



## **Arts Council England and communities living in rural England – a position statement**

### **Introduction**

1. Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts, museums and libraries in England. Our mission is: Great art and culture for everyone. We work to achieve this through advocacy and partnership, development and investment.
2. We are committed to realising our mission across the country, taking full account of the differing aspirations and needs of people and communities. In October 2013 we updated our strategy, originally published in 2010. *Great art and culture for everyone*<sup>1</sup> sets out a 10-year vision with five ambitious goals at its heart. This update reflects the Arts Council's newly expanded remit to include museums and libraries. *Great art and culture for everyone* makes clear our commitment to ensuring that everyone in England, including people living in rural areas, has the opportunity to participate in the nation's cultural life.

We must take account of the differing needs of different places. We will do this in partnership with local government, the largest investor in arts and culture in England. We will also take full account of the respective needs of rural and urban communities, so that people are not disadvantaged by where they live. (*Great art and culture for everyone*, Arts Council England, 2013, p.29)

3. We recognise the strength of the arts and culture in England's rural areas and communities. The richness and diversity of rural England is reflected in its cultural life. Many leading artists and cultural organisations are based in rural areas, and their work and connections with local communities underpin a high and healthy level of engagement with the arts and museums in particular – engagement that is higher in rural areas than in urban ones. Libraries are

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/Great\\_art\\_and\\_culture\\_for\\_everyone.pdf](http://artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/Great_art_and_culture_for_everyone.pdf) (accessed 16 March 2014).

welcoming and safe spaces where communities come together, and are hugely important to rural digital infrastructure, learning, and access to information and public services. Festivals and outdoor arts are strong in rural areas, and arts and culture in general in rural areas are strong because they are well connected. These connections are both local and with other rural and urban areas in England, and they are also international. Touring is fundamental to this, and organisations like the National Rural Touring Forum ensure that touring meets the aspirations and ambitions of rural communities. This is not one-way traffic, as organisations such as Shropshire-based Pentabus Theatre also tour in urban settings. Groups representing rural artists and cultural organisations, such as the Rural Cultural Forum, take an active part in the national debate.

4. These strengths are vital to the value that the arts and culture bring to diversifying rural economies, supporting tourism and bringing together communities. Arts Council investment and support is fundamental to this but we recognise that we have to work in partnership with local government in rural England, with the sector and with rural communities themselves. It is through these partnerships that we can sustain and grow culture and the arts in rural areas.
5. We recognise that there are challenges facing both culture and communities in rural areas. We will seek to improve our understanding of these through our partnerships, making better use of evidence and engaging regularly with rural stakeholders, using this to inform our policy and activity.
6. This position statement sets out how we will approach the specific needs and aspirations of rural communities in order to deliver the goals of our strategy. It sets out our key partnerships and how we will engage with rural stakeholders on an ongoing basis to ensure that our approach is appropriate. We welcome views on this position statement, which we will revise during 2014 taking into account any comments along with the outcomes of the independent review of rural proofing currently being undertaken by Lord Cameron of Dillington. It will serve as the foundation for our approach to working with rural communities from now until the end of our next investment round, in 2017/18.

### **The Arts Council's priorities for arts and culture**

7. The Arts Council has put the following five goals at the heart of our strategy:

Goal 1: Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 2: Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 3: The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable

Goal 4: The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled

Goal 5: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

8. These goals guide our activity and investment and how we work with the sector. The goals are interdependent. Goals 1, 2 and 5 describe our ambition for arts and culture and how we see that contribution to national life. Goals 3 and 4 are the means by which Arts Council and the sector will achieve them.
9. We also recognise the value that culture and the arts bring to localities, to regions and to the nation as a whole. This includes the social and community value of culture – building cohesive communities, fostering aspiration and personal development, making for healthier lives and playing a vital role in learning. It also includes the economic value of culture – as a fundamental aspect of England’s tourism offer, as the bedrock of our world-class creative industries and as the sector’s importance as a job and wealth creator.
10. These values benefit rural and urban communities alike and we recognise that we need to take full account of the diversity of England – in geographic, demographic and socio-economic terms – in order to see equal access to arts and cultural opportunities and the benefits these bring. This position statement sets out how we do and will approach this in relation to rural communities.

### **The Arts Council’s approach to rural communities – action to date**

11. The Arts Council’s approach to working with rural communities has evolved over the last decade. In 2004 we reviewed our approach to rural proofing, establishing a national rural working group and publishing *Arts in rural England*,<sup>2</sup> in which we committed to:

---

2

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/artsandruralengland\\_phpMk1oSQ.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/artsandruralengland_phpMk1oSQ.pdf)

- respond to the particular needs of rural areas
- support artists working in rural areas
- improve access for rural audiences
- build partnerships for growth, and
- campaign with rural organisations for recognition of their work.

