

Debate Pack

17 January 2023

Number CDP 2023/0006

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The funding decisions of Arts Council England

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Summary

[Arts Council England is an arms-length body of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#). It is the national development agency in England for creativity and culture.

In its 2020 [ten-year strategy Let's Create](#), the organisation stated that it [wished to achieve a](#) "better balance of investment across the country". Similarly, [one of the aims of the Government's Levelling Up the United Kingdom Command Paper](#), released in February 2022, was to improve access to arts and culture across England. To achieve this the Government

committed to spending all of the increased Arts Council England funding announced at the 2021 Spending Review outside of London.

On 4 November 2022, [Arts Council England announced its Investment Programme for 2023-2026](#). This comprises organisations that receive regular funding and support over a three-year period. The provisional outcome of this was £446 million per annum in funding distributed to 990 organisations.

Stakeholder responses to the announcement were mixed. Organisations that entered the Investment Programme for the first term welcomed the decisions. Organisations that experienced reductions in funding expressed their disappointment. Broadly, stakeholder interest, across media and industry, focused on two location or sector specific components of the announcement and one specific decision:

1. The impact upon arts and culture in London. For instance, in February 2022, the Artistic Director of National Theatre, [whilst signalling his support for improving the national cultural offer, described plans to move money out of London as like](#) “robbing Peter to pay Paul”.
2. The potential effect on the opera sector. [The managing director of Glyndebourne Opera House, an organisation that received a reduction in ACE funding, described the wider funding settlement as](#) “devastating for many in the opera sector, which was targeted with significant cuts.”
3. The decision to remove the English National Opera from the Investment Programme and offer it funds to relocate away from the capital. English National Opera [launched a petition opposing this decision that currently has around 83,000 signatures](#).

Government response

On 7 November 2022, [the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport provided the following statement on the Investment Programme](#):

These provisional offers fulfil the ambitious and challenging targets set for Arts Council England by my predecessor. Specifically - including National Lottery funding - these offers would see nearly an extra £45 million in each of 2023-24 and 2024-25 invested outside of London, rising to nearly £53 million extra in 2025-26. This will result in 215 new organisations being funded outside of London (a net increase of 135 organisations). This extra investment outside London is supported largely by the overall uplifts agreed by the government at the Comprehensive Spending Review, and Arts Council England decisions about its use of National Lottery funding.

DCMS worked with Arts Council England to agree on a list of 109 Levelling Up for Culture Places, which are areas identified as having historically low cultural engagement. The provisional funding offers that have been announced will increase the number of funded organisations in Levelling Up for Culture Places by 79% (from 107 to 192 organisations) and will increase the level of investment in Levelling Up for Culture Places by 95%, or £21.2 million per annum. This funding will play a vital role in fulfilling the government’s intention to tackle cultural disparities, and ensure that everyone, wherever they live, has the opportunity to enjoy the incredible benefits of culture in their lives.

1 Background

Arts Council England (ACE) is a non-departmental public body that distributes Grant-in-Aid (direct Exchequer funding) and National Lottery funding. Its remit is to “use all these funds to support arts and culture for the benefit of the English public”.¹ ACE distributes funds to individuals, arts organisations, libraries, and museums.² Broadly, these funding activities take four forms:

1. [National Portfolio](#): a group of organisations that receive regular funding and support (over a given time period) from ACE. There are two types of organisation within this portfolio:
 - National Portfolio Organisations: organisations that seek to directly deliver ACE’s Outcomes and Elements.
 - Investment Principles Support Organisations: organisations that support others to embed ACE’s investment principles.
2. [Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants](#): “support individual practitioners, communities and cultural organisations”.³ This scheme funds projects. That is, a series of activities or a piece of work with a defined start and end date, and a set of measurable aims to be achieved in that period.
3. [Developing your Creative Practice](#): a fund for individuals who want to take time away from work to focus on creative development.
4. [Cultural Development Fund](#): aims to address regional inequalities in capital funding for creative and cultural projects.

ACE also offers one more specific form of funding.⁴ Generally, its funding decisions are underpinned by the vision of its ten-year strategy document, published in 2020: “By 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.”⁵

¹ Arts Council England, [Let’s Create: Strategy 2020-2030](#), 27 January 2020, p.77

² The development of museums and libraries was added to its remit in 2011.

³ Arts Council England, [Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants](#) (accessed 16 January 2023)

⁴ Arts Council England, [International Touring and Environmental Responsibility Fund](#) (accessed 16 January 2023)

⁵ Arts Council England, [Our strategy 2020-2030](#), 27 January 2020 (accessed 16 January 2023)

2 2020-2022: Changes to the distribution of Arts Council England funds

Beginning in 2020, a series of policy developments led to changes in ACE's funding approach for the 2023-2026 funding cycle.

