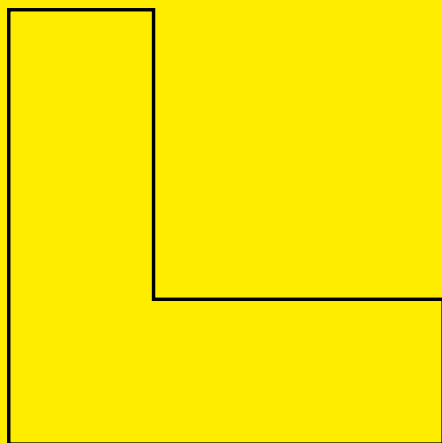


Reframed: A new policy agenda for the visual arts



CVAN Priorities:

1) INVEST IN ART AND ARTISTS.

- Commission an independent review into investment in culture.
- Provide new funding to support the grassroots visual arts ecosystem.
- Explore the potential of a Tourist Levy to fund culture.
- Optimise the benefits of Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief.
- Introduce legislation that will generate additional revenue for artists via The Smart Fund.

2) SUPPORT THE VISUAL ARTS WORKFORCE TO THRIVE.

- Introduce a Freelancer Commissioner.
- Tackle late payments by encouraging the adoption of the Prompt Payment Code.
- Promote the use of contracts for all work and improve contract clarity and transparency.
- Publish artist pay policies and fee structures.
- Expand Arts Council England's 'Developing Your Creative Practice' fund.
- Convene an expert advisory group to explore the challenges facing disabled artists.
- Protect artists from the threats posed by unregulated AI Text and Data Mining.

3) CULTIVATE THE CREATIVE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE.

- Review the national curriculum to ensure a greater focus on creative subjects.
- Reform the EBaccalaureate to include creative subjects.
- Overhaul the Progress 8 accountability measure to ensure the inclusion of creative subjects.
- Expand the Ofsted inspection framework to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum is achieved.
- Provide subsidised visits for school pupils to cultural venues, including galleries and museums.
- Reinstate the Creative Partnerships programme to increase school links with artists.
- Reverse real-terms cuts to specialist Higher Education Institution funding.

4) ENSURE THE SECTOR HAS THE RIGHT RESOURCES FOR THE JOB.

- Implement a long-term strategy to increase affordable studio space for artists.
- Optimise the use of planning rules to better protect and grow affordable workspace for artists.
- Boost capital investment for individual galleries and visual arts spaces.
- Open up access to 'meanwhile' spaces for artists through planning reforms.
- Provide financial support for maintaining and retrofitting existing buildings.
- Provide a business rate exemption for galleries and artist studios.

5) ENABLE ARTISTIC EXCHANGE ACROSS BORDERS.

- Rejoin Creative Europe.
- Implement a new creative and cultural agreement with the EU, enabling reciprocal freedom of movement for artists and other creative workers.

6) CREATE A COMMON LANGUAGE OF VISUAL ARTS VALUE.

- Formally define the visual arts sector and develop a baseline set of metrics.
- Work with the visual arts sector to embed the Culture and Heritage Capital Framework.

About the Contemporary Visual Arts Network England (CVAN).

CVAN England is an organisation where the visual arts meet policy change. We work in partnership with our nine regional networks to campaign and advocate for the visual arts sector at a national level. We create programmes of support for artists and art workers and develop organisational support that promotes learning and knowledge. We campaign for the sector to be heard, valued and recognised so that the visual arts can thrive now and in the future.

The context for change.

The story of the UK's creative industries is one of great potential – the potential for groundbreaking new work and innovation, of economic growth and job creation and of the transformational power of creativity. In 2023, the creative industries contributed £125 billion to GVA¹ (almost 6% of the economy) and supported 1.8 million creative jobs and a further 700,000 self-employed workers². From 2010 to 2019, the sector grew more than one and a half times faster than the wider economy,³ and there are ambitions to grow the sector by a further £50 billion and a million jobs by 2030.⁴ The UK's creative industries are world-beating and must remain a national priority.

From the earliest known cave paintings to today's social media culture, society has always chosen to reflect itself in visual form. The visual arts remain a crucial part of the country's creative growth economy: the UK art market is the largest in Europe, worth \$10.9 billion, and the third largest in the world.⁵ A recent YouGov poll from the Art Fund and National Museum Directors' Council showed that 89% of UK adults think museums are important to UK culture.⁶ The visual arts are also an innovation testbed and talent incubator for many other parts of the creative industries – including design, fashion, animation and advertising – and have a vital role to play in fuelling the UK's global creative reputation. And while growth is an appropriate and welcome ambition, a number of systemic challenges face the visual arts - challenges that hamper growth and diminish the power of the sector to meet its creative, social and economic goals.

CVAN calls on policy makers to improve their understanding of the specific needs of the different sub-sectors within the creative industries – recognising that different solutions will be required for each in order to meet the overarching ambition for growth. When referring to the visual arts, we are principally referring to a broad ecology made up of individual artists, art workers and independent professionals, studio providers, galleries and publicly funded arts organisations. Each have their own set of ambitions and challenges. Given the very real challenges facing the visual arts, the goal must be to achieve stability and resilience, as essential enablers of growth.

The opportunity for resilience and potential growth lies in addressing systemic issues such as low pay, precarity of work, informal work practices and a decline in creative opportunities. These challenges exist alongside challenging economic headwinds, persistent social inequalities and the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. CVAN's policy priorities, as set out below, are our solution to addressing these challenges and we welcome dialogue with policy makers, industry and other stakeholders to effect change.

Artists are among some of the lowest paid workers in the creative industries.⁷ Research shows that, while the average annual income for an artist is £16,150, the median income is much lower – at £12,500, with only £2000 of that coming from art practice.⁸ Data from 2023 suggests that the average earnings for freelance artists working in publicly funded organisations is £2.60 an hour.⁹ Chronic low pay means that 90% of artists do not earn enough to support their livelihood.¹⁰ While many choose to work for low or no pay, because of their passion for their practice, these circumstances make a career in the visual arts unattainable for many. Unless we address it, we risk turning off the tap of creative talent on which our creative industries depend.