12. In 2007 we reviewed the approach set out in *Arts in rural England* and incorporated rural proofing in our policy-making, investment and delivery, rather than defining it as a separate activity.

13. In July 2013 the Arts Council held a rural proofing workshop, facilitated by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). This workshop looked at how the Arts Council operates in relation to rural communities and how it understands the needs of rural communities, and led to a number of actions that have since been adopted. This position statement was developed following the workshop, and was presented for comment to a group of rural and cultural stakeholders in November 2013. Their views were taken into account in further developing this position statement.

14. In February 2014 the Arts Council published *This England*,<sup>3</sup> responding to the debate on regional funding of the arts and culture. This restates the principles on which we invest in arts and culture in order to preserve and enhance a national cultural ecology across England, and contextualises our current strategy. Four years into our 10-year strategy and the figures in this report show that our investment decisions are having an effect, and also outline what we have yet to accomplish to achieve our mission to make great art and culture available to everyone in England.

## **The arts and cultural sector in England's rural communities**

15. The Arts Council has reviewed data and evidence relating to engagement with and investment in the arts and cultural sector in England. Our key findings are set out here.

## **Population and participation**

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/This\\_England\\_report.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/This_England_report.pdf)

- Of the population of England, 17.6 per cent live in rural areas, 82.4 per cent in urban areas.<sup>4</sup>
- **Engagement in the arts is higher in rural areas than it is in urban areas**, and this has been a consistent finding of the Taking Part survey since 2005/06. In 2011/12 people in rural areas were more likely than people in urban areas to have engaged in the arts at least once in the previous 12 months (80.9 per cent in rural areas versus 77.5 per cent in urban areas).
- **Museum engagement is similar across rural and urban areas.** In 2011/12 Taking Part showed no statistically significant difference between rural and urban areas for museum engagement (people attending a museum or gallery at least once in their own time or voluntarily in the previous 12 months – 49 per cent in urban areas, 48.2 per cent in rural areas).
- **Library engagement is higher in urban areas.** People in urban areas were more likely than people in rural areas to have used a public library at least once in their own time and voluntarily in the previous 12 months (Taking Part found this to be 39.2 per cent in urban areas in 2011/12 versus 36.9 per cent in rural areas).<sup>5</sup>

## **Investment – Arts Council England**

- In 2012/13, taking into account National Lottery and Grant-in-Aid funding, the Arts Council's total investment in the arts and culture sector was £757.5 million. In 2011/12 it was £532.7 million.
- In 2012/13 15.2 per cent of the Arts Council's total investment was made into local authority areas categorised as significant rural or predominantly rural. This totalled £114.3 million, an increase in proportion and in cash terms from 2011/12 when such investment was 12.3 per cent of the total, or £55.5 million.
- The Arts Council's investment from the National Lottery into local authority areas categorised as significant rural or predominately rural increased as a percentage of the total from 13.7 per cent in 2011/12 to 16.5 per cent in 2012/13.
- In 2012/13 the Arts Council from both Grant-in-Aid and the National Lottery invested £18.94 per head in local authority areas categorised as urban,

---

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics, Mid-year Population Estimates, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/taking-part>

£4.55 into areas categorised as significant rural and £6.33 into areas categorised as predominately rural.

- The proportion of the total value of the Arts Council's investment in 2012-15 in National portfolio organisations based in local authority areas that are categorised as significant rural or predominately rural is 12.2 per cent.
- The proportion of the total value of the Arts Council's investment in 2011-15 in Major partner museums based in local authority areas that are categorised as significant rural or predominately rural is 8.6 per cent.
- A high proportion of investment in our Strategic touring programme and touring funded through national activities goes to rural areas. Over a quarter (25.5 per cent or £3.8 million) of investment in Strategic touring was in local authority areas that were categorised as significant rural or predominately rural in 2012/13. In the first five months of 2013/14 the proportion was 28.1 per cent. For touring funded through national activities the equivalent figures are 28.3 per cent (£2 million) in 2012/13 and 26 per cent for the first part of 2013/14. Our investment in touring is recorded on the place of benefit rather than the location of the funded organisation.
- Arts Council strategic funding is recorded by the residence of grant recipient and not the location deriving the benefit. This means that the Arts Council does not currently capture by geography the full benefit of its strategic investments. For instance, the three local authorities identified as being the biggest recipients of strategic funding are in London (Southwark: £49.9 million; Lambeth: £12.3 million; City of London: £8 million). They received £70,205,074 – 47 per cent of all strategic funding committed through the Lottery in 2012/13. However, this includes the following large national grants totalling £57.5 million (82 per cent of Lottery strategic funding benefitting these local authorities based on residence of recipient organisations, and 37.2 per cent of all Lottery strategic funding committed in 2012/13):
  - £29.7 million to National Foundation for Youth Music for a three-year Youth Music Grant Award
  - £15 million to National Skills Academy for the Creative employment programme
  - £4.2 million and £2.6 million to Trinity Guildhall for delivery of Artsmark and Arts Award, and
  - £6 million to Nesta to make awards through the Digital R&D Fund.

