

**All-Party Parliamentary Group for Visual Arts
Formal Meeting
Tuesday 1st April 2025, 11.15 – 12.15
Room P, 1 Portcullis House**

Meeting chair:

Cat Eccles MP (Labour, Stourbridge)

Parliamentary Attendees:

The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench)
Lord Freyberg (Crossbench)
Lord Hampton (Crossbench)

Other attendees

- Eliza Easton, Erskine Analysis
- Lanre Bakare, Arts Correspondent, the Guardian
- Maria Balermpa, Parliamentary Researcher to Baroness Jane Bonham-Carter (Online)
- Kate Rosser-Frost, Head of Communications & Engagement, Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS)
- Alistair Small, Communications & Engagement Lead, Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS)
- Joseph Owen, Research Fellow at University of Southampton
- Paula Orrell, Director of CVAN England (Online)

Apologies were received from the following APPG members: Manuela Perteghella MP, Polly Billington MP, Lord Inglewood, Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe, Baroness McIntosh.

And from Julie Lomax, CEO, a-n, the Artists Information Company (Co-Secretariat)

Cat Eccles MP (Meeting Chair) opened the meeting:

Introduction

The Meeting Chair thanked those in attendance both in person and online for joining the meeting, then introduced the meeting's guest speakers Eliza Easton from Erskine Analysis and Lanre Bakare, Arts Correspondent at the Guardian.

Framing the Future: The Political Case for Strengthening the Visual Arts Ecosystem

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.

Framing the Future will outline evidence that shows the visual arts can help the government achieve its priorities, at good value.

1. Raising Living Standards

The UK is a top 3 exporter of visual arts globally, and works of art are in the top 30 goods that the UK exports. Their position has dropped following a £1.5bn decrease since Brexit, yet their export value is higher than all exports to Greece, Portugal or Israel.

The GVA of the Arts and Antiques market is unvalued by DCMS as £0.8bn, this is because the 3 largest auction houses: Bonhams, Christies and Sotheby's are not included in this valuation.

The most successful regenerations in the UK have had the visual arts as a cornerstone, including Margate (Turner Contemporary), Dundee (V&A Dundee) and Wakefield (Hepworth Wakefield).

2. Supporting wellbeing and health outcomes

We know that arts and culture are essential for wellbeing. There are two significant measurable benefits, particularly for young people and for older adults – two major groups for the NHS. Research will show that visual arts participation and education can improve the health and wellbeing of both groups.

The visual arts are also essential for creating humane and therapeutic care environments, which evidence shows reduces patients time spent in hospital.

3. Educational attainment

The research will show the impact of the visual arts on educational attainment through 4 key areas:

- Early years: Visual arts organisations want to develop more early years support programmes to help meet govt goals of getting children school ready, but need more investment to do this.
- Creativity and Innovative thinking: Evidence shows these are likely to be the essential skills for the workforce of the future, and non-creative industries are making this known.
- Visual Literacy: Visual arts education can equip young people with the visual literacy skills needed to think critically, spot misinformation and image manipulation.
- Skills for the Creative Industries: creative education can support the future workforce of one of the government's key growth sectors, the creative industries.

The report will include policy recommendations to grow the visual arts, including:

- Expanding national Saturday Clubs
- Supporting grassroots visual arts in a similar way to grassroots fund for music
- Reinstating high cost funding for creative subjects in higher education
- Addressing regulatory burdens on art import / export
- Changes to MGETR to allow greater growth in the visual arts, museums and galleries sector

Eliza then outlined some recommendations that went into the Spending Review, including:

- a relief fund for arts organisations that face temporary financial difficulties
- a business model fund that supports high risk high return strategic initiatives in arts and culture organisations and businesses

- a long-term match funding programme from government to match private endowments, to promote financial sustainability.

The report will be published on Thursday 24th April at a reception in Parliament, all APPG members will receive copies under embargo.

Action: The Secretariat will share the final report with all APPG members in advance of its publication on Thursday 24th April.

Discussion on *Framing the Future*

The Earl of Clancarty raised that there is a meeting on 19th May around growth, which this research would be valuable for, along with questions.

Lord Freyberg enquired about the proposed match-funding scheme and how this differentiates from existing catapult and catalyst funding schemes. Eliza explained that this proposed scheme would be purely financial, rather than business development or other forms of support and its aims would be to leverage philanthropic giving.

Action: The secretariat will draft notes and suggested PQs on this for members to raise in advance of the launch of the report.

Reception on 24th April

Paula Orrell outlined that all APPG members are encouraged to attend and that the reception will bring together all parts of the visual arts sector from artists to public bodies to commercial galleries and auction houses.

Lanre Bakare, Arts Correspondent, the Guardian

Lanre Bakare outlined the intensifying debate around access to the arts sector, including a 2022 study which showed that the number of working class people in the arts has halved since the 1970s.

Lanre's research has focused on the leadership of arts organisations, analysing the class backgrounds the artistic directors and CEOs of the 50 best funded NPO organisations in the UK, from the Royal Opera House to Leeds Playhouse. Research showed that 36% of CEOs were privately educated, and 30% of artistic directors, in comparison to 7% of the general population.

The research also looked at the Higher Education backgrounds of the same people, specifically whether they had attended an Oxbridge university. 17.5% of artistic directors and 20% of CEOs did, in comparison to 1% of the general population. Lanre also spoke to leading creatives including Jesse Darling (2023 Turner Prize Winner), Shane Meadows and Stephen Knight. The vast majority pointed towards support like tax credits and youth development programmes promoting access to the arts as essential to them becoming the cultural figures they are today.

Research also highlighting the decline in GCSE arts education (40% since 2010) and arts teachers, and the decline in youth provision like youth clubs which are free at the point of access.

Cat Eccles MP asked whether the research had recommendations. Lanre expressed that this primarily is about investment in provision to support access to the arts for all, to create a fairer and more representative workforce. It was highlighted that Dame Sonia Boyce – 2022

Venice Biennale Golden Lion Winner, attended art college in Stourbridge, an art college which no longer exists.

Lord Freyberg highlighted the work of Youth Employment UK as setting a good example of how young people from all backgrounds can be directed towards creative careers.

Joseph Owen from the University of Southampton highlighted that placemaking and regeneration initiatives often do not carry benefits to existing communities and do not necessarily address the issues around access.

Lord Bassam concurred with this point, and attendees discussed the importance of community ownership of cultural regeneration projects, and securing community consensus on regeneration projects.

Alistair Small from DACS asked Lanre whether the freelance artists he spoke to in his research explained what kind of support was essential for them maintaining their careers post education, given low earnings across the sector. Lanre cited that earlier generations of artists could access broader welfare support and there was a higher provision of affordable housing and studios. Jesse Darling was cited as an example of an artist who moved abroad, to Berlin, during the critical development phase of their career – a city with far greater investment in the arts than that seen in the UK.

Dates of 2025 meetings

The Secretariat proposes meetings in July and October, with dates to be agreed with the Chair and shared in due course.

AOB

Members requested PQs ahead of the launch of the *Framing the Future* report.

Lord Freyberg raised that the DCMS and DBT are holding a review of small business policies, which could be an avenue to raise ideas from the visual arts sector.

Action: Secretariat will compile these PQs and share with members.