The challenge of low pay is underpinned by declining levels of public funding for art, at national and local levels, and increased competition for those funds. Local authority spending on arts and culture in England declined by 43% between 2009-10 and 2021-22¹¹; and between 2009-10 and 2019-20, government funding of Arts Council England declined by 16%.¹² Lower levels of subsidy mean that galleries, arts organisations and museums are less able to invest in innovation, less able to engage with communities, less able to grow new and diverse audiences and less able to support the wider visual arts ecosystem. Public investment flows through to all parts of the ecosystem – to studio providers, artists and communities – and is the lifeblood of our sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the precarity of work in the visual arts sector. Over 70% of the workforce are freelancers¹³ (compared to 13% in the wider economy),¹⁴ and gaps in government support schemes, and a rapid downturn in work, left many workers economically vulnerable. 47% of artists missed out on government support, 40% had work cancelled or postponed and 54% reported a drop in sales of their work.¹⁵ As with other creative subsectors, freelancing is characterised by ad-hoc, project-based work, and many visual artists report fewer work opportunities in Europe following the UK's departure from the European Union¹⁶. While low pay and precarity feed each other, other factors create precarity in the visual arts.

The visual arts workforce is often subject to informal, and sometimes poor, work practices. Many artists work without a contract and many experience late payment. Freelancers are not able to access many of the safety nets and benefits that employees receive – like sick pay, holiday pay or parental entitlements – and the dispersed and informally organised workforce means there are fewer opportunities for collective bargaining.

These challenges, especially when compounded, put the visual arts at risk, leaving the sector less able to absorb economic shocks. Many artists lack the quality of life they deserve because of low income and work precarity. Many struggle to afford the equipment, resources and workspace they need to cultivate their practice. Many experience burnout, with some choosing to leave the sector. CVAN's 'Fair and

Equitable' report (2022) showed that low pay is the reason more than a third of the workforce are considering leaving the sector.¹⁷ Those that remain, often have no choice but to find other work: 69% of artists have other jobs to supplement their income¹⁸ and 43% relied upon family and friends to support their practice.¹⁹ The ability to work flexibly, absorb the consequences of precarity or access additional support is not available to everyone and risks diminishing the pipeline of future talent and impacting the diversity of the sector. And for those that persist, the prospect of career development is poor.

Again, investment, especially via public subsidy, has the potential to drive up standards, reduce precarity and low pay and increase opportunity. But it is important to recognise that publicly funded galleries and museums face many of the same challenges and operate in a climate of diminishing revenue, increased accountability and a cost of living crisis. Nevertheless, CVAN is ambitious for the sector. We must work together to ensure that artists are lifted from relative poverty, that our publicly funded visual arts organisations have the resources they need to help support and sustain our vibrant creative ecosystem. Here we set out a series of short-term and longer-term ambitions for resilience - resilience that fuels the growth of the creative sector, the wellbeing of our creative communities and cements our world-class standing on the global stage.

1) Invest In Art And Artists:

Commission an independent review into investment in culture.

The House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee report 'At risk: our creative future' (2023), sums up the precarity facing publicly funded arts organisations: "Funding streams are disparate and complex; integrating good practice remains challenging; and the stop-start nature of grants makes it hard to support cross-disciplinary collaboration or help shift business models towards long-term financial sustainability."²⁰ These challenges, set against a backdrop of declining public subsidy, have jeopardised the economic model of the visual arts. We echo calls from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) for a 'new deal' for arts organisations that "identifies the type of investment they most need, and how that can be delivered to ensure that the full funding package for the arts protects the infrastructure that it needs to survive."²¹ A recent YouGov poll by the Art Fund and National Museum Directors' Council demonstrated the scale of public support for government funding of the arts, with almost half of the respondents (47%) saying museums should be mostly or entirely funded by government.²²

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) should commission a root-and-branch independent review of cultural investment. The review should envision the future for the cultural sector over the longer-term, map various income streams and make robust recommendations to governments at all levels. For a complete understanding of the visual arts sector, the review should consider the investment flows between the commercial and non-commercial parts of the sector, consider levels of national and local government funding and examine the whole of the ecosystem – from major commercial galleries through to grassroots provision.

Any review of the work of Arts Council England should take place within the context of this work. Similarly, there is an opportunity for the review to simplify public procurement and grant funding processes. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and freelancers have additional barriers to engaging with public procurement – including time, resource and expertise²³ - and would therefore benefit from additional support and capacity-building, as well as simplified application processes. Similarly, the review should consider what more could be done to ensure funding and support is made available to artists from minoritised communities.

Recognising that an independent review is not a short-term solution to funding challenges, CVAN is proposing other measures that could generate additional investment and maximise value in the visual arts.

Provide new funding to support the grassroots visual arts ecosystem.

The visual arts ecosystem is made up of a complex and diverse network of individuals and organisations, without which an artist could not hope to create art, develop their practice, sell and exhibit their work and engage with audiences and communities. The ecosystem at grassroots level includes everyone from studio providers to independent commercial galleries, and artist collectives to publicly funded arts organisations. Only some parts of the ecosystem receive subsidy to support their work and yet the grassroots are crucial to supporting new work and emerging artists. As a strategically important part of the UK's creative industries, the visual arts must be supported at all levels.

Messages around the importance of the grassroots infrastructure for music have been heard, and yet the same narratives for the visual arts have not cut-through. We call on DCMS to provide funding to Arts Council England to establish a grassroots fund for the visual arts – akin to the Supporting Grassroots Music fund.²⁴

Explore the potential of a Tourist Levy to fund culture.

Combined and local authorities have, for some time, been exploring opportunities for generating income through new revenue streams, with many areas considering the introduction of a Tourist Levy. While a levy has to be enacted via legislation, a voluntary scheme or via a Business Improvement District (BID)²⁵, it has not prevented Manchester from implementing one, and Scotland is in the final stages of introducing legislation (the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill).²⁶ CVAN calls on local and combined authorities to introduce a Tourist Levy, and that any income generated through it be ring-fenced for investment in arts organisations and cultural projects, both of which drive tourism.

Modelling by the Local Government Association (LGA) suggests that levy income will vary depending on the type of occupancy charge, with a percentage levy generating anything between £505,000 and over £13.7 million.²⁷ Since Manchester introduced theirs in 2023, it has generated £2.8 million from its £1 per night hotel charge.²⁸ Centre for Cities suggests there is little evidence to suggest that a levy would damage the local tourism economy.²⁹ While not a panacea for all areas, a tourist levy provides an alternative revenue stream for local culture, including visual arts organisations and artists.