2020: Let's Create

In 2020, [ACE announced its 10 year strategy: Let's Create](#). The strategy has three central outcomes (creativity amongst people, the country and communities) and four investment principles: ambition and quality, inclusivity and relevance, environmental responsibility, and dynamism.

Let's Create also contained a broader commitment to rebalancing the distribution of ACE funding:

People should have access to a full range of cultural opportunities wherever they live – but these opportunities are currently uneven, particularly for those living in towns or rural areas, where public transport is often either unavailable or expensive.

We will aim for a better balance of investment across the country and will work with the right partners on a range of projects, including capital investment in physical and digital infrastructure and the use of technology to distribute cultural content into homes, cultural venues and community spaces.⁶

December 2021: Creative People and Places added to Arts Council England's National Portfolio

ACE began its Creative People and Places funding stream in 2012. It is an intervention that has aimed to increase cultural engagement in local authority areas where “the official statistics showed historically low levels of engagement.”⁷

In December 2021, 39 Creative People and Places consortia were selected as part of ACE's National Portfolio until 2025:

In total, for the period 2022 to 2025 we have committed £38.3 million to 39 Creative People and Places projects covering 56 local authority areas, including 11 new projects in areas of low engagement.⁸

As part of ACE's response measures to Covid-19, [the rest of the planned National Portfolio process was postponed](#) (PDF). National Portfolio

⁶ Arts Council England, [Let's Create: Strategy 2020-2030](#), 27 January 2020, p.38

⁷ Mark Robinson, [10 years of learning from Creative People and Places](#), April 2022, p.6

⁸ Arts Council England, [Delivery Plan 2021-2024: Strengthening our place based approach and supporting levelling up](#), 14 July 2022

Organisations in receipt of funding from the 2018-2022 cycle could apply for a funding extension to 2022-2023.

2 February 2022: Levelling Up the United Kingdom Command Paper

[The Command Paper Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#) stated that “culture outside the capital receives significantly less funding per head” and contained a specific funding commitment to enable the delivery of a “truly national cultural offer”:⁹

The UK Government will make changes to transform the landscape for arts, culture and heritage by significantly increasing cultural investment outside London. This starts with committing to 100% of the additional funding for Arts Council England agreed at SR21 going to support culture and creativity outside London.¹⁰

The White Paper noted that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) would lay out more concrete plans across six policy areas in the spring. These included: “Identifying over 100 levelling up priority places outside of London that will be the focus for additional ACE engagement and investment.”¹¹

18 February 2022: Instructions from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

On 18 February 2022, Nadine Dorries, then Secretary of State for DCMS, wrote to the Chair of ACE. This letter contained several specific instructions for ACE’s distribution of funding:

1. Rebalance ACE funding and “significantly increase investment outside of London over this Spending Review period”.¹² This requires a £24 million per annum reduction in the funding of National Portfolio Organisations in London (a redistribution of £16 million per annum away from London and a redistribution of £8 to other areas).
2. Work closely with London portfolio organisations to “explore their potential for establishing, or increasing, their presence or activity outside of London”.¹³

⁹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#), CP 604, 2 February 2022, p.217

¹⁰ As above, pp.218-219

¹¹ As above, p.219

¹² Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, [Instruction from the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#), 18 February 2022, p.2

¹³ As above

3. Prioritise funding for “organisations in areas of low cultural engagement with lower historical Arts Council spend”.¹⁴ Priority should also be given to organisations within these areas that demonstrate an engagement with diverse communities and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
4. Work with the largest recipients of National Portfolio funding to “increase the proportion of their cultural activity outside of London”.¹⁵

23 February 2022: Levelling Up Places for Culture announcement

On 23 February 2022, [DCMS announced its plans to level up arts and culture](#). This reiterated the instructions given in DCMS’ letter to ACE and announced two additional policies:

- ACE and DCMS identified 109 ‘Levelling up for Culture Places’, all outside of Greater London, that would be targeted for additional investment. These are all in areas that have had historically low investment in arts and culture. This overlaps with [the pre-existing 54 Priority Places \(“in which our investment and engagement is too low”\) identified by ACE in its Delivery Plan for 2021-2024](#). ACE’s Priority Places includes areas in London. Organisations that receive the highest public subsidies will be expected to raise their activities in ‘Levelling up for Culture Places’ to 15% collectively by March 2026.
- Arts Council London will seek to ensure that its funds are more evenly distributed across London’s boroughs.

23 February 2022: Addendum to the Guidance for Applicants for National Portfolio and Investment Principles Support Organisations

On the same day, [ACE published an addendum to its pre-existing guidance for applicants](#). This described ACE’s plans for re-distributing £24 million of funds away from London (“15% of the current London NPO budget”):¹⁶ a minimum of £16 million per year from 1 April 2023, and a further £8 million per year by 1 April 2025.