Each of these programmes directly benefits rural areas (such as the Digital R&D Fund investment in Cornwall's Miracle Theatre Company<sup>6</sup> or numerous Youth Music-funded projects, including Rhythmix's work in Kent, East Sussex and Surrey). At present, because it records grant awards by the location of the receiving organisation and not by the location deriving benefit, the Arts Council cannot give a full picture of the geographic extent and range of benefit. This is an issue that we are actively seeking to rectify.

## **Investment – local government**

- Local government remains the biggest public investor in the arts and culture in England, and as such is the Arts Council's most important strategic partner.
- In 2011/12 local government expenditure on the arts and culture per head of population was highest in local authority areas categorised as significant rural (£51.02) and lowest in those categorised as predominately rural (£21.39). Spend per head in areas categorised as predominately urban was £35.09.
- The difference between funding for the arts and culture in local authority areas defined as predominately rural and significant rural was greater than that between rural and urban areas.
- Local government expenditure is declining in real terms. Central government grants to local authorities (which account for the majority of income) have been reduced by 28 per cent in the current spending period. A further 10 per cent reduction will occur in 2015/16.
- Total local government net revenue expenditure in 2010/11 was £121 billion, and fell to £98 billion in 2012/13, a 19 per cent decline.
- Overall arts and culture spend decreased by 8 per cent between 2010/11 (the last year of the previous spending round) and 2011/12 (the first year of the current one), from £1.8 billion to £1.7 billion (a reduction of £137.75 million).
- Spend on museums and galleries decreased by 12 per cent between 2010-1 and 2011/12, from £285.3 million to £255.1 million (a reduction of £30.2 million).
- Spend on theatres and public entertainment decreased by 7 per cent between 2010/11 and 2011/12, from £350.4 million to £326.3 million (a reduction of £24.1 million).

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://native.artsdigitalrnd.org.uk/projects/miracle-theatre-company/>

- Spend on libraries decreased by 8 per cent between 2010/11 and 2011/12, from £1.04 billion to £969.4 million (a reduction of £66 million).<sup>7</sup>

16. There is a complex relationship between investment in culture and the arts in rural and urban areas by both the Arts Council and local government. Investment in one location does not mean that it does not bring benefits to people living elsewhere. Touring, loans from collections, and digital innovations all mean that investment in one locality can directly benefit people elsewhere. A further consideration is that people may be prepared to travel from a rural to an urban area in order to engage with culture and the arts. Obviously such opportunities may be limited by external factors, and there are particular ones that pertain to rural areas, for example transport to and from isolated communities, access to broadband, etc. Some of these are outside the control of the Arts Council, but we will seek to improve our understanding of these with our partners and stakeholders (see paragraphs 19 to 29) and to exert our influence where we can (eg as members of the Creative Industries Council<sup>8</sup>).

## **Arts Council England and rural communities 2014–8**

17. This section sets out how the Arts Council intends to deliver the goals of *Great art and culture for everyone* by taking into account the needs and aspirations of people living in England's rural communities. We welcome comments on this from stakeholders.

## **Principles underpinning the Arts Council's approach to rural communities**

18. The Arts Council's approach to rural communities is governed by the following principles, which we will take into account as we advocate, develop, invest and form partnerships:

- The Arts Council's priorities for the arts and culture are set out in *Great art and culture for everyone*. This strategy, and the five goals it includes, applies to all of our work and equally across England. We want to see these goals delivered in both urban and rural areas.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/creative-industries-council>



- We do not see the need for a specific rural strategy or investment programme – but we do want to see rural communities benefiting appropriately from the totality of our support.
- Our commitment to equality of opportunity to enable people to experience the arts and culture and our ambition to increase the number and range of people taking up these opportunities is set out in Goal 2. To realise this we recognise that rural communities have particular and specific characteristics and needs – including sparsity, rural deprivation, access issues – and we will take account of these.
- We recognise that rural communities and the arts and culture in rural areas also have characteristic strengths that we can build on.
- We will continue to work in partnership with Defra to take account of rural proofing and to amend our approach to this over time and in the light of experience.
- We will begin and sustain a national dialogue with rural stakeholders from across England, and use this to inform our policy and our work.
- We reaffirm our commitment to the following ways of working outlined in 2004 in *Arts in rural England*:
  - respond to the particular needs of rural areas
  - support artists working in rural areas
  - improve access for rural audiences, and
  - and build partnerships for growth.