Optimise the benefits of Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief.

Creative and cultural tax reliefs have transformed the creative industries, providing much needed boosts to revenue in recent years, and enabling greater investment in new work. CVAN welcomed announcements in the 2024 Spring Budget to put the Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief (MGETR) on a permanent footing at 40% (for non-touring exhibitions) and 45% (for touring exhibitions). While these developments are positive, there remains an anachronism in MGETR that does not

exist in other creative tax reliefs – whereby claimants must be local authorities or constituted as charitable organisations to qualify for relief. This prevents claims from small commercial galleries and not-for-profit activity delivered under different business entities (e.g. social enterprises). Charitable status comes with an administrative and regulatory burden that many small organisations cannot meet, and therefore inhibits access to this revenue stream for those at the grassroots.

Expanding the scope of MGETR would help to generate additional revenue to support exhibition-related activity that would otherwise struggle for resource:

- **Eligibility for MGETR should be expanded to include sales of work or selling exhibitions.** Not-for-profit organisations should be allowed to claim where it can be demonstrated that any income is reinvested in the organisation or the wider visual arts ecosystem.
- **Education, learning and outreach activity associated with an exhibition should be eligible.** Outreach not only enhances engagement with exhibition content, it increases footfall and grows the audiences and consumers of the future.
- In recognition of the hybrid model of presentation and consumption that emerged in the pandemic, **the development costs of digital exhibitions should be eligible.** Digital exhibitions increase reach and accessibility and therefore help grow the visual art ecosystem.
- **Live art and performance, where it is linked to an exhibition or performed within a gallery setting, should be eligible.** Interdisciplinary work is common in our sector and there is a well-recognised blurring of the boundaries between art and performance. Given the visual arts and theatre receive tax relief at the same rate, there should be no reason why creative work taking place at the intersection of both should be excluded.

It is important to note that other creative tax reliefs support the production of work, rather than its presentation. Film tax relief supports the development of film content and theatre tax relief supports the creation of new productions. Again, MGETR is anomalous in supporting those that primarily present work, rather than produce it. Estimates suggest that just under half of the value of UK art market sales, in the region of £4.25 billion, comes from the work of living artists. Therefore, there is a valid argument to be made for exploring how tax reliefs can better support the production of new art.

Introduce legislation that will generate additional revenue for artists via The Smart Fund

IP is the lifeblood of the creative industries and, for artists, royalties from copyright are a significant revenue stream. Technology, by enabling the sharing of content via devices, has depressed this source of income by allowing platforms and users to avoid paying copyright royalties.³⁰ While 63% of respondents to a 2022 YouGov survey said they downloaded cultural content for free, nearly three quarters supported paying creators for digitally shared work.³¹

CVAN supports the work of the collecting rights societies who are seeking the introduction of The Smart Fund – a scheme that sees technology manufacturers pay a small levy on the sale of devices that enable private copying.³² Proposals suggest

the scheme could raise between £250 and £300 million a year,³³ which would fund artists directly and support the commissioning of new work. There is a precedent for its implementation in other countries, where, in 2018, over £930 million was paid out to creators and performers globally.³⁴

2) Support The Visual Arts Workforce To Thrive.

Introduce a Freelancer Commissioner.

The visual arts ecosystem depends upon the flexibility and expertise of a largely freelance workforce. Rates of freelancing in the visual arts (70%)³⁵ far outstrip the average in other parts of the economy (13%).³⁶ Freelancers bring particular expertise to creative work, and while many benefit from the greater flexibility and control that freelancing brings, for others, self-employment is not a choice. Limitations on funding, the project-based nature of the sector or the highly-specialist nature of work make it difficult for an artist to be employed on a PAYE basis. As a result, they miss out on a range of entitlements that employees receive – including sick pay, holiday pay, pension contributions and parental leave. They also miss out on career development opportunities that employers provide. If we are to ensure the future resilience of the visual arts ecosystem, freelancers need a sustainable package of benefits to provide them with additional support and protection.

The Creative PEC recognise that freelancers are “poorly served by many parts of the policy infrastructure.”³⁷ The introduction of a Freelancer Commissioner, called for by several bodies, would help to advocate for the rights of freelancers, inside and outside of government. The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee’s recent ‘Creator Remuneration’ report (2024) supported calls for the introduction of a commissioner “with appropriate powers and cross-departmental oversight to advocate in the interests of creative freelancers and address wider issues around contracts and working conditions.”³⁸ CVAN calls on the UK Government to appoint a Freelancer Commissioner that can represent the needs of a largely invisible part of the workforce and ensure policy responses are tailored to their needs. As part of their role, a commissioner could also help to address the scarcity of national data.

Tackle late payment by encouraging the adoption of the Prompt Payment Code.

The issue of late payment is a persistent problem for freelancers. Research by IPSE, the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed, suggests nearly two-thirds of freelancers have experienced late payments³⁹ and spend an average of 20 days a year chasing late payments.⁴⁰ Freelancers are often unable to absorb delayed payments and cash flow gaps and worryingly, one in five are left without the money to cover basic living costs.⁴¹

The Prompt Payment Code exists as a mechanism to address late payment practices. However, it is a voluntary code of practice and not enforceable by law. CVAN supports calls for the adoption of the Prompt Payment Code where existing late payment agreements aren’t in place.⁴² IPSE go further and suggest the Prompt Payment Code should be written into law and supplemented by mandatory 30 day payment terms and a UK Prompt Payment Index to improve accountability.⁴³ If voluntary take-up of the Prompt Payment Code proves ineffective, CVAN would consider calling for stronger measures. Again, this is an area where a Freelancer Commissioner could champion and improve compliance.

Promote the use of contracts for all work and improve contract clarity and transparency.