ACE identified three actions that would enable funding to be redistributed:

¹⁴ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, [Instruction from the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#), 18 February 2022, p.2

¹⁵ As above

¹⁶ Arts Council England, [2023-26 Investment Programme: Addendum to the Guidance for Applicants](#), 23 February 2022, p.4

1. National Portfolio Organisations leaving the portfolio.
2. Reduction of grants.
3. Support offered to organisations to relocate.

Organisations that applied from within ACE's London area could opt into consideration for the new Transfer Programme. [The Transfer Programme provides two years of business funding for organisations that are willing to relocate out of London by 31 October 2024](#). ACE also stated that it wished to “consider how we can ensure better distribution of investment across London's 32 boroughs”, including activities or organisations linked to ACE's five London priority places.¹⁷

According to the addendum, DCMS' 15% requirement would need to be met by any organisation that was awarded on or over £2 million per year.

¹⁷ Arts Council England, [2023-26 Investment Programme: Addendum to the Guidance for Applicants](#), 23 February 2022, p.6

3

Arts Council England's 2023-26 Investment Programme

On 4 November 2022, [ACE announced its National Portfolio funding decisions for the 2023-2026 cycle](#). In the press conference announcing the National Portfolio, the Chair of ACE provided the following top line summary of its funding decisions:

So, to begin, I want to summarise some of the key stats. We are investing £446 million each year from 2023 to 2026. That investment will be made in 990 museums, libraries and arts organisations across the country. This includes 276 organisations that will be joining the programme. Funding for organisations outside of London would increase by nearly £45 million each year.

In particular, levelling up for culture places will see a 95% increase in investment. These places with historically lower levels of cultural activity, are set to receive £43.5 million every year. From Stoke to Slough, Blackburn to the Isle of Wight, and from Gloucester to Wigan.¹⁸

[According to ACE's data dashboard](#), funds were distributed to each of the forms of art and culture within ACE's remit in the following ways:

- Combined Arts: £82 million.
- Dance: £47 million.
- Libraries: £4 million.
- Literature: £16 million.
- Museums: £38 million.
- Music: £65 million.
- Not discipline specific: £35 million.
- Theatre: £112 million.
- Visual Arts: £48 million.

[The table below, from a House of Lords Library briefing on ACE funding and regional distribution](#), summarises the total annual investment per region since 2018. This includes the previous funding cycle (2018-2022), the extension year (2022-23) and the 2023-26 funding announcement.

¹⁸ ACE, [2023-26 Investment Programme: press conference transcript](#), 4 November 2022, p.1

Table 11 Arts Council England total annual investment per region since 2018 (not adjusted for inflation)

Region	2018-2022 (£mn)	2022-23 extension year (£mn)	2023-26 (£mn)
London	144	147	152
North	99	101	128
Midlands	67	68	84
South-east	35	36	46
South-west	25	26	37
Total	369.2	377.5	446.3

Source: House of Lords Library, [Arts Council England: Funding and regional distribution](#), 8 December 2022. Please note, the totals may not sum due to rounding. Additionally, the 2018-22 and 2022-23 extension year figures are averaged totals and do not include investment received by organisations that have left the portfolio. Figures for the 2018-22 investment and 2022-23 extension can be found on ACE's website.

Each region has experienced an increase in funding since the 2018-2022 funding cycle. This increase displays regional variation with the North seeing the largest regional funding increase (£29 million) and London the lowest (£8 million).

24 organisations were successful in opting into the Transfer Programme.

From 8 November 2022, [2022-2023 National Portfolio organisations that were unsuccessful for the 2023-2026 cycle could apply for the Transition Programme](#). This programme could provide up to seven months' funding for unsuccessful applicants and up to ten months for successful applicants who were unable to reach agreement with ACE for a Funding Agreement for 2023-2026 investment period.

Stakeholder response

The response of the arts and culture sector was mixed.

Touretteshero joined the National Portfolio for 2023-2026, an organisation that aims to “celebrate and share the creativity and humour of Tourettes in an accessible way, with the widest possible audience.” [Jess Thom, the co-founder of Touretteshero, stated that the organisation was “excited” to join the National Portfolio](#) and that they were also “really pleased that many other fantastic disabled-led companies were successful too”.

[Future Arts Centres, an organisation that aims to advocate for arts centres and their role within communities, joined the National Portfolio for 2023-2026](#)

[and described the investment decisions as a](#) “clear sign arts centres are more highly valued than ever” as arts centres in receipt of National Portfolio funding expanded from 51 to 58 with a “16% overall cash increase to £19.6 million per year”.

