

**All-Party Parliamentary Group for Visual Arts
Formal Meeting
Tuesday 21 January 2025, 11.00 – 12.00
Room C, 1 Parliament Street**

Meeting chair:

The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench)

Parliamentary Attendees:

Polly Billington MP (Labour, East Thanet)
Ruth Cadbury MP (Labour, Brentford and Isleworth) – Online
The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench)
Cat Eccles MP (Labour, Stourbridge) – Online
Lord Freyberg (Crossbench)
Lord Hampton (Crossbench)
Lord Inglewood (Crossbench) - Online

Other attendees

- Julie Lomax, CEO, a-n, the Artists Information Company
- Kate Rosser-Frost, Head of Communications & Engagement, Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS)
- Alistair Small, Communications & Engagement Lead, Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS)
- Prof. Martin Kretschmer, Professor of Intellectual Property Law in the School of Law, University of Glasgow, and Director of CREATE
- Dr. Amy Thomas, Lecturer in Intellectual Property and Information Law, in the School of Law, University of Glasgow and Researcher, CREATE
- Dr. Arthur Ehlinger, Researcher, CREATE
- Eliza Easton, Erskine Analysis
- Ronda Gowland-Pryde, Senior Public Engagement Fellow at University of Southampton
- Joseph Owen, Research Fellow at University of Southampton

Apologies were received from the following APPG members: Lord Clement-Jones, Satvir Kaur MP, Baroness Keeley, Lord Parkinson and Manuela Perteghella MP. APPG Chair Cat Eccles MP attended the meeting online, due to illness.

And from Paula Orrell, Director, CVAN England

The Earl Clancarty (Meeting Chair) opened the meeting:

Introduction

The Meeting Chair sent well wishes to APPG Chair Cat Eccles MP who was unable to join in person due to illness, but joined online, then introduced the meeting's first guest speakers, Prof. Martin Kretschmer, Dr. Amy Thomas and Dr. Arthur Ehlinger, from the Centre for the Regulation of the Creative Economy, University of Glasgow.

Artists' Earnings and Contracts Report

The researchers outlined the key findings of the Artists' Earnings and Contracts report, published November 2024, commissioned by DACS. From a survey of 1241 artists, the following key findings were highlighted:

- The median earnings for visual artists is £12,500, a 47% decrease since 2010.
- 81% of visual artists describe their earnings as an artist as 'unstable' or 'very unstable'.
- 65% of visual artists earn below the national minimum wage.
- Women artists and artists of other genders earn 40% less than men.

Polly Billington MP asked whether there was data on access to creative education, and therefore access to the sector. Researchers highlighted that the respondents indicated a higher level of economic privilege in comparison to the general population, indicating that socio-economic background is a barrier to entry into the sector, or to maintaining a career as a professional visual artist.

The group then discussed the report's findings of variation amongst geographical regions – with the report finding a higher concentration of artists in London, but the lowest earnings of any region – and the broader barriers to accessing creative education, particularly in state schools.

Julie Lomax, a-n, highlighted work by the Freelands Foundation into arts provision in schools, and the risk of a contraction in the pipeline of artists studying at higher levels. Eliza Easton highlighted that art schools admissions data could help illuminate the direction of travel on the numbers of University students studying visual arts subjects.

Informing Policy for the Visual Arts: Evidence and Opportunities

Eliza Easton from Erskine Analysis outlined upcoming research into the visual arts ecosystem, and how the sector can support the UK Government's current priorities through its economic, social and soft-power contributions. The research has been commissioned by CVAN, with support from the University of Southampton.

Challenges facing the sector include: Fragile business models (including as a result of hybrid value creation), the need for technological investment, the risk posed by emerging technologies like AI, access to skills, the implications of trade restrictions post Brexit, the vulnerability of freelancers, lack of workspace and lack of investment in capital.

The secretariat will support a submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review (deadline 9 February 2025) drawing on this research.

Action: The Secretariat will share the submission with all APPG members in advance of submission.

Action: The secretariat will work with the Chair's office to agree a date for a parliamentary reception for the APPG Visual Arts & Artists highlighting the findings of the submission, TBC March 2025.

Eliza's research highlighted that DCMS' figures show the decline of the UK art market since Brexit has been significant. Exports have fallen by £1.8bn in four years. Imports have fallen by £1.1bn. That means that, even following a slight bounceback in 2021, the balance of trade has fallen by £0.7bn.

Action: The secretariat will draft notes and suggested PQs on this for members to raise in the Creative Industries Commons debate on Monday 27th January 2025, and Lords Debate on 6th February 2025.

Discussion on the proposed sale of works in the British Council collection

The Earl of Clancarty and Lord Freyberg tabled a discussion on the reported proposal to sell up to half of the works in the British Council collection, as reported by the Times. The British Council has £197 million debt following a £250 million emergency loan from the government during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Action: The Secretariat will prepare a one-pager on this, and draft PQs for the upcoming sessions referenced above.

Dates of 2025 meetings

The Secretariat proposes that the next meeting of the APPG take place on one of the following dates, to be confirmed by the Chair:

Tuesday 1st April 2025, 11AM

Tuesday 29th April 2025, 11AM

Tuesday 6th May 2025, 11AM

Tuesday 13th May 2025, 11AM

Moving forward, the Secretariat proposes meetings in:

July 2025

October 2025 (AGM)