

# Speech to Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association AGM

Bisham Abbey



**Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman QC MP**

Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

House of Commons,  
London, SW1A 0AA  
0207 219 4218  
[harriet.harman.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:harriet.harman.mp@parliament.uk)  
[harrietharman.org](http://harrietharman.org)  
[@HarrietHarman](https://twitter.com/HarrietHarman)



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**SPEECH TO THE CHIEF CULTURAL AND LEISURE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Great to be here**

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak to you today.

It's great to be here as Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to be speaking to all of you, who do so much to promote and encourage sport, tourism, heritage and culture.

And it's a particular pleasure to be doing it here at Bisham Abbey, where so many of our sportsmen and women are training for success, in football, rugby, tennis, hockey, and many other sports.

And this building has a great past – it was once home to Henry VIII and Elizabeth I – but it's also looking to the future, training athletes and hosting conferences and weddings to generate income, showing how sport, leisure, culture and tourism are all intertwined.

And talking about tourism, you're just a stone's throw from Marlow, where tourists come to see the suspension bridge and this weekend they can enjoy the regatta, whatever the weather!

**Central not marginal**

Of course, sport and culture are so important, not just for a few – they're for everyone.

It's impossible to imagine our lives without sport – especially this summer, with the Olympics and Euro 2012. It's impossible to imagine our lives without music, without film, without TV or without art. It's important for each of us as individuals, and for our sense of identity and sense of place.

And particularly for young people. Whether they live in the inner city, like my constituency, or somewhere more rural like Swale, young people are not only avid consumers of culture – they want to work in the creative industries in future. And I have no doubt many of them will be inspired by athletes from all over the world this summer.

So, both for national and for local government, there is a democratic imperative for us to deliver on what our constituents feel so passionately about – not just for fun, but for their health, and for their own ambitions for the future.

Sport and culture are not only central to the life of individuals and communities across the country, but to the future of our economy.

All around the world we are known for our arts and culture and for our sporting achievements – we are seen as world leaders.

**Labour in government**

That's why we gave so much support to sport and culture when we were in Government.

That's why we brought in free entry to museums and galleries, from the British Museum to Spelthorne Museum.

We boosted the film industry with tax credits, and I'm glad the current Government is finally implementing our tax credits for the video games industry, and helping animation and high-end television.

We legislated for the Digital Economy Act.

We supported creativity and sport in schools – our School Sports Partnerships increased the number of children taking part in two hours of high quality PE each week, up from 25% in 1997 to 90% in 2010.

And, of course, working across all parties and with the sporting community, we brought the Olympics to Britain.

### **Crucial role of local government**

Because culture and sport must be for everyone, your role in local government is absolutely crucial. And wherever you go around the country, you can see this.

In Leeds – and I know Leeds are here today – there's the flagship Northern Ballet building, and the Leeds Arena which will give the whole city a boost, bringing jobs and regeneration to the area. Both could only have been built with financial support from the local council. In Exeter, there's the glittering refurbishment of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, again with funding from the council.

And it's not just the big projects that matter. In the Wirral, I went to an art project funded by the council's Empty Shops Fund, bringing life to the local high street. And I know so many of you are working on exciting projects and initiatives – Newham's 'Every Child a Musician' policy is a great example.

None of these projects would have happened without their local councils. And I want to come to see more of these projects, so please keep me in touch with what you're doing and invite me.

### **Culture cuts**

But we all know this is a difficult time for sport and culture. There's been a triple-whammy.

- Cuts to the Arts Council. They had their budget slashed by 30%, but everyone says how hard they've worked to help people through these difficult times. And I want to pay tribute to Liz Forgan, their chair, who was sacked in a petty political act despite the arts saying she was doing a great job for them.
- The abolition of the regional development agencies.
- And cuts to your budgets in local government. Look at the threat to our libraries, for instance – much-loved services but so many of them are closing because of the financial pressures.

And then we had the Budget. The 'Heritage Tax' which suddenly added 20% to the cost of approved alterations to listed buildings – galleries, museums, theatres, libraries, community halls.

Although the Government has reversed its plan to cap the tax relief on philanthropy, it's already put off donors by stigmatising them as tax-dodgers. Ironical because the government said philanthropy was their strategy for plugging the funding gap.

But philanthropy was never going to fill that gap in any case. Outside of London, it was never even going to come close.

Most successful arts projects rely on support from a variety of partners: philanthropy, the Arts Council, local and national government. If all these partners are facing difficulty, it's very difficult to plan confidently for the future.