In total, around 700 applicant organisations did not receive National Portfolio funding. There was disappointment amongst organisations that saw either decreases in funding or were unsuccessful in their applications: [Welsh National Opera announced that it would no longer be able to tour to Liverpool](#), due to the “substantial reduction in its public funding”; [Watermill Theatre, located in West Berkshire, described ACE’s decision to no longer offer National Portfolio funding to the organisation](#) as a “significant challenge”; and [the Artistic Director of Theatre Albi, located in Devon, stated that the organisation was](#) “immensely disappointed” to no longer be part of the National Portfolio.

Some stakeholders raised broader sector or location specific concerns with the investment decisions:

1. The impact on London based organisations: [the Mayor London, Sadiq Khan, stated that London’s cultural organisations had been](#) “left devastated by over £50million worth of Government cuts”. Particularly, amongst London based organisations, the removal of the English National Opera (ENO) from the National Portfolio was subject to much media and stakeholder interest.¹⁹ [ENO was offered potential Transfer Programme funding to create a](#) “new base out of London, potentially in Manchester”. ENO launched a petition to reinstate its National Portfolio funding. Currently, [the petition has around 83,000 signatures](#). A spokesperson for the organisation stated they were not specifically opposed to a move to Manchester, rather:

We are against Arts Council England arbitrarily plucking a location without any consultation with us, the city itself or indeed other cultural organisations who operate there.²⁰

2. The impact on the opera sector: [The Stage, a publication covering theatre and the entertainment industry, described opera as the](#) “biggest loser” due to ENO’s removal from the National Portfolio, “while three of the five largest reductions in funding were imposed on opera companies”. [The managing director of Glyndebourne Opera House, an organisation that received a reduction in ACE funding, described the wider funding settlement as](#) “devasting for many in the opera sector, which was targeted with significant cuts.” The potential impact of ACE’s investment programme on the opera sector was also subject to much parliamentary interest. Twelve written questions on the topic were

¹⁹ See for instance: Musicians’ Union, [MU in Urgent Talks Following Major Funding Cuts to English National Opera and Other Arts Organisations](#), 4 November 2022; The Guardian, [ENO to relocate as arts funding diverted away from London](#), 4 November 2022

²⁰ The Guardian, [We’re not all heathens in Manchester. Andy Burnham tells ENO](#), 23 November 2022

tabled, across the House of Commons and the House of Lords, from 1 December 2022 to 16 December 2022.²¹

Arts Council England response

ACE does not comment on individual funding decisions. However, [in an 8 December 2022 oral evidence session for the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee](#), ACE provided comment on some of the wider potential issues that had been raised by stakeholders. The Chief Executive of ACE provided the following summary of the rationale behind the funding decisions for London based organisations:

We have to deal with the reality of the funding envelope within which we work. We can deal with hypotheticals, but they will be hypothetical. We had a funding envelope where we needed to move money out of London. We looked very carefully and thought very hard about how we would do that. Tonya will be able to give you some of the data on London, but in our last funding round, the top four organisations in London had 43% of the London budget. To make the sort of shift that we needed to in London, it was inevitable that there would be challenges for us at every price point of every organisation.²²

In response to a question about ACE's desired long-term outcomes for the opera sector, the Chief Executive stated that in five years he hoped "we will have a very vibrant opera ecology this country at all scales". This includes "large-scale specialist opera organisations" and other organisations:

We are also really interested in how opera as an art form connects with new audiences, so we have brought into this portfolio new organisations, including OperaUpClose, based on the south coast, and Pegasus Opera Company. We have put more money into English Touring Opera, which tours around the country at a smaller scale. We have also put more investment into Birmingham Opera Company, which does some very interesting and different sorts of opera.

We absolutely believe in opera. Opera is expensive because of the forces it involves, including singers, musicians and technicians. We absolutely know that to be the case. We really do believe that the people who work in opera have the ability to work with us to reimagine this. It is also really important that we reach new audiences for the art form. That is really important, as it is with every art form.²³

The Chief Executive provided the following comment on ENO:

The first thing I would say is that nationally significant organisations are not just limited to London; they can be in places right across the country. That is important to note. With the English National Opera, we absolutely believe in them as an organisation, and I think they do excellent work. We are saying to

²¹ [The written questions from this period can be accessed here.](#)

²² Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of Arts Council England](#), 8 December 2022, HC 941, 2022-2023, Q6

²³ As above, Q17

them that because of our funding requirements, we need them to think of a different way of operating.

