If you're in, we're in", has been helpful in making the case for the protection of cultural funding from local government, and clarifying the risks of withdrawal – that ACE cannot displace local government funds. However, as local government cuts bite deeper, there is no question in the minds of CLOA members that local authorities will largely be forced to withdraw funding for culture in the medium-term, not from choice but necessity.

That said, as CLOA's own research indicates, and as Sir Peter Bazalgette highlighted at the recent NGLN event, there are many examples of good practice with local authorities adopting and adapting new models of working in order to enable local cultural provision to survive and thrive in the future.

## **5. Cultural partnerships in the regions, including with NPOs and MPMs.**

Where formal cultural partnerships exist, they are generally viewed as positive mechanisms for building local cultural capital, strengthening networks and facilitating private sector buy-in. Birmingham, the North East, Manchester and Liverpool have been cited as particularly strong examples.

Some cultural partnerships, particularly beyond the core cities, in rural areas and in 2-tier authorities, struggled to survive the post 2009 financial and structural changes, as reductions in officer personnel have led to problems in sustaining formal relationships. As part of Creative People and Places, or Local Cultural Education Hubs, or the work on City Deals and Combined Authorities, many partnerships are reforming and seeking new partners, particularly beyond local government.

Partnerships with NPOs and MPMs, particularly those based within localities, are viewed as essential for the development of a strong cultural offer. NPOs/MPMs have an essential role in providing quality cultural programmes for local audiences. They can also provide strong leadership for culture and have an invaluable role in building understanding beyond the cultural sector of the power of arts and heritage to drive social and economic change. Critical mass is important in order to provide accumulative benefits for localities and to maximise choice for audiences. This also provides a stronger basis for talent development, supply chain development and growth in the wider creative industries, since the creative economy tends to thrive where there is a higher number of practising artists and cultural organisations. (We draw your attention to publications by John Holden and by NESTA which investigate the relationships between different parts of the cultural sector and the creative industries.) That said, ACE would do well to widen its definitions and understanding of what



**CHIEF CULTURAL & LEISURE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**

constitutes high quality art. There are many creative practitioners working in comedy, gaming, ballroom dance, magic and other popular culture genres whose work is original, creative, technically brilliant and at the cutting edge of their field, and yet would fail to attract ACE funding because their work and background does not fit within traditional definitions of contemporary art. This is a missed opportunity, not least because this work has the power to engage some communities on their own terms.

Local authorities often have shared investment interests in NPOs and MPMs and many have struggled to retain the level of grant support to local cultural organisations. Often, creative solutions have emerged, such as transferring investment from revenue to capital where it is appropriate, or 'topping up' grant cuts with new commissioning arrangements. Anecdotally, performing arts organisations have tended to fare better because their business models (with an audience accustomed to paying for tickets) are more sustainable. Conversely, some museums and galleries have struggled, particularly outside of the core cities and particularly in areas of historical socio-economic disadvantage.

Strong partnerships between NPOs/MPMs and local government (irrespective of whether they are formalised through a cultural partnership) and particularly when they extend beyond the cultural department are essential to wider cultural growth. This demonstrates that culture is more broadly embedded in public sector planning and ensures that opportunities for growth, development and widening engagement are optimised.

## **6. Skills, management and infrastructure of regional cultural institutions**

There are many excellent cultural institutions right across the country who are delivering great work with relatively modest levels of public sector investment. Home-grown organisations often inspire tremendous loyalty with local audiences, strengthen routes for talent development and embed culture as a powerful tool for social change and economic growth. When combined with visionary leadership and creative partnership working which brings great international, national, touring companies and artists to localities, then the benefits are spread across the sector. Where great cultural leaders have been attracted to places 'off the beaten track', usually as part of a wider programme of cultural transformation (often led and facilitated by local government), then extraordinary change has taken place, with notable examples being Margate, Thanet, Blackpool, Leeds and Stoke (and there are many others).

