

What Next? Briefing Pack
Draft 12/11/19

GENERAL ELECTION 2019: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Hashtag: **#ArtsforBritain**

We want arts and culture at the heart of our society, and in the past, we've used a number of different strategies to ensure that it is part of the political debate surrounding our general elections. Although the circumstances and climate of this election are a little different: time is short, key players are constantly shifting and the narrative can be polemic, we believe that there is still great value in engaging our parliamentarians in serious discussion about the arts and culture and engaging with the electoral process.

This briefing gives you a list of the some of the key actions that you can take.

1. Understand the timetable
2. Get to know your local candidates
3. Get the arts on the agenda
4. Tell everyone you know to register to vote
5. Host a local hustings
6. Raise the importance of the arts and culture in all your media and public speaking opportunities

We are intending for this to be a live document. Please let us know of any links, campaigns, documents or statistics that we should be linking to.

Do email lizzie@culturallearningalliance.org.uk with any thoughts.

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.

- Party manifestos expected to be published: TBC, expected soon
- **Thursday 14th November** - 4pm is the deadline for candidate nominations.
- **Tuesday, 26 November** - Deadline for registering to vote
- **Thursday 12 December** - Election Day. Polling booths will be open between 7am and 10pm. Counting begins once the polls close.
- **Friday 13th December**: 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 make sure that they understand how important the arts are in your area. Because this is a snap election, many

local candidates won't be selected until 14th November – less than a month before the election itself.

This website will tell you which constituency you live in and who your local candidates are as soon as they register: <https://whocanivotefor.co.uk>. Keep a close eye on local media to find out who else is putting their hat into the ring.

If you filed your nomination papers by Thursday 14th November **you could still run as an independent candidate in this election**. You would need to be eligible, have ten signatures from your constituency, and a £500 deposit (refundable if you win a 5% share of the vote). [All information here](#). As a candidate you would be invited to hustings and could make the case for the arts – to the electorate – and, critically to the other candidates, creating a real debate on the value of the arts and culture and asking key questions whilst in the public eye.

3. Get the arts on the agenda

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 the arts, culture and creativity.

In the current landscape, it might be difficult for candidates to make a statement about where they or their party stand on specific policy issues; some questions may need sign-off from Regional Party Directors. However, all candidates should have views on some of the major issues affecting our sector. Here's our step-by-step how-to guide to engagement.

- **We're aiming to get as many candidates as possible on the record talking about the arts and culture.** We want them to say things that prompt their rivals to respond on the same subject, and we want them to make statements of intent that we can hold them to account with if they win.
- **Give every candidate the opportunity to be a visible champion.** Ask them to hold up placard with the **hashtag #Arts4Britain** on it, or to visit a positive event with the press there. Take a photo and tweet it/post it on your social media.

If possible, encourage them to tweet themselves: 'I've just been shown the work of XXXX arts charity and I support it'.

- **Ask them some headline questions about our sector** and make their responses public.

We suggest:

- What is your approach to funding local arts and culture?

- What do you feel about your local authority's record on supporting arts and cultural services?
- What are your thoughts on the place of the arts in education?
- What do you think the impact of Brexit will be on organisations like ours?

If they don't have a strong response, or it's not the answer you were expecting, you can share that too (without rancour), as this is a useful way to get a local debate about the arts off the ground.

If there is a specific local issue or organisation you want to ask them about, then add in a question about that.

- **Encourage and mobilise as many people as possible to ask these questions to your candidates.** Use your newsletters and your contacts to get your organisations / board members / patrons / audiences / participants etc. to all get in touch with their local candidates

Don't be put off if at first if 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.

- If they are able to meet with you then **do offer them a very quick briefing on the value of the arts and culture** (no more than one side of A4).

Arts Council England has a ['Making the Case' Toolkit](#) on its website, with the following headlines:

- **Art and culture contribute £10.6 billion to the UK economy** - the UK has a creative economy worth £27bn and culture brings £850m to UK, through tourism, each year.
- **Arts and culture help tackle social injustice** - theatres, museums, galleries and libraries are the beating heart of our towns and cities. Not only do they bring prosperity, they bring communities together and make life worth living.
- **Our creative industries are successful throughout the world** - our leading cultural institutions are a calling card worldwide and have important trading links from the US or Germany to China and South Korea. Last year our National Portfolio Organisations earned £57m abroad.

Arts Council England has a number of other tools, statistics and resources you can use. The Creative Industries Federation has a [page of statistics](#) and the Cultural Learning Alliance has a [series of briefings](#) on the value of the arts and culture to the lives of children and young people, as well as its key publication: [Imagine Nation](#).

If you are part of an organisation and it's possible for you to **make a quick infographic**, then this can be a great visual tool to show the local contribution you make. Consider including the following information:

- *how many people you employ*
- *your annual turnover*
- *audience numbers and any breakdown information*
- *number of performances / exhibitions / events / commissions*
- *number of apprenticeships or training opportunities*
- *if you attract tourists who then spend money in local restaurants, hotels and bars*
- *if you deliver any education or learning opportunities (how many? with which partners?)*
- *if you run projects to increase health and well-being*
- *if you have attracted any investment into the local area.*

4. Tell everyone you know to register to vote

Earlier this year the [Guardian reported](#) that more than 9 million UK voters are not correctly registered to vote. Increased voter registration, particularly for young people, could potentially make one of the biggest differences to the outcome of the election.

<https://www.gov.uk/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.

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 haven't got a fixed address, or you are working with people who haven't, they can register too: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-to-vote-if-you-havent-got-a-fixed-or-permanent-address>

If you work with people who don't have the internet, why not print off some forms and make them available in your foyer? In past elections, arts and cultural organisations have set up voter registration booths in their foyers – with computers which can be used by people wishing to register. This has been especially effective for reaching young people.

[It's Our Time](#): is an open challenge to the creative industries to **mobilise the 2 million people aged 18-30 who care about climate**, will be most affected by it and are not registered to vote.

[Promote the Migrant Vote](#) is a collaborative project organised by Migrants Organise with a number of charities and organisations in the migration and race equality sector. The **purpose is to support migrants and BME groups to engage with the upcoming General Election on 12 December 2019**, by providing resources, information and a national

framework for mobilisation. It wants to ensure that the experiences of our members facing uncertainty, fear and isolation are on the national agenda at this election and that their interests are properly represented.

In the 2015 election [Vote Art](#) commissioned a number of artists to make work encouraging people to vote – these artworks were put in the public domain and can still be used by organisations now to encourage people to participate in local democracy.

5. 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:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/are-you-holding-a-hustings>)

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.

6. Raise the importance of the arts and culture 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 arts, culture and creativity are 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.** Use the key points from section three of this briefing, or if you want to make any further, more detailed, policy asks consider:

- The Creative Industries Federation's [Manifesto](#)
- The Cultural Learning Alliance's [Key Asks for Children and Young People](#)
- [Drama, Theatre and Young People 2019 Manifesto](#)
- Bacc for the Future [Manifesto](#)

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