Uniquely, we have set aside £17 million. Every organisation that is exiting the portfolio will be allowed to apply for transition funding—seven months of money in the new financial year—giving them a year of visibility. That alone would represent £1 million a month for the English National Opera, but we have another £10 million, which is an indicative amount of money that we talked to them about, to help them think about how we might work with them to reshape their organisation. We would like to see an organisation with a substantial base outside London, but we absolutely recognise that the Coliseum is an important part of their business plan going forward.²⁴

Government response

On 5 December 2022, in his remarks during a debate on [Performing Arts: English National Opera, Stuart Andrew, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for DCMS, provided an assessment of ACE's investment programme for 2023-2026](#):

Central to all of this is our delivery partner, as my hon. Friend has mentioned—Arts Council England—and, as we have heard, it has recently announced the outcome of its latest investment programme, which will be investing £446 million in each year between 2023 and 2026. There were a record number of applications for this competitive funding, which will support 990 organisations across the whole of England. This means more organisations will be funded than ever before and, crucially, in more places.

[...]

I just want to come on to this point. English National Opera, in particular, is just one decision out of 1,700. As I say, there are 990 organisations in the next portfolio, and unfortunately 700 were unsuccessful on this occasion. Many hon. Members will have been following this coverage, and I can confirm that the Arts Council has offered English National Opera a package of support. We are keen that the Arts Council and English National Opera work together on the possibilities for the future of the organisation. I welcome many of the suggestions put forward, and I encourage the exploration of those ideas during engagement between English National Opera and Arts Council England. We need to explore all suggestions made.

[....]

I am really sorry, but I do not understand how funding more organisations than ever before, in more parts of the country than ever before, is not spreading that opportunity for artists around the rest of the country. I make no apology for that whatsoever, and I am surprised that people do not want rising talent in Blackpool or Birmingham to have the same opportunities —[Interruption.] This is not divisive; this is about trying to help other people around the country. As I said, I go back to the main point that I encourage all these ideas to be explored—of course they should be. We are keen for that to happen. Through

²⁴ Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of Arts Council England](#), 8 December 2022, HC 941, 2022-2023, Q7

this programme, opera will continue to be well funded, with it remaining at around 40% of overall investment in music. Organisations such as the English Touring Opera and Birmingham Opera Company will receive increased funding, and there are many new joiners such as OperaUpClose and Pegasus Opera. The Royal Opera House will continue to be funded. Those statistics are likely to underestimate the level of opera activity being funded, as some organisations in the programme will fall under combined arts.

For those who are concerned about what this decision may mean for London, let me say that we remain committed to supporting the capital—of course we do—and we recognise and appreciate that London is a leading cultural centre, with organisations that benefit the whole country and greatly enhance the UK's international reputation as a home for world-class arts and culture. That is clearly reflected in the next investment programme, when around one third of the investment will be spent in London, equivalent to approximately £143 million a year. I am sure hon. Friends will agree that when we step back and look at the bigger picture, it is exciting to see that it also gives opportunities to people around the country to enjoy what many have in London. I reiterate that we encourage Arts Council England and English National Opera to continue their dialogue and explore all those issues. I have said that in each of the debates—I think this is the third or fourth we have had—and I look forward to seeing the outcome of those discussions.²⁵

²⁵ [HC Deb 5 November 2022 cc181-184](#)

4 Parliamentary material

4.1 Ministerial Statements

[Arts Council England 2023-2026 Investment Programme: Announcement of National Portfolio Organisations and Investment Principles Support Organisations](#)

07 Nov 2022 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS357

[Levelling Up Culture in England](#)

23 Feb 2022 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS621

[Support for arts, culture and heritage sector](#)

07 Jul 2020 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS345

4.2 Debates

[Arts Council England: Regional Distribution of Funding](#) – HL Deb 15 Dec 2022 – 826 cc823-856

[Arts and Creative Industries Strategy](#) – HL Deb 08 Dec 2022 – 826 cc266-311

[Performing Arts: English National Opera](#) – HC Deb 05 Dec 2022 – 724 cc174-184

[Supporting UK Artists and Culture](#) – HC Deb 22 Nov 2022 – 723 cc65-82WH

4.3 Parliamentary Questions

[Opera](#)

Asked by: Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay on 1 December (HL3495 and HL3496), what is Art Council England's national opera strategy; and whether they will put on hold

their plans to withdraw all national programme funding from English National Opera until one has been published.

Answering member: Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Arts Council England made its decisions regarding its 2023–26 Investment Programme in line with its published guidance and its ten year strategy, ‘Let’s Create’, which covers all art forms, and which can be found on its website at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create>.

Assessments were carried out by Arts Council England staff, based on balancing criteria published in its funding guidance, and were made by its Area and National Councils, which include both local representatives and people who work in the sector.

More opera organisations will be funded in the new Investment Programme portfolio than in the preceding one, and opera accounts for 40 per cent of funding for music in the new portfolio. His Majesty’s Government will continue to work with Arts Council England to understand the impacts of its investment in arts and culture, including on opera.