Freelancing is commonplace. In the year to March 2020, 76% of creative companies had engaged a freelancer.⁴⁴ While freelancers deserve the right to request a contract, to ensure the terms and conditions of that work are clear and fair for each party, it is often the case that freelancers operate without one and the protections it affords. Where contracts are used, practice can be inconsistent.⁴⁵

Organisations such as a-n⁴⁶ and the Artists' Union England⁴⁷ recognise the importance of contracts with clear, fair terms and conditions for exhibitions and other creative work. Other organisations, like FACT, have risen to the challenge – using the limitations of previous contracts as the inspiration for a commission from the artist Jack Tan, who developed a template, easy-read artist contract.⁴⁸ Some parts of the sector have been slow to implement best practice, which is why CVAN is suggesting that a contract for all freelance work should be a condition of grant funding from public bodies.

To improve transparency and minimise overworking, lump-sum contracts should be broken down to demonstrate the amount of work expected and the equivalent hourly/daily rate. This recommendation, from the 'Structurally F-cked' report (2023), aims to promote greater clarity and transparency around payments and how they are calculated.⁴⁹

Publish artist pay policies and fee structures.

As highlighted above, fees “given in lump sums obscure the reality of hourly rates, shielding both the artist and commissioner from comparison to the minimum wage.”⁵⁰ Practices like this make it hard for artists and art workers to negotiate for better terms. In 2014, a-n launched its Paying Artists Campaign “to secure payment for artists who exhibit in publicly-funded galleries”⁵¹; and its 2016 Exhibition Payment Guide to provide “advice for agreeing exhibition payments for the benefit of the whole sector.”⁵² a-n called on organisations to improve the transparency by “publishing policies that clearly state your organisation’s approach to fair Exhibition Payments.”⁵³ Guidance on fees and rates of pay for the visual arts sector are already available,^{54 55} and provide a benchmark for fair pay.

Pockets of poor practice and “institutional opacity”⁵⁶ remain within industry. Again, the 'Structurally F-cked' report shines a light on how the lack of transparency protects organisations while preventing artists from negotiating better rates of pay.⁵⁷ CVAN calls on funders of the arts to use their grant funding conditions to promote transparency by ensuring those organisations in receipt of public funding publish their artist pay policy and fee structures. CVAN recognises the economic challenges facing publicly funded organisations, and why there may be reluctance to publish, but without it, artists are unable to negotiate and CVAN is unable to play back the scale of system-wide challenges to government.

Expand Arts Council England's 'Developing Your Creative Practice' fund.

The House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee highlighted how “the English education system equips pupils poorly for the realities of future work, in particular the freelance market.”⁵⁸ Arguably training and career development opportunities are no better once a creative freelancer has entered the world of work. A policy briefing by the Creative PEC highlights how freelancers often miss out on lifelong learning opportunities and careers advice.⁵⁹

Few freelancers have the resources to fund their own professional development, and while most Arts Council England project grants are open to individual artists, the majority of funding is still allocated to organisations.⁶⁰ However, the Arts Council England Developing Your Creative Practice (DYCP) fund has proved transformational. The fund is geared towards individuals and provides support for much needed creative R&D and personal development, via “research, networking, or time to create new work”⁶¹. While Arts Professional suggests the fund has a success rate of 21%,⁶² which is higher than other funds, Arts Council England acknowledges the high levels of competition.⁶³ Given the scale of need for funded professional development, and its importance to the sector, Arts Council England should look to expand the DYCP fund and increase its reach and impact.

The Developing Your Creative Practice fund will not address all training, development and careers advice needs, and the UK Government should explore ways to improve skills and careers advice for freelancers, sole traders and microbusinesses in the creative sector.

Convene an expert advisory group to explore the challenges facing disabled artists.

As outlined above, the dependence on freelancers contributes to precarity in the sector. However, that precarity is not felt equally by everyone. Artists with a disability are more likely than other groups to consider leaving the visual arts due to the challenges they face.⁶⁴ Artists with physical and/or mental impairments are likely to have additional barriers and needs that must be met in order for them to engage fully in creative work. Disabled artists often have a complex and carefully negotiated package of benefits - for housing, living costs, activities and assistance - that comes in multiple forms from multiple funders (including local authorities and the Department for Work and Pensions) and with varying conditions.

The ‘Structurally F-cked’ report recognises how intermittent payments, in lump sum form, can be problematic for artists on certain benefits, who can lose access to their entitlements as the result of a ‘spike’ in income.⁶⁵ This spike can occur when earnings fluctuate from month to month. In presenting the issue to the House of Lords, Baroness Bull summed up the specific challenge succinctly:

“Freelance incomes inevitably fluctuate, but if a disabled artist’s income briefly exceeds the threshold for a given benefit, they risk losing that benefit and

destabilising a carefully negotiated support package that is vital to housing, living costs and daily assistance. There is a discriminatory policy gap, in that the unpredictable income that is integral to freelancing is at odds with the stability required to maintain disability benefits.”⁶⁶

The benefits system’s inability to adapt to the precarity of freelance work has created a perverse situation in which a culture of fear means it is easier, and less risky, for disabled artists to work for free or for very little, rather than lose the package of benefits that make working possible. Baroness Bull called for “a grace period for disabled freelancers when income briefly exceeds thresholds, so that benefits are not immediately cut”, and also calls for better guidance for disabled creative freelancers.⁶⁷ CVAN calls on the UK Government to convene an expert advisory group, made up of a Freelancer Commissioner, sector bodies, policy experts, politicians and disabled artists, to examine these challenges in more detail. Members with specific expertise on benefits, and the rights of the self-employed, as well as those with lived experience, will be essential. The aim of the group will be to develop pragmatic solutions that can be implemented across government at pace.

Protect artists from the threats posed by unregulated AI Text and Data Mining.

The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee recognises that “as new means of consuming creative content have become the norm, creators across the sector have experienced persistent declines in their royalties.”⁶⁸ Artists have no desire to inhibit innovation, quite the opposite, but without robust regulation, new technologies, including AI, will continue to undercut the income artists rely on.

The UK Government, via the Intellectual Property Office, sought consensus between AI developers and creative sector bodies on developers’ ingestion of copyrighted content. Negotiations broke down, with AI developers reinstating their belief that they do not require the permission of creators to ingest their content nor need to remunerate them. If the UK Government cannot reach an agreement between UK creators and tech companies, it must use legislation to reinforce copyright law and regulation to protect creators from inappropriate AI practices. Further ‘deadlock’ only serves the interests of AI developers, who ingest with impunity.⁶⁹

CVAN recognises that the threat to artists from AI, comes not only from a decline in IP revenue, but from the risk to their livelihoods. AI is “moving into territories traditionally considered difficult to automate, such as music and visual art production.”⁷⁰ If our creative industries are a strategic priority, we must ensure their survival is not unintentionally undermined.