As per the Adrian Harvey report, the majority of cultural organisations have increased their revenue streams from sources other than local government. That said, much of this is for new work, and we know of organisations that are struggling to cover core costs and to offset the imminent reductions in local authority funding with new revenue.

A proportionately modest uplift in funding to some smaller institutions would enable them to grow and develop their reach. Competition for ACE funding to support the development of new business models, through funds such as the Museums Resilience Fund, has been fierce and too many organisations have been turned down with no hope of resolving their immediate need for transition funding. There are still too many cultural institutions which do not have the skills and capacity to address the financial challenges they are facing, and even small sums, circa £15 - £30k would provide them with the additional support on a temporary basis, to find new solutions to their long-term sustainability.

There is an argument that cultural institutions beyond the core cities need extra help to nurture and grow great ideas and practice, not least because they do not have access to the same levels of philanthropy, to great Trustees, income through trading and to the accumulated knowledge of professional networks which is gained from working in proximity. It is certainly true that working in places of low cultural capital, in places of socio-economic disadvantage and in rural areas, that working to develop and embed high quality cultural programmes can be an isolating and (sometimes) thankless experience, though rewarding for those whose creative values accord with engaging new audiences and driving social and economic transformation.

Finally, there are still too many gaps in cultural infrastructure beyond the core cities and still too many places, built in the golden age of Victorian and Edwardian philanthropy, that require substantial improvements to make them fit for purpose for 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences.

## **7. Physical and virtual accessibility of cultural sectors in the regions, including digital outreach and engagement.**

Access to high quality, compelling, live, locally-delivered and locally-resonant cultural activity is critical for communities to obtain the consequential benefits of participation and in order to optimise the benefits to local economies. That said, the livestreaming of key cultural events, such as the recent Shakespeare Live celebrations, are a great and pragmatic solution to widening access.

Too many communities suffer from poor broadband speeds and a reliable, fast and secure ICT infrastructure is still needed for many parts of the UK, including in places which purport to have good coverage.

In areas of disadvantage, as many as 30% of households do not have access to the internet and too many residents still do not have the digital skills they need to access quality 'live' events.

As the government and the Arts Council work to rethink the regional spread of cultural investment, it would be easy to prioritise investment in the core cities. It is worth remembering that this does not increase access for many people and communities any more than it does to privilege London. Faced with increasing childcare and transport costs, let alone the cost of tickets, it is simply not possible for families of moderate or low means to access quality experiences. Furthermore, it reduces opportunities for engagement through schools.

## **8. Value and impact of culture in the regions**

Important to assess culture in terms of the accumulative impacts as part of their strength is their ability to deliver multiple outcomes, and act as both the glue to bring disparate organisations together and the oil to make things happen more easily.

### **Social and Learning Impacts**

The social and learning impacts of culture have been well-researched and much evidence is in the public domain already.

In recognition of the vital role culture and leisure play in improving the health and wellbeing of local communities, CLOA have published [a series of case studies](#) to highlight how culture can help to tackle unhealthy lifestyles, address the social determinants of health, offer cost effective approaches, bring creative solutions and engage communities, families and individuals in managing their well-being.

Culture has a particularly important role to play in addressing social isolation and encouraging community cohesion. ACE has recently produced an excellent study on the value of cultural engagement with older people. Other examples include:

**Creative People and Places**, funded by Arts Council England, is a great example of the power of partnerships to unlock new resources and talent in support of a strategic approach to building arts engagement in places of low participation. Successful partnerships have included representatives from the private, voluntary and public sectors, including unexpected partners such as a haulage firm, a rugby club, a housing association and a multinational leisure provider. Where local government has been involved, the role of the



local authority has varied from delivery partner to guarantor to 'co-commissioner'. The scale of the funding available has enabled the CPP partnerships to have an influence at a local level, to draw in new resources (for example, from the private sector) and to take risks with a view to enabling long-term financial sustainability. Over 21 partnerships are currently in place across England.