16 Dec 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL3933

Date tabled: 01 Dec 2022 | **Date for answer:** 15 Dec 2022 | **Date answered:** 16 Dec 2022

[English National Opera: Finance](#)

Asked by: Bottomley, Sir Peter

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much public funding the English National Opera received in each of the last 15 years; and what discussions his Department had with Arts Council England on funding that organisation (a) over the next three years and (b) in the long term; and if she will make a statement.

Answering member: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Records of the level of public funding for English National Opera are available in its annual accounts, which are published online on the Companies House website.

Following Arts Council England’s decisions relating to English National Opera and its 2023–26 Investment Portfolio, which are taken at arm’s length from the Government, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is helping to convene relevant parties and support them to find a way

forward. I am keen that Arts Council England and English National Opera work together on the future of the organisation.

All decisions on which organisations to fund through the 2023–26 Investment Programme, and by how much, have been taken by Arts Council England in line with the long-standing principle that Arts Council England makes such decisions at arm’s length from the Government. The Chief Executive of Arts Council England, Darren Henley, answered questions from the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee on these issues on 8 December 2022.

15 Dec 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 104083

Date tabled: 06 Dec 2022 | **Date for answer:** 08 Dec 2022 | **Date answered:** 15 Dec 2022

[Opera](#)

Asked by: Harman, Ms Harriet

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to conduct a review into opera provision in England.

Answering member: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Decisions about which organisations to fund, and by how much, are taken by Arts Council England at arm’s length from the Government. Arts Council England made its decisions in line with its published guidance and its ten-year strategy, ‘Let’s Create’. Assessments were carried out by Arts Council England, and decisions were made by its Area and National Councils, which include both local representatives and people who work in the sector. Any questions about specific funding decisions should be directed to Arts Council England.

Arts Council England’s investment in opera, orchestras and other classical organisations represents around 80% of all investment in music in its 2023–26 Investment Programme. Through this programme, opera will continue to be well funded, with it remaining at around 40% of Arts Council England’s overall investment in music. Organisations such as the English Touring Opera and the Birmingham Opera Company will receive increased funding, and there are many new joiners such as Opera UpClose and Pegasus Opera Company, who are based in South London. It is worth noting that these statistics are likely to underestimate the level of opera activity being funded as some organisations in the 2023–26 Investment Programme will fall into combined arts or non-discipline-specific categories.

The Government will continue to work with Arts Council England to understand the impacts of its investment in arts and culture, including on opera.

01 Dec 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 97389

Date tabled: 28 Nov 2022 | **Date for answer:** 01 Dec 2022 | **Date answered:** 01 Dec 2022

[Arts Council England Funding Decisions](#)

Asked by: Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab)

We all support the fairer distribution of arts funding and the principle that communities outside London should get a fairer share so that everybody everywhere can enjoy the arts, but levelling up should not be about pitting arts organisations against one another. What we have seen is an attempt to address regional disparity by shifting some funding to the regions, but doing so from a funding pot that has been shrinking since 2010. Does the Minister agree that these very short timeframes and the lack of consultation on these cuts to funding could have a very damaging impact on the ecosystem of the arts?

Answered by: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Well, I have to say that London will still be getting the lion's share of funding from the Arts Council. I make no apology for what we are seeing in areas such as Blackburn, which had never received any funding: four projects there are now receiving funding. Why cannot talented artists in Blackburn get the same access to those opportunities as artists in London? I do not understand the problem.

01 Dec 2022 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | 723 c991

Date answered: 01 Dec 2022

[Arts Council England Funding Decisions](#)

Asked by: Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con)

On a similar theme, levelling up is undoubtedly a noble ambition, and the Arts Council funding has been too London-centric for too long, partly due to the subsidies to the Royal Opera House, which, if the Minister ever visits there, he will see is a bit like the Starship Enterprise, in terms of facilities. In

correcting the imbalance, however, does he agree that the Arts Council needs to be careful about not potentially wrecking established institutions such as English National Opera, which was given very little notice of funding cuts? As a result, it is threatening legal action. A soft landing is needed. Does he agree that he needs to speak to the Arts Council to ensure that, when it makes such decisions in future, it has a plan in place to ensure that those institutions are at least protected and have a way in which to cope with the decision?

Answered by: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

I reiterate that the Arts Council is an arm's length organisation. We have had several meetings to hear about the long processes that it has undertaken to consider each of the awards that it has made. We pushed it to increase the transition period of funding, recognising the difficulty that that may present to other people. We hope that both Arts Council England and English National Opera will work together—we certainly encourage them to—on the possibilities for the future of the organisation.

01 Dec 2022 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | 723 c991

Date answered: 01 Dec 2022

[English National Opera: Finance](#)

Asked by: Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government whether Arts Council England discussed with English National Opera a plan of transition from their base in London, prior to their decision to withdraw all national programme funding from the organisation.