3) Cultivate The Creative Workforce Of The Future.

Review the national curriculum to ensure a greater focus on creative subjects.

The World Economic Forum identifies creativity as one of the top ten skills of the future,⁷¹ and employers rate creative skills highly.⁷² The CBI has echoed the importance of creative skills to the economy, saying “we need to provide a curriculum that instead of narrowing horizons, broadens them, and fosters skills such as creativity, resilience, communication, and problem-solving.”⁷³ If we are to meet the ambition of a million new jobs in the creative industries, we must increase the pipeline of creative workers through the education system, ensuring all pupils experience creative subjects in school.⁷⁴

Conversely, the Government’s focus on STEM in England has led to a narrowing of the curriculum and the marginalisation of creative teaching. Across all arts subjects there has been a 21% decline in the number of hours taught between 2010 and 2021; and for art and design the drop is 13%.⁷⁵ This has a knock-on effect on the numbers applying to art and design courses at Further and Higher Education – diminishing the diverse, creative throughput that we so urgently need. The Crafts Council highlights the frequent omission of crafts from the art and design curriculum – and CVAN the supports calls for craft to be properly referenced and its importance to the curriculum clearly recognised.

As the ‘Art is Essential’ coalition highlights “cultural education appears to be seen as of lesser importance to the curriculum, which feeds negative perceptions of careers in the creative industries. This then compounds issues like social mobility and skills shortages within the creative sector and the wider economy.”⁷⁶ The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education goes further, declaring the universal provision of creative subjects “a matter of strategic concern and social justice.”⁷⁷

While creative teaching has declined in mainstream schools, the private education sector has taken a very different approach – investing in the expertise, resources and time needed to provide high quality creative learning.⁷⁸ This risks widening the gap between those who can afford a creatively-rich education and those who cannot. To ensure everyone has the same access to creative education (and a creative career), the Department for Education (DfE) must review and rebalance the National Curriculum in England, ensuring greater prominence for creative subjects. The House of Lords’ Education for 11–16 Year Olds Committee recommends the UK Government “conduct a review of the national curriculum’s status, with the aim of ensuring that all mainstream, state-funded schools are teaching a genuinely broad and balanced curriculum throughout a three-year key stage 3.”⁷⁹ A mandatory curriculum with a “common entitlement for all pupils” is also among its suggestions.⁸⁰ For curriculum reform to have the greatest impact, it must be accompanied by increased funding to schools for training and investment in the equipment and resources to support creative learning. Policy change will also necessitate a closer working relationship between DCMS and DfE.

As part of a review, it is crucial that issues specific to the visual arts (including craft and design) are examined in detail. Most importantly, art in the National Curriculum needs greater diversity in order to better represent the work of global majority artists and to better appeal to global majority pupils. The ‘Visualise’ report (2024) describes how the ‘creativity crisis’ we face has “a disproportionate impact on minority ethnic students, who are more likely to find that the content of the art and design curriculum fails to represent, affirm or inspire them.”⁸¹ The situation is compounded by the perceptions of parents towards creative GCSEs. CVAN supports the report’s recommendation to improve access to teacher and curriculum resources that support a broad and diverse curriculum.⁸²

Reform the EBaccalaureate to include creative subjects.

The school curriculum in England will not change without a change in the accountability metrics that underpin it. After all, what gets measured gets done. The English Baccalaureate, more commonly referred to as the EBacc, has played a part in the narrowing of the National Curriculum. An accountability measure introduced in England in 2010, the EBacc “measures the proportion of children who secure a grade 5 or above in English, Maths, Science, a humanity and language GCSE.”⁸³ The EBacc does not include creative subjects. The devaluing of creativity at GCSE is ‘baked in’ via the government ambition for 90% of year 10 pupils to take the EBacc – thus making it a priority for secondary schools. The impact of the EBacc has been immediate. As the ‘Save our Subjects’ campaign highlights “between 2010 and 2022 there was a fall of 40% in GCSE entries in creative and technical subjects. Design and technology GCSE alone had 71% fewer entries in 2022 than 2010.”⁸⁴ Again, schools in the independent sector in England are not subject to the EBacc, which further exacerbates the gap in education and diminishes social mobility and the diversity of creative talent.

The House of Lords Education for 11–16 Year Olds Committee suggests the DfE “abandon the EBacc school performance measures and review the other measures in the 11–16 phase. Schools must be given greater flexibility to offer the subjects and qualifications that would best serve their pupils, based on a balanced curriculum including the study of creative, technical and vocational subjects.” CVAN calls on DfE to reform the EBacc to ensure it allows pupils to select a creative subject. Attempts at reform have been made outside of DfE, with Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, proposing the implementation of the ‘MBacc,’ which includes creative and vocational subjects.⁸⁵ If reform is not possible, the system should be abolished and replaced with something that better reflects the commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Overhaul the Progress 8 accountability measure to ensure the inclusion of creative subjects.

Related to the EBacc is the Progress 8 accountability measure. Introduced in 2016, Progress 8 was designed to measure pupil progress between the end of primary school and GCSEs. Again, the ‘Save our Subjects’ campaign highlights how “Progress 8 heavily weights league tables towards EBacc subjects”⁸⁶, which do not include creative subjects.

Given the emphasis policy makers and parents place on league tables, it follows that schools have chosen to focus on EBacc subjects that boost their performance. Between 2015 and 2019, GCSE entries in EBacc subjects increased from 71.4% to 81.4%,⁸⁷ with a related drop of 9% in the take-up of art and design GCSEs between 2015 and 2023.⁸⁸

CVAN supports calls by the ‘Save our Subjects’ campaign, to “reform the Progress 8 accountability measure, giving pupils more freedom of choice at GCSE”⁸⁹ Similarly, we support calls by Creative UK to ensure creative skills are “a metric by which educational excellence and outcomes are measured.”⁹⁰

Expand the Ofsted inspection framework to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum is achieved.