## **How we will work – our partnerships**

19. **Local government** The Arts Council's key strategic and delivery partner is local government. Our partnership with local authorities in rural areas is vital to us being able to realise our ambitions. Within their localities, councils have democratic legitimacy, on-the-ground knowledge and the ability to offer leadership to communities. Sustaining a healthy cultural sector requires partnership between the Arts Council, as the national development agency, and local government. While council finances remain under pressure (and will do so for the foreseeable future), local authorities will continue to be major investors in arts and culture, and a healthy rural cultural scene depends in large part on them. Any assessment of public funding for the arts and culture which looks only at local government or Arts Council investment and not at them together is necessarily incomplete.

20. The Arts Council has a strategic approach to local government that recognises this, and which is set out in our joint statement of purpose with the Local

Government Association (LGA).<sup>9</sup> A key element of our partnership with the LGA is undertaking service improvement activity with councils. This has included the Libraries Development Initiative and leadership academies for councillors responsible for cultural services. Many rural authorities have directly benefited from this work and we will continue to collaborate with the LGA to provide these opportunities. We recognise that the LGA are members of the Rural Coalition and that their membership encompasses rural authorities, so the LGA is a key rural stakeholder in its own right. Five places on each of the Arts Council's Area Councils are reserved for local government members, and this includes councillors from rural areas.<sup>10</sup>

21. The Arts Council will engage strategically with local authorities in rural areas in order to sustain and extend cultural opportunity. However, we cannot commit to make good cuts in local government funding for the arts and culture. We will work with local councillors to make them aware of the benefit of culture to their area, and we will proactively work with them to help craft solutions that might sustain a local cultural offer (eg new business and delivery models, sharing services, etc). This support applies equally to rural and urban areas.

22. We recognise local government's statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

23. **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)** The Arts Council values its relationship with Defra. The department facilitated a recent rural proofing workshop to allow us to critically assess how we engage with rural communities, and the actions that emerged from this have informed this position statement and are attached as an appendix. We will continue to engage with Defra through the Rural Communities Policy Unit so that we can remain connected to changes in policy relating to rural areas and the countryside, and so that we have a source of expert advice and guidance.

24. **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** The contribution of the arts and culture to the national economy<sup>11</sup> and economic growth are well evidenced and understood, and the Arts Council has a key role in advocating for that

---

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.local.gov.uk/culture/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/3796188/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/culture/-/journal_content/56/10180/3796188/ARTICLE)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/who-we-are/how-we-are-run/area-councils/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/browse-advice-and-guidance/contribution-arts-and-culture-national-economy>

contribution, forming partnerships and securing investment to realise it. Foremost in our plans to boost culture's economic contribution are LEPs. The Arts Council advocates nationally to Government and to the LEP Network, and locally to individual LEPs, and seeks to broker partnerships between cultural organisations, LEPs and the private sector. We have written to the chairs of all LEPs, including those in rural areas, to offer Arts Council support in realising culture's economic contribution in their areas. In March 2014 we held a roundtable discussion with LEPs to help us understand how we can better work with them. We have indicated that our funding is eligible to match the LEP's allocations of European Structural and Investment Funds during 2014-20. This will include regular funding for National portfolio organisations and Major partner museums during 2015-18. We will work directly with Defra to see how the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and other funding programmes can support the cultural sector in rural areas.

25. We are doing what we can to make the case to LEPs, to make our investment lever in LEP investment, and to broker partnerships between the arts and cultural sector and LEPs. We commit to doing this in both rural and urban areas. This is a major opportunity and rural arts organisations and their partners should actively exploit this if we are to see the creative economy in rural areas make its contribution to national recovery.

26. **Partnerships extending the reach and impact of art and culture** The Arts Council works with partners to increase engagement in the arts, and certain of these partnerships have been focused on rural areas. The following partners<sup>12</sup> are now working with each other on joint audience development activity:

- **National Trust** – Trust New Art, an annual arts programme, has been successfully delivered across National Trust properties and landscapes since 2009, attracting audiences of over 500,000 each year. It has been a highly successful partnership, signalled by the Trust's commitment to a Contemporary Arts Programme Manager post.
- **Canal & River Trust** – a national arts programme has been developed for England's waterways through a partnership which, since 2011, has aimed to repeat the successes of work begun with the National Trust. The Canal & River Trust led a consortium bid to Creative people and places, and in June 2013 was awarded almost £2 million to develop a 10-year scheme of radical

---

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/collaboration-and-partnerships/>

arts programming by the people of Pennine Lancashire that will focus on the waterways.

- **Forestry Commission England** – a public art programme for England's public forests has been underway since 2011. The Forestry Commission has received over £100,000 in Strategic touring funding for an experimental music project across the forest estate. The Jerwood Open Forest Competition has been created with the Jerwood Foundation, offering artists the chance to win £30,000 to develop a project in one or more locations within the forest estate.