Answering member: Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Decisions about which organisations to fund, and by how much, through its Investment Programme are taken by Arts Council England at arm's length from His Majesty's Government.

Arts Council England has a robust process to determine how funding decisions are made. The decisions were made in line with its published guidance and in response to its ten-year strategy, 'Let's Create'. Assessments were carried out by Arts Council England, and decisions were made by its Area and National Councils, which include both local representatives and people who work in the sector.

The London Coliseum is owned freehold by English National Opera and is not under public ownership or control. The property can be used according to the terms as set out in agreements between English National Opera and each of its funders. This includes Arts Council England.

01 Dec 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL3495

Date tabled: 17 Nov 2022 | **Date for answer:** 01 Dec 2022 | **Date answered:** 01 Dec 2022

[English National Opera: Finance](#)

Asked by: Harman, Ms Harriet

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the potential impact of the Arts Council England funding decision to reduce the English National Opera's grant on levelling up.

Answering member: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Ministers and officials regularly meet their counterparts across His Majesty's Government to discuss shared priorities, including how cultural investment and policy can support levelling up. There have been no recent discussions between the Secretaries of State on this issue specifically.

24 Nov 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 92068

Date tabled: 21 Nov 2022 | **Date for answer:** 24 Nov 2022 | **Date answered:** 24 Nov 2022

[English National Opera: Staff](#)

Asked by: Harman, Ms Harriet

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether Arts Council England have made an estimate of the (a) number of people employed by the English National Opera and (b) proportion of those employees who would be able to move out of London.

Answering member: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Decisions on issues relating to staff employment and location are always made by organisations independently of both HM Government and Arts Council England. Arts Council England is, however, currently working with the English National Opera on possibilities for the future of the organisation.

17 Nov 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 86387

Date tabled: 14 Nov 2022 | **Date for answer:** 17 Nov 2022 | **Date answered:** 17 Nov 2022

[Opera: Buildings](#)

Asked by: Harman, Ms Harriet

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of opening a new opera house in a town or city outside of London.

Answering member: Stuart Andrew | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Arts Council England (ACE) provided the English National Opera (ENO) with £12,607,792 of public funding in 2021/22 and 2022/23 through its 2018–22 Investment Programme. Decisions about which organisations to fund in its Investment Programme, and by how much, are taken by Arts Council England alone. As part of its decisions regarding the 2023–26 Investment Programme, Arts Council England has offered the English National Opera £17 million to help it transition from its current model and explore a new future.

I can confirm that all decisions on which organisations to fund through the 2023–26 Investment Programme and their precise allocations have been taken by Arts Council England.

As the Cabinet Minister responsible for arts and culture, the Secretary of State regularly meets Arts Council England, which is an arms-length body of the Department. She met Arts Council England officials to discuss the overall process, outcome and plan for announcement on 2 November. However, the Secretary of State held no meetings with the English National Opera or any other external organisation to discuss this Investment Programme's funding settlements prior to its announcement.

16 Nov 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 84786

Date tabled: 11 Nov 2022 | **Date for answer:** 16 Nov 2022 | **Date answered:** 16 Nov 2022

[Arts: Coastal Areas and Rural Areas](#)

Asked by: Seely, Bob

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support her Department can provide to incentivise major London-based arts institutes to undertake outreach to (a) the Isle of Wight, (b) coastal and (c) rural communities.

Answering member: Nigel Huddleston | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

The Government is committed to promoting the arts and culture outside of London, and invests in culture across the country through Arts Council England.

Arts Council England's ambition to ensure the arts are accessible to all is articulated in its 'Let's Create' Strategy 2020-2030, which can be found on its website. The Arts Council encourages London-based organisations to have national reach and impact. It facilitates relationships across the country where there are synergies and/or particular opportunities, and supports organisations from major cities, including London, to share their work in rural areas. In addition, the Arts Council has identified the Isle of Wight as a priority area for increased engagement and investment.

A number of London-based National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) work in the Isle of Wight as well as rural and coastal areas. One example includes The Reading Agency, which produces programmes delivered by libraries across the country.

13 Jan 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 98422

Date tabled: 05 Jan 2022 | **Date for answer:** 10 Jan 2022 | **Date answered:** 13 Jan 2022

[Arts: Finance](#)

Asked by: Cooper, Daisy

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his Department's policy is on allocating the second tranche of Arts Council England funding to National Portfolio Organisations.

Answering member: Caroline Dinenage | **Department:** Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

In order to support the sustainability of the Arts sector, including the National Portfolio, DCMS has worked closely with Arts Council England (ACE)

to provide a tailored package of financial support. In March, ACE announced a £160m emergency response package to complement the financial measures already announced by the Government and to ensure immediate resilience of this vital sector.