We have outlined the myriad ways that curriculum design, policy decisions and accountability measures for schools in England have contributed to the narrowing of teaching – prioritising core academic subjects and STEM above creativity. As the independent inspector and regulator for schools in England, Ofsted has a critical role in holding individual schools and the wider school system to account. It therefore has a role in ensuring this narrowing is halted and reversed.

Much has been said in Parliament, the media and policy circles about the limitations of the single word rating given to schools following an inspection. We agree that a single word rating can have a significant impact on parent perception and the school workforce. It is insufficient to reflect the way in which a school delivers a broad curriculum to a diverse school community. CVAN calls for the single word rating to be replaced with a more detailed scorecard approach. In making this change, it is essential that creative subjects are assessed and captured as a key measure of a school’s commitment to providing a broad and balanced curriculum. In its review of Art and Design, Ofsted said “the subject is both intellectually challenging and creatively demanding.”⁹¹ We now need a better way of holding the education system to account so that pupils get the rigorous art education they deserve.

Provide subsidised visits for all school pupils to cultural venues, including galleries and museums.

Data from the ‘Stop School Cuts’ campaign shows that 83% of schools in England will have less money next year than in 2015.⁹² It also says “subjects like music, languages, art and design are being cut as a result”.⁹³ Limited funds, constrained admin time, the increasing cost of transport and the marginalisation of creative subjects have all contributed to a decline in school visits to cultural venues. A report from the Sutton Trust (2023) suggests that, since 2022 “reports of cuts to trips and outings have more than doubled, now standing at 50%, up from 21% – a proportion that is even higher in schools with the most disadvantaged intakes”.⁹⁴

Data from the DCMS Taking Part survey (2020) showed that a third of 11-15 years did not participate in any arts and craft activities, inside or outside of school, over the course of a year.⁹⁵ Children from low-income families are most likely to miss out too, because they are less likely to have access to cultural experiences outside school.⁹⁶

Similarly, research from the Art Fund (2023) showed that pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds were not as likely to be taken to a museum by their school (34%) compared to their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds (47%).⁹⁷

The benefits of experiencing culture first-hand, through school visits, is well understood, and pupils recognise the value: a Votes For Schools survey of over 30,000 students showed that 93% of primary school pupils wanted to go on school trips, with that figure rising to over 96% for secondary school pupils.⁹⁸ That is why CVAN calls on DfE and DCMS to provide subsidised visits to cultural venues – including museums and galleries – for all school pupils at least once a year.

Reinstate the Creative Partnerships programme to increase school links with artists.

Creative Partnerships was a flagship project funded by DCMS and administered by Arts Council England between 2002 to 2011. Targeted at 36 of the most-deprived areas of England, the programme built strong links between schools and creative organisations and practitioners. It increased opportunities to develop creative skills “by enabling children, teachers and creative professionals to work together in both education and cultural buildings such as museums, galleries and theatres.”⁹⁹

Research by BOP Consulting¹⁰⁰ and a report by Ofsted¹⁰¹ showed the positive impact Creative Partnerships had on schools by bringing artists and creatives together with teachers to collaborate. Ofsted confirmed what we have known for some time – that creativity in the classroom supports attainment in other non-creative subjects, as well as builds confidence and communication skills:

“Schools offered evidence of improvement in achievement in areas such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) which they associated with pupils’ enjoyment in learning through Creative Partnerships programmes and their aim to develop thinking skills.”¹⁰²

Artists also valued the opportunity to work creatively with schools not only to boost the teaching of creative subjects, but to introduce creative approaches to all subjects. A commitment to rebalancing the curriculum would support the reintroduction of Creative Partnerships – bringing teachers and artists together to collaborate and innovate in the classroom, for the benefit of all children and young people.

Reverse real-terms cuts to specialist Higher Education Institution funding.

In recently published guidance to the Office for Students,¹⁰³ the Secretary of State for Education directed the regulator to freeze grants intended for strategically important high-cost subjects. This funding helps meet the additional costs involved in offering creative courses in universities across England. Funding for these courses in the 2024/25 academic year remains at £16.7 million, a standstill on 2023/2024 levels. Taking inflation into account, those institutions are experiencing a real terms cut.¹⁰⁴ On the back of this announcement, a number of Higher Education institutions (HEIs) have announced cuts to creative teaching posts and course provision.¹⁰⁵

Many visual artists, curators and arts workers choose to undertake specialist courses at HEIs, including art schools. Degree and postgraduate level study is an important pipeline for our sector and must be adequately funded to ensure the next generation of artistic talent can study high-quality courses that develop their practice. The erosion of HEI funding, and the rhetoric around low-value courses, only serve to undermine the renowned provision that fuels our creative industries and cements our global reputation. That is why CVAN calls for a reversal in these cuts and a reinstatement of adequate funding for creative Higher Education courses.

4) Ensure The Sector Has The Right Resources For The Job.

Implement a long-term strategy to increase affordable studio space for artists.

The importance of affordable studio space for visual artists cannot be understated. The Creative PEC identifies that “access to work and studio space on a long-term basis is important to an organisation’s ability to run efficient operations and build profitable networks. Those without access to spaces may struggle to benefit from the clusters that are key to the creative sector’s success.”¹⁰⁶ The scarcity of building stock, rising price of rents and high running costs have left many artists ‘locked out’ of the workspaces they so desperately need.

A long-term strategy is needed that creates a secure national network of buildings. CVAN has identified two approaches for growing affordable studio space: via seed funding for studio providers and/or a community land trust approach. Both warrant further consideration, evaluation and support from local and national governments.

Seed funding that enables affordable studio space providers to purchase property is an essential requirement in tackling the increasing gap between studio rents that artists can afford (in relation to their income) and the spiralling costs of long-term studio provision. A national programme of seed funding should be administered by a public body, such as Arts Council England, and evaluated by an independent panel of experts with visual arts and planning system knowledge.

In areas where seed funding is not an option, and for when mixed creative sector use is desired, a community land trust approach provides an alternative. The Creative Land Trust is a London-based charity set up in 2019 to develop new approaches to the rapid loss of studio space in London and inspired by the community land trust approach. The model provides a blueprint for other areas looking to address the same challenges. A version has already been adopted in Margate,¹⁰⁷ and we understand there is interest from other areas. The model aims to combine “a blend of funding from donors, investors and grants to purchase freeholds or long leases of permanent, affordable workspaces”¹⁰⁸, and in doing so, seeks to cultivate long-standing relationships between councils, landowners and developers.