**Time To Read** is a partnership of 22 different library authorities in the North West. The purpose of the network is to develop the adult reading audience (16 years+) through sharing good practice and ideas and developing joint projects and promotional activities. A part-time post co-ordinates the network and is managed by the Society of Chief Librarians NW. The initiative recognises the importance of reading for pleasure as a means of improving literacy: poor literacy has a profound impact on educational achievement, employability, health and life expectancy. (See the recent Read On Get On report).

**Dance for Parkinson's** Oxford City Council was the first regional Hub in 2013 to work in partnership with English National Ballet to deliver the Dance for Parkinson's programme locally. Together both are committed to raising the public profile of Parkinson's, giving access to, and advocating for the benefits of dance and cultural activities for people with Parkinson's. (With a national remit ENB is currently delivering the programme across the UK with five regional Hub partners). The Dance for Parkinson's programme provides opportunities for people with Parkinson's, their carers, friends and family members to engage in high quality artistic dance activity. Since the pilot in 2013, the Oxford programme has become well-established with currently between 25-30 participants weekly. In 2011, English National Ballet commissioned a mixed-methods research study to evidence impact, led by Dr. Sara Houston, University of Roehampton and Ashley McGill MSc. The research findings evidenced that the main benefits of dancing with Parkinson's are in the mental activity it provides and in emotional and social health and well-being. Dancing is a good and challenging mental workout for people with Parkinson's and allows some participants to cope better with symptoms and disability. It offers a positive environment where there is a community of support through dance, allowing participants to nurture positive attitudes to the future and a sense of independence.

**My Cambridge** is the first cross sector partnership to develop out of Cambridge Arts and Cultural Leaders and the new Cambridge City Council Arts Plan. The partnership proposition is that by supporting all children and young people, particularly those not engaged, to develop rich cultural lives, their life chances will be significantly improved, both in terms of education and employment, and their overall quality of life. Improving educational attainment and positive outcomes for children and young people living in low income families is a key issue for Cambridge. The partnership focus is on greatly improved collaboration and alignment of existing resources, rather than simply looking for additional funds, and has brought together arts and cultural organisations, schools and youth service

providers, local authorities, and businesses. The Kite Teaching School Alliance and Norfolk and Norwich Festival Bridge have been instrumental in its development, working closely with the City Council arts team.

**Barnsley Museums** continue to thrive, with visitor figures across 5 sites reaching over 1.2m visitors. Over 25,000 visitors consulted 2,492 archival documents. 9000 schoolchildren attended learning programmes and young people achieved 156 Arts Awards. 40 tenants and 200 jobs were supported in SMEs, along with 3 modern apprenticeships to support local talent development. A new Development Trust was established and the service opened a new gallery.

**Blackpool's Local Cultural Education Hub** is part-funded by Blackpool Council, Curious Minds (ACE) and a range of other partners. The hub brings together all the major cultural organisations together with representatives from local schools and colleges. Early findings from early evaluation of a range of initiatives, including the RSC learning partnership, National Theatre Connections, the Place-based Curriculum programme, Wordpool and the Grundy Art Gallery's learning programmes suggest that there are significant contributions, beyond the creative arts, to be made in relation to:

- a. Progress in literacy and English
- b. Readiness to learn (attendance, motivation and family engagement)
- c. Wellbeing (particularly resilience or 'mental toughness')

All of which are essential to supporting the Blackpool Challenge, a joint initiative to support teaching and learning in schools and to ensure that 100% of Blackpool students progress 100% of the time.

### **Economic Growth and Place-making**

Culture has a particularly important role to play in developing economic growth, place identity and distinctiveness. As places increasingly compete for visitors, retail and private sector investment, culture has been an important way to improve the public realm through quality design, architecture, public art and the conservation of historic buildings. Festivals and events also have value in developing skills and talent, encouraging civic pride, building visitor numbers and town centre footfall. The Creative Industries Federation have recently highlighted that the Creative Industries are outstripping most other sectors in terms of their contribution to the nation's GDP. The Northern Futures programme recently identified

history and heritage as the top attractors for the international market visiting the North of England.