27. **The arts and cultural sector** Artists, museum and library professionals, and all those working in the cultural sector in rural areas are and will remain significant partners for the Arts Council. We will engage as appropriate with professional and representative bodies where our interests and ambitions coincide on culture in rural areas (eg the Society of Chief Librarians and the Museums Association). We will work closely with strategic organisations such as the National Rural Touring Forum. We acknowledge the role of community-based and voluntary arts and cultural activity and its importance to rural cultural infrastructure. Thus, we see Voluntary Arts as a key stakeholder.

28. We recognise that the cultural sector relies upon and extends beyond those organisations that may have a funded or formal relationship with the Arts Council, or indeed other public bodies. The Arts Council recognises that it must consider the needs of the voluntary arts and other arts and cultural organisations. We are keen to address this across the country, given our commitment to the total investment approach.

29. We will seek to engage representative and rural interest stakeholders on an ongoing basis (see paragraph 59). We will engage with rural interest groups as appropriate, whether those with a cultural focus (eg Rural Cultural Forum) or those whose focus is generic where they have a specific interest in arts and culture. We will continue to support the arts and cultural sector in rural areas directly through our investment, partnership, advocacy and leadership.

## **How we will work – our investment**

30. **National portfolio organisations** The Arts Council invests in the national arts infrastructure in a number of ways, but one of the most significant is through

the National portfolio funding programme<sup>13</sup> which launched on 1 April 2012. This provides funding for 696 National portfolio organisations for three years, to March 2015. Selection was through an open access process, which included geographic balancing criteria as part of the decision-making. National portfolio organisations are incredibly diverse, but encompass many organisations with a direct rural focus, including rural touring organisations and a number of rurally based arts organisations.

31. In 2015/16 we will begin a new funding round. The application and assessment process will be completed by July 2014 with funding for the new portfolio beginning in April 2015. The criteria for decision-making will once again include geography, and thus national and regional spread will be taken into account.

32. **Major partner museums**<sup>14</sup> 16 museums receive regular funding from the Arts Council under the Renaissance programme for regional museums. This includes a number of museums serving rural areas.

33. As with the National portfolio organisations, in 2015/16 we will begin a new funding round. The application and assessment process will be completed by July 2014 with funding for the new portfolio beginning in April 2015. The criteria for decision-making will once again include geography, and thus national and regional spread will be taken into account.

34. **Grants for the arts** Our open-access Lottery-funded grants programme is for individuals and organisations, and funds activity engaging people in the arts, and helps artists and organisations carry out their work. The Arts Council does not classify if the activity funded takes place in an urban or rural area, but we do classify if it is taking place in an area of low engagement in line with our goals. This is taken into account when decisions are made. Although whether an area is urban or rural has no bearing on our decision-making process, we maintain intelligence on the types of areas receiving our investment and this includes whether or not they are rural or urban. This will continue to be monitored.

---

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/national-portfolio-funding-programme>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/renaissance/renaissance-major-grants-programme/renaissance-major-partner-museums/>

35. **Touring** We recognise the value of touring to places where there is a low physical cultural infrastructure or where there are small numbers of arts and cultural organisations. Our support for rural touring organisations remains important across the country, and especially in regions with issues of sparsity and rurality, such as the Midlands, the South West and the North.
36. As part of the current funding for National portfolio organisations, we increased funding to Queen’s Hall Arts in Northumberland, Rural Arts in North Yorkshire, Air in G Arts in Rural Gloucestershire and the National Rural Touring Forum in order to support national rural touring across the country, and we supported Pound Arts in Wiltshire (incorporating a festival, an arts centre and a rural touring circuit) for the first time. Between 2012/13 and 2014/15 we will invest £6.5 million in rural touring organisations.
37. **Strategic touring** Our £45 million Strategic touring programme<sup>15</sup> was launched in 2011 and is designed to encourage collaboration between organisations, so that more people across England experience and are inspired by the arts, particularly in places which rely on touring for much of their arts provision. So far, £1.5 million has been awarded to bring specific benefit to rural areas. Other projects may also bring work to rural areas as part of a wider tour.
38. Our touring policy is that we want to support work which tours to places ‘which rely on touring for much of their arts provision’, which clearly encompasses rural areas. An example of strategic touring aimed specifically at rural areas is Spot On, the rural touring network that brings a range of professional work into village halls and rural venues across Lancashire.
39. **Creative people and places** The Creative people and places fund<sup>16</sup> provides focused investment in parts of the country where involvement in the arts is significantly below the national average, with the aim of increasing participation, including in rural areas. This investment will encourage long-term collaborations between local communities and arts organisations, museums, libraries and other partners such as local authorities and the private sector. It aims to empower these to experiment with new and radically different approaches and to develop inspiring, sustainable arts programmes that will

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-for-funding/strategic-touring-programme/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/creative-people-and-places-fund/>

engage audiences in their communities. We encourage partnerships across the subsidised, amateur and commercial sectors.

