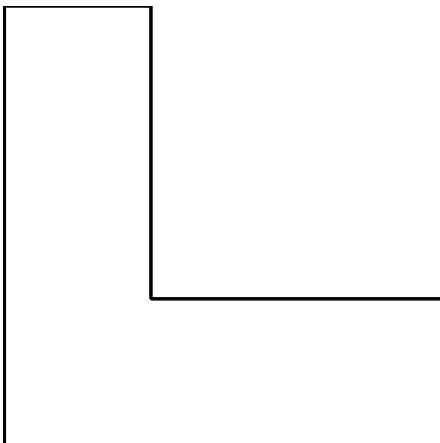


Policy Priorities for the Visual Arts Sector

November 2022

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About CVAN

Through our nine regional networks, CVAN England supports the visual arts sector through research, professional development, knowledge exchange, and influencing policy. Our regional networks nurture connectivity and engagement through participation, working in partnership with artists, arts workers, and organisations to build sustainable infrastructures and deliver development opportunities. The visual arts sector consists of artists, arts workers and a variety of organisations including artists' studios, collectives, development organisations and galleries.

Introduction

The visual arts represent an essential part of our creative industries. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the creative industries contributed £115.9 billion in gross value added (GVA) and supported 2.1 million jobs in the UK (with a further 1.4 million jobs supported via their supply chains).¹ The sector was growing at four times the rate of the UK economy and creating jobs at three times the UK average. This document summarises CVAN's recommendations to the government to protect and maximise the potential of the visual arts sector.

At the time of writing visual artists and organisations are facing multiple challenges as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. Whilst the sector shows signs of recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that audience and visitor numbers have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels and visual arts organisations are struggling to recruit and retain talented staff as people seek less precarious work in other sectors. Some of our network members are preparing to support their communities this winter by acting as warm banks, however they will need government help to achieve this as they have already had to reduce their opening hours in response to inflation and rising energy costs.

Policy Recommendations

Supporting our Workforce

70% of visual arts workers are freelancers but their needs and contribution to the UK economy are poorly understood by the sector and government. We therefore join our cultural sector partners in calling on the government to:

- Appoint a Commissioner for Freelancers to champion the contribution of arts workers to the UK economy.²

Our International Connections [report](#) detailed the impact of the UK leaving the EU on the visual arts. To enable our sector to thrive internationally CVAN is calling on the government to support:

- Knowledge exchange opportunities to share best practice about post-Brexit international exchange work.
- Ensure that the visual arts sector is represented on the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement Domestic Advisory Group.
- Provide accessible government guidance for artists, specialists, museum professionals, exhibitors and businesses working or exhibiting in the EU.

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-economic-estimates-2019-gross-value-added/dcms-economic-estimates-2019-provisional-gross-value-added>

² This recommendation has been proposed by Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Creative Diversity and the Centre for Cultural Value.

Museum and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief (MGETR)

Tax reliefs offer our sector additional income to support artists, engage with diverse audiences, take risks and innovate. Given the success of the creative industries tax reliefs, CVAN calls on the government to extend and enhance the Museum and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief, in particular:

- Remove the March 2024 sunset clause to enable the sector to plan future activity.
- Maintain the higher rate of MGETR.
- Allow not-for-profit organisations to claim MGETR.

CVAN also calls for MGETR to be enhanced to include:

- Education costs;
- Digital online exhibition development;
- Live art and performance;
- Sales of work or selling exhibitions.

Easing the Cost-of-living Crisis

High inflation and rising energy prices are adding to running costs and limiting the capacity of visual arts organisations to realise their growth potential. Business rates bear no relation to the ability of creative businesses to pay, and risk taxing viable small businesses beyond what they can tolerate. The government can ease the pressure of rising costs by:

- Applying Business Rate Relief to visual arts organisations such as galleries and artists' studios and;
- Removing VAT currently applied to historic buildings for maintenance and repair.

CVAN welcomes the temporary [Energy Bill Relief Scheme](#) for businesses introduced in September 2022. We call on the government to provide ongoing assistance by:

- Developing longer term strategies to protect all types of visual arts organisations including charities, community interest companies and unincorporated associations.
- Ease pressures of rising costs by applying Business Rate Relief to cultural sites, venues and hubs and removing VAT currently applied to historic buildings for maintenance and repair.

Education

The Schools White Paper [published](#) in March 2022 outlined plans to develop a Cultural Education Plan which states *“As part of a richer school week, all children should be entitled to take part in sport, music and cultural opportunities. These opportunities are an essential part of a broad and ambitious curriculum, and support children’s health, wellbeing and wider development, particularly as we recover from the pandemic”*. We look forward to the realisation of this plan and in particular we call on the government to:

- Honour its election pledge to provide a £270m arts premium for secondary schools.
- Bolster creative provision in further and higher education to meet workforce demands.
- Reinstate arts, media and design courses as 'strategically important'.

Fostering an Equitable Sector

The visual arts are a powerful force driving our world-famous creative industries, but our sector is precarious and inaccessible to a large proportion of our population. The importance of considering intersecting inequalities and acknowledging the multifaceted construction of identity is a foundational aspect of working towards greater equity in the visual arts sector.

CVAN endorses the following recommendations of the Creative Diversity All Party Parliamentary Group, which call on DCMS to:

- Introduce a plan for creative diversity, published and reviewed annually, with associated key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Collate, co-ordinate and disseminate the range of sector guidance and toolkits on supporting access to jobs within the creative economy, for example the Social Mobility Commission's toolkit for the creative industries and recent guidance by BFI, ACE, and Jerwood Arts.
- Produce guidance for companies on how to interrogate their recruitment practices to make them fairer and inviting for all applicants.

Defining our Sector

DCMS has worked to differentiate the contribution of other sectors within the creative industries such as music, video games and craft. By formally defining the economic baseline of the visual arts, the sector - including education, galleries, and touring exhibitions - will also be able to coalesce around a common baseline to develop strategic plans for growth, to deliver economic and social benefit. The government for its part will be better able to judge the size and value of public good achieved from public investment, including in visual arts in the education system. We call on the government to:

- Formally define the value of the visual arts sector and measure in DCMS trade figures, using similar criteria as for craft, and establishing a group of visual arts-specific Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes.

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