

GENERAL ELECTION 2017: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

We want creativity at the heart of society. That's why it needs to be at the heart of the political debate in the 2017 General Election. Here's what you need to know, and some simple ideas about how you can take action.

1. Understand the timetable

Despite the incredibly short timescale, we need to be working from now right up until Election Day to ensure the importance of culture is well understood by both voters in your local constituency and politicians.

- **Wednesday 3 May 2017:** Parliament will be dissolved and writs will be issued in the UK's 650 constituencies. This marks the start of the formal Election campaign period.
- **Thursday 4 May** - Local and mayoral elections
- Monday 8 – Thursday 11 May – Party manifestos expected to be published
- **Thursday 11 May** – 4pm is the deadline for candidate nominations.
- **Monday 22 May** - Deadline for registering to vote
- **Thursday 8 June** - Election Day. Polling booths will be open between 7am and 10pm. Counting begins once the polls close.
- **Friday 9 June:** Counting continues and first results announced

2. Get to know your local candidates

Get to know who is running for Parliament in your constituency, and making sure that they understand how important the arts are in your constituency. But because this is a snap election, many local candidates won't be selected until 11th May – less than a month before the election itself. This website will tell you which constituency you live in and who all your local representatives are: <https://www.writetothem.com/> - and keep a close eye on local media to find out who's standing. This link will help you find out the majority of the incumbent MP: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/constituencies>.

For most politicians, seeing is believing. Our most effective lobbying happens when politicians and candidates come face to face with artists and art. If you work for an organisation, invite your local candidates in to see how your organisation works and to see a show. If you are an individual artist or freelancer, write to them to ask for their stance on creativity.

Don't be put off if at first they can't make time to see you or don't reply to your email. They will be frantically busy for the next few weeks: but time, charm and persistence often pay dividends. Especially if you make an ally of a candidate who can go on to be our champion in Parliament.

3. Tell everyone you know to register to vote

All the information you need to make sure you're registered to vote is available online. All you need to do is fill in the form at the above link. It has 11 simple questions (one of which is your National Insurance number) and takes less than 5 mins to fill out – the WN? team have personally tested this! <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

You can also register to vote by post. This form is available via your local Electoral Registration Office, or you can download it online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions>

If you work with people who don't have the internet, why not print off some forms and make them available in your foyer?

4. Host a local hustings

Hustings are public meetings at which political candidates in an election can address voters. They can particularly help undecided voters listen to individual candidates' policies in more detail. Holding hustings can boost your profile locally; show the candidates that there is a significant level of support for an issue; and provide an opportunity to quiz candidates on their stance. However they do take planning and work, and need to comply with simple Electoral Commission rules (which can be found here:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/105946/sp-hustings-rp-npc-ca.pdf).

Given that candidates will have a very short space of time to campaign, make sure invites are issued early, and that the event is well publicised. You will need an independent chair and time to decide what issues will be addressed. All candidates should be invited (even the ones you're not so keen on...), and organising the event in partnership with other local organisations is the best way to ensure maximum attendance and support.

5. Raise the importance of creativity in all your media and public speaking opportunities

The first rule of communications is repetition – it is only when you are sick of saying something that people really start to listen. We need as many people as possible to understand that creativity is important to society, and that it is an issue worth voting on. Between now and the election, try to mention this as often as possible in public and to the press.

We want to make policy-makers understand that investment in the arts is equally good for society and for the economy.

Our 10 key policy asks are:

1. sustained investment in arts and culture at current levels and in line with inflation across the whole country
2. a commitment to DCMS and its relationships with its arms lengths bodies, ACE, HLF and the BFI
3. continuation of sector-specific tax breaks (eg for film, theatre, orchestras)
4. a place-based approach to developing creative industry zones / clusters across the country
5. new guidance from Ofsted that no school, academy, youth service or children's centre be judged outstanding unless it offers a broad and balanced curriculum that includes the arts and culture
6. continued funding for arts education
7. a national policy focus on STEAM
8. an Arts and Wellbeing Premium to match that for PE and Sport
9. a commitment to work towards a sector deal on free movement of talent and skills, a commitment to addressing sector specific visas and a commitment to protect access to international cultural funding streams and markets.
10. remaining a part of Creative Europe.