40. A total of £37 million has been made available over two funding rounds to establish around 15 Creative people and places projects between 2012 and 2016. Proposals will be for between £500,000 and £3 million over three years. While engagement in the arts is higher in rural than in urban areas, we do take seriously those rural locations where low engagement has been identified, and the following two examples from the Creative people and places programme illustrate how Arts Council investment can support rural communities to tackle these issues.

- **South East Northumberland** was awarded £2.4 million from the fund and is currently using local artists to sound out ideas from the community in order to create a business plan. The project is being run in partnership between Woodhorn, VCS Assembly, NHS North of Tyne, Northumberland College, Northumberland County Council and Queen's Hall Arts, and has been supported by *Billy Elliot* writer Lee Hall.
- **Boston and South Holland** won £2.5 million to fund an initial consortium comprising artsNK, Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service and Lincs Artist Form, aiming to increase engagement with the arts in South Lincolnshire. The three year programme, called Transported, will see inventive art experiences in both established venues as well as more unusual spaces, transporting art to new audiences in new ways. Running alongside the main programme of activity is a Quality and Innovation Programme to raise ambitions and aspirations, and a CPD programme for local partners and practitioners with the aim of sustainability and legacy. The scheme is independent of, but in partnership with local authorities, other arts organisations and private sector partners.

41. **Supporting modernisation and development in libraries** Libraries contribute to rural communities. Very often they are the only public service in a locality, and they are a service with a high level of trust and community awareness. The Arts Council has a strategic and developmental leadership role for libraries. Envisioning the library of the future<sup>17</sup> sets out how the Arts Council will undertake this role.

---

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/library-of-the-future/>

42. Arts Council England and Defra collaborated with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Local Government Association to produce research into community libraries<sup>18</sup> in 2012. This is now being followed by specific research, led by Defra, with support from both the Arts Council and the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, into community libraries in rural areas.
43. The Arts Council delivered the Libraries Development Initiative<sup>19</sup> in 2012/13 to take forward new ways of working, and this supported innovation in the library sector. It included the Cambridgeshire Libraries-led project Developing community-led commissioning for arts and library services in rural deprived areas, which aimed to increase access to cultural activity in deprived rural areas through the development of library spaces. It used the community networks of local libraries and enabled local communities to choose high-quality cultural activities to take place within those spaces.
44. The Arts Council encourages libraries to play a role in supporting economic growth and regeneration, and their reach into communities means that they have a major contribution to make in rural areas. In October 2013 the Arts Council, along with funding partners DCLG and the British Library, announced the successful applicants to Enterprising Libraries.<sup>20</sup> This funds a number of projects in which libraries use their role as community hubs to spark local economic growth and improve social mobility in communities across the country. The 10 funded projects include rurally focused activity in Devon, Norfolk and Northamptonshire.

### **How we will work – the Arts Council supporting the social and economic value of culture and the arts**

45. There are a number of areas in which the Arts Council works to maximise the broader value of the arts and culture to communities. Very often, this work is delivered in partnership. In line with our principles for working with rural communities, none of this activity is restricted to rural or to urban areas. Instead, it seeks to add value across the country, and the key from a rural perspective will be to ensure that those living in countryside areas are as well placed to secure this value as those living in towns and cities.

---

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/community-libraries-research/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/libraries-development-initiative/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/enterprising-libraries/>



46. **Culture and the economy** As noted above, the arts and culture have significant potential to contribute to economic growth. Partnership with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) will be crucial, but the Arts Council undertakes a number of other activities designed to promote culture's contribution to growth and to build the sector's capacity to deliver it. The Arts Council is actively engaging with LEPs and will make its investment eligible to match the LEPs' allocations of European Structural and Investment Funds. We are working closely with a number of LEPs focused on issues of rural development. We are discussing with Defra and with LEPs how culture can contribute to growth in rural areas through the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development and also how we can better engage with the LEADER programme. However, following discussion with LEPs, we recognise that many of the more significant opportunities to invest in rural growth through culture may be through the European Regional Development Fund and other generic programmes,
47. The Arts Council has undertaken research into the economic value of the arts and culture and plays a role in disseminating evidence that can inform practice and policy. To date, it has been difficult to disaggregate evidence about the size and value of the creative economy by locality and to put it in a form that can be used by practitioners locally. This challenge has been common in both rural and urban locations. Arts Council investment, alongside our partners in the DCMS Culture and Sport Evidence programme, has delivered the Local Culture and Heritage Profiles.<sup>21</sup> These provide information on employment, business stock and new business stock, and turnover in the cultural sector. This can be disaggregated to the level of a local authority or LEP.
48. Tourism is a key means by which arts and culture contribute economically. Our partnership with VisitEngland<sup>22</sup> seeks to maximise the contribution of culture and the arts to the growth of the tourist economy. We hope that by bringing the countryside and cultural tourism offers closer together (eg forming relevant partnerships between National Parks, market and coastal towns, and arts and cultural organisations), it will offer economic benefits to rural communities and improve partnerships including in the cultural sector. VisitEngland and Arts Council England will seek to align funding as appropriate to support this.