This package includes £90 million of support for National Portfolio Organisations so they can better sustain themselves, and their work, in the coming months. There is no upper limit for the amount of funding National Portfolio Organisations can apply for, and decisions on funding will be made on 30 June 2020.

In keeping with the arms-length principle, Arts Council England will determine whether and to what extent organisations receive funding.

The Secretary of State, myself and officials continue to consult organisations within the Art sector, including National Portfolio Organisations, extensively to ensure we fully understand the impacts of Covid-19 and remain well placed to respond as it develops.

30 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 62641

Date tabled: 22 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 24 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 30 Jun 2020

4.4

Committee material

[The work of Arts Council England.](#)

08 Dec 2022 | Parliamentary committees - House of Commons papers - Select Committee oral evidence - Select Committee written evidence | House of Commons | HC 941 2022-23

5 Media

5.1 Press releases

[Arts Council England Funding Decisions: ETO Remains a National Portfolio Organisation and Joins the Transfer Programme](#)

English Touring Opera

07 November 2022

[A new chapter for ENO](#)

English National Opera

04 November 2022

[Statement from Mayor on arts funding](#)

04 November 2022

[Creative UK responds to the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation Announcement](#)

04 November 2022

[Arts Council England makes NPO announcement](#)

Royal Opera House

04 November 2022

[National Theatre's response to Arts Council England's funding announcement](#)

National Theatre

04 November 2022

5.2

Articles and blogs

[Glyndebourne cancels 2023 opera tour due to arts funding cuts](#)

Times

07 January 2023

[To cut funding from English National Opera heralds the death knell of this much-loved institution](#)

The House

02 December 2022

[Arts Council England's £446m grants: who are the biggest winners and losers?](#)

The Art Newspaper

30 November 2022

[A fight at the opera: could forcing ENO up north work out?](#)

Guardian

27 November 2022

[Grand plans to level up have produced results – great art venues levelled to the ground](#)

Guardian

26 November 2022

[Andy Burnham says English National Opera doesn't deserve to come to Manchester if it thinks the city's full of heathens](#)

Manchester Evening News

24 November 2022

[WNO Shrinks Touring Programme Amid Funding Cuts](#)

Classical Music

22 November 2022

[It's time for London to stop moaning and let Greater Manchester have its time - the future of the arts depends on it](#)

Manchester Evening News

20 November 2022

[Will forcing English National Opera out of London help 'level up' the UK?](#)

The Week

18 November 2022

[Key funding from the Arts Council England helps to 'transform lives' at the Liverpool Philharmonic](#)

Liverpool Echo

12 November 2022

[Grand opera has no growth, says arts council chief](#)

Times

12 November 2022

[UK culture chief hits back at criticism to move arts funding out of London](#)

Financial Times

11 November 2022

[Arts Council cuts: the problems with 'levelling up' through culture](#)

The Conversation

10 November 2022

[Investing in the future of music](#)

Arts Council England

10 November 2022

[Arts Council funding: organisations head into the unknown amid cuts](#)

Guardian

10 November 2022

[The North East is trailing behind in Arts Council 'levelling up' investment.](#)

North East Culture partnership

09 November 2022

[English National Opera's funding to be cut to zero unless it moves from London](#)

Guardian

09 November 2022

[Queen Mary experts warn Levelling Up agenda risks levelling down London arts and culture](#)

Queen Mary University

07 November 2022

[Arts Council England announces funding for 2023 to 2026](#)

WestEndTheatre.com

04 November 2022

[London's cultural venues from Donmar Warehouse to Royal Opera House respond to major Arts Council funding cuts](#)

Evening Standard

04 November 2022

[Sam Mendes says Arts Council England funding reduction decision 'short-sighted'](#)

Independent

04 November 2022

[Arts Council England to triple number of BAME-led groups it funds](#)

Third Sector

04 November 2022

[Leading UK opera companies have funding slashed in Arts Council announcement](#)

Classic FM

04 November 2022

[Arts Council England announces funding plans for 2023-26](#)

WhatOnStage

04 November 2022

[The Arts Council has put ideology over the success of British culture](#)

The Telegraph

04 November 2022

[UK arts 'levelling up' plan—designed to redirect funding outside of London—
blasted by city's mayor](#)

The Art Newspaper

25 February 2022

[Levelling Up White Paper targets cultural engagement outside London](#)

Arts Professional

02 February 2022

6

Organisations and further reading

[Impact of Arts Funding Cuts Highlighted in Leafleting Drive](#), Musicians' Union, 13 January 2023

Claire Brader, [Arts Council England: Funding and regional distribution, House of Lords Library](#), 08 December 2022

[Levelling Up agenda: immediate impacts on Arts Council England distribution of funding](#), Cultural Learning Alliance, 23 March 2022

[100% of ACE uplift to be spent outside London under Levelling Up agenda](#), Museums Association, 04 February 2022

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