The House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee recommends that “the Creative Industries Council [...] work with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to evaluate options for improving long-term access to affordable workspaces for creative businesses.”¹⁰⁹ While CVAN supports this recommendation, there is much that combined authorities and local councils can already do to safeguard low-cost artist studio spaces as essential infrastructure.

Optimise the use of planning rules to better protect and grow affordable workspace for artists.

Planning obligations, such as section 106 agreements, form a legal contract between councils and developers. Section 106 agreements exist to minimise the impact of a development on a local area – protecting existing assets and investing in new infrastructure for the benefit of the community. Section 106 agreements are a vehicle by which a council can protect existing affordable artist workspace or invest in new cultural assets – such as public art or the development of new artist studio space.

While Section 106 is already enshrined in law and available to local authorities, its use is mixed and there is scope for greater exploitation of this planning lever and considering its own asset class.

Developers and councils must better recognise the unique characteristics of affordable workspaces for artists and makers within the built environment. The requirements for artist studios are distinct from office and other commercial workspaces. Affordable workspace policies do not always recognise that artists need a broader use class than desk-based workspace, which can impact the scale of the space accounted for and its affordability. Therefore, there is merit in creating a new sub-category or use class, to better reflect the specific needs of the visual arts sector. Similarly, there needs to be greater recognition within the property industry of this use of space.

With the specific needs of artists and their studio space in mind, it follows that outcome and impact measures for these spaces, when created under Section 106 obligations, are based on end-user needs and are relevant to the core activity of studio provision.

Organisations in the visual arts are developing guidance and tools to help councils and developers grow their understanding of Section 106 as it relates to the sector. CVAN welcomes the opportunity to convene councils and network members to a) explore ways of increasing sector involvement in planning policy and b) in helping councils increase artist studio provision through improved use of Section 106.

Boost capital investment for individual galleries and visual arts spaces.

Galleries and visual arts organisations looking to maintain, retrofit or develop their buildings have fewer options and experience high levels of competition for limited capital funds via Arts Council England, compared to others in the cultural sector.

Non-national accredited museums are eligible to apply to the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND), with a current fund value of £23.8 million.¹¹⁰ Other local cultural partnerships, such as local authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships, are eligible to apply to the Cultural Development Fund, with the round 4 fund value sitting at £15.2 million¹¹¹ - notably lower than the MEND fund value. However, there is no

current Capital Investment Fund¹¹² programme open to enable individual organisations to access investment that supports cultural infrastructure.

A new capital fund, equivalent in design and value to the Museum Estate and Development Fund, but available to the broader visual arts ecosystem, is needed to ensure visual arts venues and spaces are fit-for-purpose and future-proofed.

Open up access to ‘meanwhile’ spaces for artists through planning reforms.

‘Meanwhile’ space refers to the use of vacant spaces, including shop units, that are often found in town or city centres.¹¹³ The increased interest in meanwhile spaces, as short-term places for the development and exhibition of artists’ work, has arisen in the context of the decline of the high street - with many more shop units available as a result of the increase in online retail - and in the increasing scarcity and cost of artist studio space.

As well as providing grassroots artists and art workers with much-needed space to work, the creation of meanwhile spaces in disused building or empty retail units gives artists an opportunity to reanimate our urban spaces. A Centre for London report (2018) outlines how use of meanwhile space has flourished in London, highlighting the value to the city, landowners and developers, as well as artists, and the opportunity it creates for experimentation and flexibility.¹¹⁴ However, current planning laws make it difficult for local authorities to take control of unused spaces from landowners that will not willingly engage with them. CVAN is therefore calling for reforms to planning laws to better enable short-term shared use of commercial spaces. Legal changes alone will not address the issues between councils and landlords, which can scupper the development of meanwhile spaces. Therefore, councils should seek to simplify planning and licensing processes for meanwhile use and develop a “Good Practice Code of Exit” to strengthen trust.¹¹⁵

Provide financial support for maintaining and retrofitting existing buildings.

Many gallery and studio spaces operate in buildings that consume energy at high levels and high cost. Whether it is a poorly insulated artist space where energy-intensive equipment is used (such as a kilns), or a publicly funded gallery using energy to maintain the environmental standards needed for collections management, the visual arts sector is mindful of its carbon footprint and committed to reducing emissions. There is appetite to undertake work to retrofit existing spaces to improve energy efficiency, with the majority of the UK’s museums and arts organisations signed up to the goals of the Gallery Climate Coalition: to see a 50% reduction in carbon emissions across the sector by 2030. And with high inflation, fuelled by volatility in global energy prices, there is an economic imperative to reduce cost and consumption.

The financial challenges facing our sector make retrofitting buildings a costly and often impossible task. The sector can be further relieved of tax burdens and supported with energy costs by removing VAT for building repair and maintenance on

existing buildings. Work on new buildings is currently eligible for zero-rated VAT. While we recognise the importance of new developments, there is much that can be done to improve the fabric, and the energy efficiency, of our existing building stock. CVAN is calling for an VAT exemption on the retrofitting of existing buildings, which must include the maintenance, repair and retrofitting of venues, studios and collection stores.

For many, a VAT exemption alone will be insufficient in providing the capital for investing in sustainability and energy-efficiency measures, such as installing heat source pumps or LED lighting. A grant or low-interest loan scheme could make all the difference to publicly funded organisations, studio providers and SMEs, enabling them to invest in environmental measures that will also generate substantial cost savings.

Artists, craft experts and other creators have the potential to drive the creative design solutions that will help address the challenges of climate change and sustainability – for example the crafts sector are well-placed to collaborate with others on improving energy use and material capability. There is more the UK Government could do to invest in creative design thinking, provide innovation funding and broker conversations between sectors to ensure the creative industries can contribute effectively to meeting net zero targets.

Provide a business rate exemption for galleries and artist studios.