### **Sport cuts**

And sport is suffering too.

The widest possible participation is important for its own sake, so people are enjoying sport at all levels, but it's also important to ensure that we are bringing forward the next generation of world class elite sportsmen and women.

That's why we're so concerned that central government funding for school sport has been cut by 60%, and that School Sports Partnerships have been abolished. And because the School Sport Survey has been axed, we can't see how much sport young people are doing.

It will be difficult, but I know you're doing everything you can to support sport in your schools and communities as they try and make up for the axing of the school sports partnerships and the funding cuts.

### **Local government faces difficult times**

There will be those arguing that, now the good times are over, arts are a luxury we can no longer afford. But we have to make the case for sport – we have to make the case for culture.

We have to sustain the commitment in local government – your commitment in local government – to sport and culture.

Because the argument is so strong.

Because these industries are key to our economic future.

### **Creative fightback**

We are saying to government that they have to put the creative industries at the heart of their plans for jobs and growth.

- The creative economy has grown faster than any other sector - accounting for around 2m jobs
- It accounts for economic output of at least £60b per year - more than 8% of UK GDP
- Our creative industries have the potential to grow at double the rate of any other sector
- They accounted for £17b of exports - the second biggest global exporter after the US

### **Five point plan**

The sporting and cultural agenda have to move beyond just being something for one department. They must be integrated across government departments. To really deliver for Britain, to really deliver for the sporting and creative and tourism industries, we must go beyond just DCMS.

I'm working closely with the Shadow Chancellor, Ed Balls, the Shadow Business Secretary, Chuka Umunna, the Shadow Education Secretary Stephen Twigg and the Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary to forge our 5 point plan for jobs and growth in the creative industries.

It's evident that there are five key themes:

- Access to finance – making the City realise that creative industries are a good investment. Banks have got to start lending to viable creative businesses
- Protection of copyright – so there's a sound basis for investment. It's such a waste if some talented designer in Oxford or musician in Brighton creates something and isn't able to lock that value in, instead watching it drain away through copyright theft
- Support for exports – when the Prime Minister leads a high level business delegation overseas, I want to see the creative industries right in there
- Young people and skills – making sure that the next generation have the right education and skills – to foster the designers, the technicians, the musicians and the animators of the future
- And a regional strategy for growth. Everyone agrees we need to build a more balanced economy for the future – not just less reliant on financial services but also less reliant on London. Just as our reach needs to be global it needs to be across all regions of the UK. Part of this is ensuring there's a strategy for regional broadband, so a creative business can get online wherever they're based. So there has to be a proper regional strategy for growth in the creative industries. Which is where we can all work together.

I know you will make the case for culture and strive to protect it. That's what local government has always done. That's what we want to support you in doing and what we want to build our plans for government on.

In the face of a threat to the cultural sector we need a united and creative response: a creative fightback.

## **Tourism**

And a strong cultural sector is key to tourism. Tourism provides 1.3 million jobs and is worth £105 billion to the UK economy each year. All over the country, mostly small and medium sized businesses.

These are private businesses – but what you do, and what government does, for good or ill, is important.

So, it's important to have a clear national strategy for tourism and put it into action. This has to be work done across government – across different departments, and at local and national level.

Again, it's not just about the DCMS – take the recent stories complaining that the UK is missing out on Chinese tourists because of visa regulations – the Home Office has to be involved.

So there has to be a co-ordinated approach on

- Transport
- Planning
- Business regulation
- And VAT

## **Olympics and tourism**

That's especially important for this summer, with the Olympics, and we have to ensure that this is felt not just in London, but across the country.

The Olympics – and the Cultural Olympiad – provide an opportunity for the whole world to see Britain at its best. Not just London – the whole country. To enjoy our rich heritage and vibrant cultures.

We have so much to offer in this country – much of it thanks to the support of local government. Look at the success of festivals. Once, festivals meant music festivals like Glastonbury, aimed at young people. But now we have literary festivals, music festival festivals for families, comedy festivals, film festivals. From Hay to Edinburgh to this week's Sheffield Doc Fest. And we have much to offer tourists. Our museums and art galleries and theatres. Our countryside and parks. Our historic buildings. There is so much to celebrate.

## **Conclusion**

Although times are undoubtedly tough at the moment, there is so much good work going on. There is so much to celebrate. And I repeat my request – if you're doing good work in culture, sport, heritage, tourism or anything to do with the creative industries, I want you to tell me about it. I look forward to hearing from you – and working with you.