The engagement of all parts of local government in the place-making process is important, as is engagement from the voluntary sector, and crucially, the private sector. Often it is local government which leads the way and provides an example for others to follow.

**The 'Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle'** <http://www.ysculpture.co.uk> brings together 4 leading venues across Leeds and Wakefield: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Hepworth Gallery, Leeds Art Gallery and the Henry Moore Study Centre. The initiative is supported by Leeds City Council, Wakefield MBC and Welcome to Yorkshire. It successfully builds on the distinctive artistic heritage of Leeds and Wakefield as a way to encourage more visitors to these important venues.

**Blackpool** is in the process of reimagining its extraordinary entertainment and seaside heritage to build its significance as a world leader in popular culture and the creative playground of the Northern Powerhouse. This includes the creation of a new £26m museum in its historic Winter Gardens to tell the Blackpool story and its role in the success of British popular culture, the reimagining of the Illuminations and reinvented festivals such as Showzam!, building on the developments at the iconic Tower and Winter Gardens (purchased by the council in 2010). This provides a shared vision with which to engage the town's creative industries, tourist attractions and cultural organisations with a view to stimulating growth in the visitor economy. Integral to these programmes is engagement with local communities to contribute to harnessing local talent, developing skills and strengthening resilience. Collaboration between the Council, LeftCoast, Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool Grand Theatre, Blackpool Coastal Housing, Blackpool Entertainments Company, Merlin and social sector organisations such as Blackpool Coastal Housing have all been essential to driving cultural development across the town.

**HLF Townscape Heritage** has been a great way for Heritage Lottery Fund and local government to jointly encourage engagement from the private sector in the improvement of the public realm. Townscape Heritage schemes help to reverse the decline of our best-loved historic townscapes. Local, regional and national organisations work together to repair buildings in conservation areas and bring them back to life. Schemes don't just help to create attractive, vibrant places that people want to live, work, visit and invest in. They also inspire communities to find out more about their townscape heritage, and give local people the chance to learn new skills. The predecessor of this grant programme is Townscape Heritage Initiative. There are many great examples across England of successful TH programmes, including Blackpool, Bedford and Keighley.

**Stevenage** Borough Council has an ambitious regeneration plan which places cultural place-making at the heart of its proposition. Linked to the relocation and expansion of the town's railway station, it will be providing its arts, leisure and cultural provision in new regeneration zones in the town, funded from commercial and residential development. This will stimulate economic development including the night-time economy.

**Suffolk Arts and Museums sector** annually contribute £40 million GVA to the local economy with an annual turnover of over £100m. The sector employs over 2500 people and is made up of 500 businesses. They attract an estimated 60,000 international visitors and enable over 200,000 overnight stays.

## **9. Recommended Actions (by Government or others)**

- We believe that there should be a proactive approach by ACE, in collaboration with local authorities, to increase the number and quality of NPOs and MPMs in areas of disadvantage/'cold spots' as part of the commitment to increasing investment beyond London.
- ACE could also make available flexible funding to support R&D, organisational development and capacity-building for potential NPOs
- DCMS should be working more closely with DCLG/BIS/DoE and DoH to broaden their understanding of the role and value of culture in economic growth and place-shaping, health and wellbeing; education and social care. Too many civil servants are ignorant of good practice in these areas and multiple outcomes could be achieved with the same resources if early planning encouraged collaboration with the cultural sector.
- Culture should be a mandatory theme in all plans related to LEPs, City Deals, Combined Authorities and other devolution mechanisms.
- Work to allow localised approaches to funding, such as a 'tourist tax', 'bed tax' or 'cultural enterprise zones' where there is scope for it to provide longterm and sustainable new revenue to support cultural developments.

We would welcome the opportunity to present oral evidence to the inquiry.

**Polly Hamilton**  
Vice-Chair of CLOA  
[info@cloa.org.uk](mailto:info@cloa.org.uk)  
Tel: 01473 345385