

Cultural Learning Alliance Briefing

General Election 2019 manifestos are out What do they mean for arts, culture and learning?

In this briefing we will compare and contrast the policies most relevant to the Cultural Learning Alliance in the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative Manifestos.

What are the headlines?

Over the last few years the Cultural Learning Alliance has been lobbying for an **Arts Premium for schools (ring-fenced money for the arts)**, and we are really pleased to see that this idea has been adopted - in differing forms - by both the Conservatives and by Labour.

- The **Labour Party** has pledged:

£175m a year for an Arts pupil premium pledge that will be modelled on the sports pupil premium and will be available to all primary schools, with funding based on the number of pupils in years 1 to 6. Schools could use the premium to fund:

- at least one free visit to an arts destination every year,
- hiring arts specialists to work alongside teachers to enhance or extend current opportunities
- partnering with other schools to run after-school arts activities and clubs
- improving creative resources in schools (e.g stages, instruments, arts supplies), to help close the gap in creative resources between state-funded and private schools.

- The **Conservative Party** has pledged:

We will invest in arts, music and sport.

Over the last nine years we have made real improvements in maths, English and science, and given more children access to a rich academic curriculum. We retain our commitment to the core subjects and also want young people to learn creative skills and widen their horizons, so we will offer an 'arts premium' to secondary schools to fund enriching activities for all pupils

In the [manifestos costings document](#) this breaks down as around £110 million a year for three years, starting in 21/22.

Speaking about the Conservative Pledge to [Schools Week](#), Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL school leaders' union, said the arts premium pledge was "welcome" but "slightly galling that it comes after arts subjects have been hammered over the past few years by a combination of cuts to school budgets and school performance measures which prioritise traditional academic over creative subjects".

"The 'arts premium' smacks of a belated and inadequate effort to repair this damage. It is too little too late."

For us, the context of the premium, and the detail of how it is introduced are really key. The CLA has been working over the last year to distil our thinking on what is needed to help sustain and develop cultural learning in England, and we believe that a premium will be effective if it is used to forensically invest in quality provision in schools, and in the capacity of teachers. It should not be

used to outsource the arts from the core of a schools learning offer, and it must be something that both Ofsted (or equivalent) and the school's governing body hold the school to account on. The language of 'enrichment' used in the Conservative Pledge is concerning.

We also believe that any premium needs to be introduced in tandem with a **National Plan for Cultural Learning** and with a very strong **Continued Professional Development and Learning Blueprint** for teachers and the cultural learning workforce.

You can read our [Key Asks in full here](#).

What do the manifestos agree on?

As with the set of 2015 Manifestos, **all the documents mention the arts, culture and creative industries**, and it's good to see that the joint lobbying that the sector has done over the past few years has kept us on the agenda. It's easy to forget that ten years ago, this really wasn't the case.

All three major parties have pledged to continue **free entry to national museums**, and whilst this is a great ideological policy, it does need significant investment to make it work, and any successful government will need to recognise this.

There is mention of the **apprenticeships levy and scheme**, with improvements and expansion to it mentioned in all of the manifestos.

Conservative Headlines

[You can read the Conservative Manifesto here](#)

The maintenance of creative sector tax breaks is good news, as these have been very beneficial - though it would be useful to have on the radar that the current Museum tax sector relief has a 'sunset clause' and will be reviewed next year. Our colleagues at [National Museum Directors Council](#) say that the clause needs to be removed. Do contact them if you have any evidence that they can use in their case.

As the Creative Industry Federation [points out in its analysis](#), there are a number of measures in place designed to support small businesses, for example: ***'we will cut the burden of tax on business by reducing business rates. This will be done via a fundamental review of the system. As a first step, we will further reduce business rates for retail businesses, as well as extending the discount to grassroots music venues, small cinemas and pubs. That means protecting your high street and community from excessive tax hikes and keeping town centres vibrant.'***

Many of the pledges that the Conservatives have made in government are reiterated in the manifesto – including the [£500 million for Youth Services](#), the [£250 million for the Cultural Investment Fund](#) and the [Towns Fund](#). This is similarly true for the package of support for schools and education, which is [listed here in full by Schools Week](#). The manifesto places emphasis on behaviour management and discipline, and on opening more schools (and more free schools), but there are no hard targets for these pledges included in the document that we can see. It also includes a pledge of around £7.1 billion a year for schools, a boost to per-pupil funding and a rise for teacher's salaries.

The document mentions that the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** will be used to ensure that *'people of the UK do not lose out from the withdrawal of EU Funding'* – but there are very few details on how this fund will work and what it will cover; either in the manifesto or in the public domain.

The manifesto does include a pledge for a new **£3 billion National Skills Fund**:

'This fund will provide matching funding for individuals and SMEs for high-quality education and training. A proportion will be reserved for further strategic investment in skills, and we will consult widely on the overall design.'

There are also pledges for a **National Disability Strategy** and an **investment of almost £2 billion to upgrade the entire further education college estate**.