---

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/case-programme-local-tools-sport-and-culture-and-heritage#local-culture-and-heritage-profile-tool>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/collaboration-and-partnerships/>

Through a £3 million investment programme, Cultural destinations, Arts Council England is investing to help build capacity in the cultural sector to improve local tourism offers in partnership with destination organisations in 10 places across England. Rural areas receiving investment include Lincolnshire, Cornwall, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and the Lake District. Participants will share their learning with other areas across the country.<sup>23</sup>

49. The arts and culture sector is a major employer in its own right, and growing the sector creates jobs. The Arts Council has supported the supply of apprenticeships and internships, which can feed growth in the sector through the Creative Employment Programme.<sup>24</sup> Arts organisations and others can bid for funding for apprenticeships, and this opportunity is open to those in rural and urban areas.

50. **The social value of culture** Engaging with culture brings a range of value, from health and wellbeing to cohesion, safer communities and learning opportunities. The Arts Council invests in a number of activities to increase this value and is keen that people living in rural areas benefit as much as people elsewhere. Our investment will bring specific benefit to rural communities. As approximately 50 per cent of those living in rural areas are over the age of 45,<sup>25</sup> the challenges of an ageing population will be acutely felt in the countryside. Ageing populations, even if they are often more affluent than other parts of the community, will face particular barriers to participation, from difficulty in travel to arts venues to issues posed by care needs. Arts and older people in care<sup>26</sup> is a £1 million investment, jointly funded by the Arts Council and The Baring Foundation over three years, to provide access to quality arts experiences for older people in residential care, as both participants and audiences. It will be implemented by partnerships or consortia led by residential care providers or arts organisations.

51. The potential of arts and culture to contribute to social value can be realised through the sector's engagement with strategic commissioning. Here, cultural organisations will be commissioned by health, education, social care or community providers to realise outcomes. This is a major opportunity for the

---

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-funding/funding-programmes/cultural-destinations/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://creative-employment.co.uk/>

<sup>25</sup> Defra, *Statistical Digest of Rural England*, 2013

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/arts-and-older-people-care-commissioned-grant/>

sector, and the Arts Council has appointed a consortium led by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations to undertake a three-year capacity-building programme called Cultural commissioning.<sup>27</sup> Rural organisations seeking to undertake public service commissions will benefit from engaging with this work.

**52. Planning** The Arts Council works with national and local government to include considerations of cultural opportunity within planning. We have worked closely with the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) over a number of years on these issues. The TCPA is a member of the Rural Coalition and therefore another key rural stakeholder with whom we engage. The Arts Council grant funded TCPA to develop the Culture & Sport Planning Toolkit,<sup>28</sup> which is of value to planners and the cultural sector working in rural areas.

**53. Digital and creative media** Digital technologies and creative media are transforming how art and culture is produced and consumed. They are making a major contribution to culture in rural areas and they have significant potential to do more. The Arts Council's Creative media policy describes creative media as 'artistic and cultural works and content that are created for digital platforms and/or distributed digitally to engage the public.'<sup>29</sup>

**54.** Our Creative media policy commits us to 'support an increase in the quality, volume and reach of digital content and experiences from the arts and cultural sector for artistic, economic and audience development and growth'. This activity will and is making a profound difference in terms of access to culture and the arts in rural areas. Digital opportunities are significant. Innovations such as National Theatre Live mean that world-class theatre can be accessed in cinemas across the country – in effect breaking barriers between urban-based cultural organisations and audiences in rural areas. However, these opportunities should not be seen as a replacement for access to live productions. Indeed, it could perhaps be more usefully considered strategically for its role in stimulating audience development.

