

3 July 2023

Mr Jeff Smith MP
Shadow Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Music
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Smith,

ARTS COUNCIL AND THE LONDON ARTS AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SECTOR

On behalf of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, may we request your guidance as to how a future Labour Government could support the arts in London following the decision of the Arts Council to impose further cuts to the critical arts and creative industries in the capital.

We represent the interests of firms of all sizes, from micro businesses and sole traders through to large, multinational corporates, across all 33 London local authority areas – reflecting the broad spectrum of London business opinion.

It is in this context that our members are continuing to reel from the shock of the Arts Council cuts to London organisations that was announced in November. As 2023 has progressed, these cuts are being felt more and more in terms of the impact on jobs, business viability and the attractiveness of London as the cultural hub for London and the United Kingdom.

According to the Greater London Authority, the creative economy is estimated to provide one in six jobs in London and the creative industries generate around £47 billion for the London economy.

In addition, it is estimated that by 2030, there will be ten million people living in London. Therefore the need for London to have a diverse and creative arts scene is critical for the economy and for bringing communities together across the capital.

However, the unexpected decision of the Arts Council in November has come on top of a series of cuts that has already afflicted the arts scene across Greater London. In the past decade, London lost 35% of its grassroots music venues and 58% of LGBT+ venues

Therefore when the Arts Council announced the £50 million worth of cuts to organisations in London, this did not just affect central London venues but venues across Greater London such as the Hampstead Theatre and the Gate Theatre in Notting Hill.

This reduction in funds is likely to result in international talent to either leave the United Kingdom or not to arrive in the country in the first place as London is recognised globally as the cultural gateway to the UK. This, in turn, will reduce the

touring of London based arts organisations including loans by museums and galleries. At the very least, the Arts Council should promote through funding more extensive touring and sharing of exhibition material.

We believe that these series of cuts to the London arts sector must now end. The capital is now at a pivotal moment – if further cuts are inflicted on the arts in the capital then the welcoming nature of London will be hampered.

This would not only be damaging for London but for the whole of the United Kingdom. London, as the global city, is the cultural gateway to our country for many international visitors. By harming this cultural offer, we also harm the levelling up agenda for further investment in the nations and regions of the United Kingdom.

We support the levelling up agenda – it is critical that the whole country benefits from economic growth. However, London needs levelling up too. One in four children in the capital live in poverty. It is the arts which has helped address this economic and social inequality. However, these cuts are levelling down rather than levelling up London.

That is why the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry has decided not to stand by whilst we witness how these damaging cuts are harming our members, our city and our country.

We therefore have decided to launch a campaign to safeguard arts and creative industry businesses in the capital.

We therefore request your support so that the cycle of cuts cease. Beyond this, we do need investment in the arts but our immediate priority is that the cuts to arts ends.

We would be happy to meet with you to explore this matter further.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Burge
Chief Executive