The Augar Review of into post-18 education ([published earlier this year](#)) is mentioned, but the manifesto only pledges to 'consider the recommendations'.

▪ **What do we think?**

This manifesto includes some interesting pledges for the arts and for cultural learning, and it includes some great sentiment on social justice: but it does not address investment into public services and into local government – beyond the City Deals and plans for further devolution of power. It is also very light on detail on how many of these plans will be taken forward, with comparatively few hard targets in place. There is no mention of funding for the arts and culture, or of the Arts Council and DCMS, and the lack of explicit reference to the Industrial Strategy and the [Creative Industry Sector Deal](#) is surprising.

Labour Headlines

[You can read the Labour manifesto here](#)

The Labour Party has pulled together the main headlines of its policies for the arts, culture and creative industries into a [Charter](#) (exactly as it did in 2015 – though this old document has now disappeared from the website).

In addition to the proposals set out above this 2019 Charter sets out plans to:

- invest £1 billion to transform the UK's cultural landscape by upgrading and building new libraries, museums, galleries and arts venues across the country
- launch a new 'Town of Culture' competition
- invest £1 billion in Youth Services
- introduce greater transparency in lottery funding and ensure grants are shared out fairly between all our communities

This last is explored in a little bit more detail in the Charter document with pledges to:

- fund the Arts Council properly
- review its grant criteria to ensure a full local, regional and national balance in its work
- consider the stability of arts funding through more multi-annual funding awards and long term targeting of under-served communities.

These last are interesting – but it would be great to get a better understanding of what 'properly' entails, and to hear more and further about how this would work with the Arts Council's arms-length principle.

The Labour Manifesto makes significant pledges to invest very heavily (approximately £83 billion a year) in local government and in public services, including education and schools. It states that

‘Labour will reverse the Tory decade of austerity for local government and aim to restore council spending powers to 2010 levels over the lifetime of the Parliament.’

The manifesto sets out plans to create a National Education Service: re-investment in Sure Start (early years provision), well-funded schools with lower class sizes, free university tuition with no fees; and free lifelong learning. They plan to scrap Ofsted and Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs. You can read more detail and analysis of the broad sweep of proposals [here in the Times Educational Supplement.](#)

What do we think?

This investment and focus on the arts and culture is extremely welcome, as is the focus on social justice and on child poverty – with plans in place for **a cross- governmental National Strategy for Childhood** focusing on health, security, well-being and poverty. However, as with the Conservative Manifesto, many of these plans are very broad, with a lack of detail as to how the policies will work in practice. For example, at the launch of the Arts For All Charter, the arts premium was described as ‘free music tuition for every child’ as a ‘pupil premium’ and as an ‘arts premium’ – three good ideas, but three quite different policies.

Liberal Democrat Headlines

[You can read the liberal democrat manifesto here](#)

As well as the pledges for national museums, the Liberal Democrats have a number of specific pledges for arts and culture, including:

- protect the availability of arts and creative subjects in the curriculum and act to remove barriers to pupils studying these subjects, including by abolishing the English Baccalaureate as performance measure
- protect sports and arts funding via the National Lottery
- examine the available funding and planning rules for live music venues and the grassroots music sector, protecting venues from further closures
- support the tourist industry which is vital for many local economies by:
 - upgrading the status of tourism within government, by creating a Department of Digital, Culture, Media, Sport and Tourism, with a designated Minister of State for Tourism
 - enabling local authorities to bring in tourist levies to fund local tourism infrastructure
- support growth in the creative industries, including video gaming, by continuing to support the Creative Industries Council and tailored industry-specific tax support, promoting creative skills, supporting modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules, and addressing the barriers to finance faced by small creative businesses
- create creative enterprise zones to grow and regenerate the cultural output of areas across the UK
- teach the core skills required for children to flourish in the modern world, including critical thinking, verbal reasoning and creativity.

Education plans also include scrapping Ofsted, SATs, and performance or ‘league tables’ for schools, as well as investing in school building repairs and extra teachers. They plan to take education policy out of the hands of government and place future curriculum review into the hands of a non-political independent body. You can read [further analysis from Schools Week.](#)

The Lib Dems plan to **set up a new Skills Wallet for every adult**, giving people £10,000 to spend on approved education and training courses to gain the right skills for the jobs of the future, and to **introduce a wellbeing budget** - basing decisions for government spending on what will improve wellbeing as well as on economic and fiscal indicators.

- **What do we think?**

The Liberal Democrats are the only party pledging to stop Brexit, and their manifesto makes it clear that if elected, they will remain in the EU. Plans for the creative industries are strong, and link most closely to the Industrial Strategy and the current creative industry sector deal, but as with the other two manifestos – some of the plans for local government are very vague, with only a mention that cuts to local government will be ended. The focus on wellbeing as a fiscal principle is very welcome.

Anything else?

If like us you are interested in how this all compares to the pledges in 2015, you can read our [historic post here](#).