As outlined above, the cost of ‘doing business’ has risen sharply in recent years as a result of high inflation, high energy costs, slow growth and supply chain challenges. While business rates are a key income stream for local authorities, they are highly problematic, particularly for smaller, grassroots organisations. As Creative UK highlight, business rates “risk taxing small businesses beyond what they can tolerate.”¹¹⁶ The Federation of Small Business declared to Parliament that “the tax remains regressive and is not linked to a business’ ability to pay. It penalises particular sectors or businesses that are reliant on larger properties or expensive machinery. Small businesses find the valuations confusing and lacking in certainty and the system difficult to navigate with monetary fines if they make an incorrect challenge.”¹¹⁷

Some art galleries and museums are eligible for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief scheme,¹¹⁸ which provides 75% relief on business rates. However, while the relief has been extended, it is not a permanent measure. Other organisations, constituted as charities, can claim up to 80% charitable relief.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, many individual artists, small businesses and studio providers are ineligible for his support, despite many operating a not-for-profit business model. Given the impact funding scarcity has on the artist ecosystem, HM Treasury should provide a full exemption on business rates for galleries and museums - to help to ease financial pressures. Similarly, given the scarcity of studio space and issues of affordability, studio spaces should be granted a similar exemption.

It is important to remember that revenue from business rates flows directly to local authorities. It is therefore essential that any drop in local income is offset by the UK Government, so as not to worsen the squeeze on cultural funding by local government.

5) Enable Artistic Exchange Across Borders.

Rejoin Creative Europe.

Prior to the UK's departure from the European Union (EU), the country's artists and creative professionals were eligible to participate in the Creative Europe programme. Between 2014 and 2018, the Creative Europe Desk UK awarded €89.5 million to 376 UK-based creative organisations and audiovisual companies.¹²⁰ The current Creative Europe Programme (2021-27) has a €2.44 billion budget that supports all creative sub-sectors, not just the visual arts.¹²¹ From 2021, the UK chose not to participate in Creative Europe, despite the fact the UK could still do so as a 'third-country organisation'. A recent parliamentary question asked in the European Commission confirmed that, while the UK is eligible to participate in Creative Europe, it has expressed no interest in doing so.¹²²

The value Creative Europe brought to UK artists goes beyond funding alone. It has also "provided vital access to finance, markets, skills development and employment."¹²³ Our visual arts ecosystem depends on global collaboration, trade and cultural exchange, which Brexit and the loss of access to Creative Europe has hampered. In September 2023, the UK Government negotiated access to Horizon Europe, ensuring UK scientists can access important research funding and collaborative networks.¹²⁴ The creative industries, like health and the life sciences, is a strategic growth priority in the UK. In fact, the co-Chairs of the Council for Science and Technology recently wrote to the Prime Minister setting out how "the creative industries have delivered more economic value than the life sciences, aerospace, and automotive sectors combined."¹²⁵ If Horizon Europe is considered strategically important enough to UK plc, CVAN sees no reason why the UK Government cannot negotiate the same arrangement for Creative Europe and transform opportunities for the creative and cultural sector.

The Scottish Government recently published its International Culture Strategy (2024-30) and proposed a renegotiation with the EU that would allow Scotland to participate in Creative Europe again.¹²⁶ CVAN calls on the UK Government to renegotiate the UK's participation in Creative Europe.

Implement a new creative and cultural agreement with the EU, enabling reciprocal freedom of movement for artists and other creative workers.

Since the UK's departure from the EU in 2021, creative professionals have had to adapt to changed circumstances when working in Europe. Previously the UK was able to take advantage of tariff-free trade and frictionless borders. Now, under the terms of the withdrawal agreement, UK nationals are only eligible for visa-free travel in EU member states for up to 90 days in any 180 day period for "tourism, visits to family and friends, business meetings, cultural or sports events, or for short-term studies or training."¹²⁷ In addition to visa limitations, UK artists have to apply for work permits according to the specific requirements of individual member states. The complexity of the arrangements has created an additional costs and administrative burdens for the sector. Inevitably, this changed context has led to a decline in work in

the EU, a reduction in the opportunities for international exchange and a decline in creative collaboration. The visual arts sector is poorer for it.

The EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement is due to be renegotiated in 2026, offering an opportunity to implement a new creative and cultural agreement with the EU that could enable reciprocal freedom of movement for artists and other creative workers on an ad-hoc, time-limited basis. Our world-leading creative industries are fuelled by the global exchange of ideas, goods and services and must be reignited by a new relationship that recognises the unique status of this priority sector.

6) **Create A Common Language Of Visual Arts Value.**

Formally define the visual arts sector and develop a baseline set of metrics.

There remains a need for DCMS to formally define the visual arts sector and identify an economic baseline. In doing so, industry will be able to develop evidence-based growth plans and DCMS will be able to measure and monitor the size, growth and impact fully of the sector for the first time. Metrics must look beyond the sector's contribution to GVA and include international trade and workforce measures. The latter speaks to the broader need in the creative industries to find better means for identifying and measuring the contribution of creative freelancers.

Work with the visual arts sector to embed the Culture and Heritage Capital Framework.

“Economic valuation is a powerful tool used to support traditional investment decisions, including public spending decisions.”¹²⁸ It follows that demonstrating impact and value is critical to supporting the case for investment in the visual arts ecosystem.

Launched in 2021, DCMS is working with arms-length bodies to consider the value of culture and heritage to society by “assessing value for money through robust appraisal and evaluation” through the Creation of the Culture and Heritage Capital Framework.¹²⁹ DCMS aims to provide the sector with tools, resources and guidance that will help sectors value the benefits of different investment options against costs, using methods consistent with HM Treasury's Green Book principles.¹³⁰ The Framework should provide a rigorous methodology for identifying “the value of all things that matter to people, capturing the value of non-market transactions, and addressing human wellbeing - not just wealth.”¹³¹ The visual arts sector is hungry for a way to capture social and cultural benefits in ways that can be played back to policy makers in robust terms.

If we are to capitalise on the much-needed opportunity to capture the value of the visual arts beyond market transactions and to support decision making that takes a more holistic view of value, then DCMS and Arts Council England must work with CVAN and other partners to roll out the framework and embed its use within the ecosystem at large. Given the number of small and micro visual arts organisations and the highly dispersed freelance workforce, additional and tailored support will be needed to ensure expertise is developed in the sector and the opportunity to demonstrate impact is grasped.

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