**55.** The Arts Council is committed to developing the potential of the sector to take forward creative media and to extend and broaden its impact through innovation. Our partnership with Nesta delivers the Digital R&D Fund for the

---

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/public-services/cultural-commissioning-programme>

<sup>28</sup> <http://cultureandsportplanningtoolkit.org.uk/>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/browse-advice-and-guidance/creative-media-policy>

Arts,<sup>30</sup> investing in projects that harness digital technologies to connect with wider audiences and explore new ways of working, and a number of the investments have been made in organisations working in rural areas. We are going to explore with the British Film Institute and the Big Lottery Fund opportunities to strengthen digital exhibition of creative media and film work. We'll also look at extending audiences geographically – particularly in places of low engagement and rural areas, where broadband infrastructure can be lacking, potentially investing in capital digital equipment in community spaces and libraries to widen access to an increasing number of 'live' arts events and cultural films.

### **What are we going to do differently as regards rural communities?**

56. We have thus set out the work we are undertaking and the plans we have made for the future. We want to hear from stakeholders about these and we will review this position statement in the light of the feedback that we receive. Here, we set out practical actions we are planning to take in the future to improve our approach to rural areas.

57. **Rural proofing** The Arts Council first adopted an approach to rural proofing in 2004, and revised it in 2007. Following our recent rural proofing workshop with Defra we have agreed to include reference to Defra's rural proofing guidance<sup>31</sup> in our advice to our staff about policy development. This will be the Arts Council's formal position on rural proofing until the report of Lord Cameron's independent review is published. Then, we will revisit our approach and update this position statement as appropriate. Within the Arts Council, the Executive Director, North, Midlands and South West will be responsible for rural proofing.

58. **Defra** The Arts Council will seek to develop and maintain its relationship with Defra. Overall responsibility for the relationship with Defra will be held by the Director, Strategic Partnerships.

59. **Stakeholder engagement** The Arts Council will revisit how it engages with rural stakeholders. It will make a commitment to host a biannual meeting of rural stakeholders to consider issues relating to arts and culture and rural communities. The meeting hosted by the Arts Council on 25 November 2013 should be seen as the first of these, and attendees were asked for their views

---

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.artsdigitalmd.org.uk/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/rural-proofing-guidance>

on how the Arts Council should engage with rural stakeholders and who those stakeholders should be. This position statement will be published online in March 2014 and comment invited.

**60. Data and evidence** The Arts Council will review how it collects, maintains, analyses and makes available data and evidence relating to the arts, culture and rural communities. We recognise that the available data and evidence at present gives only a partial picture and we are actively seeking to improve this situation. In particular, we want to check that existing data and evidence is adequately capturing if there are any issues relating to engagement with culture or relating to the state of cultural infrastructure in rural areas. We will do this in partnership with the Head of Rural Statistics at the Rural Communities Policy Unit in Defra. Responsibility for this will lie with the Senior Manager, Policy and Research.

**61. Raise awareness in rural areas of the opportunities presented by Arts Council investment** We do not consider that there is a need for rurally specific programmes or investment by Arts Council England. In our view, our programmes and investment are already bringing significant benefit to rural areas (evidenced by higher levels of rural than urban participation in the arts, especially), and we think that our activity and future plans focused on economic and social value have tremendous potential for rural areas. We do, however, recognise that we might make better use of our networks and partners to raise awareness of the arts and culture in rural areas, and we will commit to do this in 2014. We are already discussing this with Defra and will welcome further suggestions on this issue. We will look for active support to achieve this from the rural stakeholders with whom we engage. In particular, we will work closely with the Rural Services Network.

7 March 2014

‘A thank you from someone who has recently enjoyed *Albert Einstein, Relativitively Speaking*, in Goodrich Village Hall. Without funding for Arts Alive we could never have put on this most enjoyable show. So thank you for this one and several others we have been privileged to see. It helps us to feel part of the world of entertainment even though we live in a rural area.’ Email to Alan Davey, Chief Executive, Arts Council England, 16 October 2013

## Appendix A

### Actions for Defra and Arts Council England following the Rural Proofing Workshop, 10 July 2013

	Issue(s)	Action(s)
1	<p>What additional evidence is needed for Arts Council's current review of its policies, processes and programmes in respect of rural culture?</p> <p>What are the rural issues?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts Council to engage with Defra on its review of its rural evidence including mapping of drivers of engagement (eg education and attainment)</li> <li>Arts Council to summarise the funding that directly benefits rural areas</li> </ul>
2	Sharing representative rural stakeholders on government's cultural strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defra to advise Arts Council of rural stakeholders</li> <li>Arts Council to advise Defra of the key stakeholders who have so far engaged with them on rural cultural issues</li> <li>Arts Council to organise stakeholder event</li> </ul>
3	Join up activity and exchange of information on culture/tourism/heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defra, DCMS and Arts Council to exchange information on their current initiatives and partnership-working</li> </ul>
4	<p>Maximum advantage is taken of funding opportunities</p> <p>Stakeholders are aware of the opportunities available to them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts Council and Defra to exchange information on their current engagement with LEPs and input into LEP strategies</li> </ul> <p>See Arts Council stakeholder event</p>