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A National Strategy for Cultural Philanthropy

Unlocking Private Investment in Britain's Cultural Future

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Introduction

Against a backdrop of declining government funding for the arts, boosting cultural philanthropy has become a key focus for government and institutions alike. This report argues that cultural philanthropy should be treated as both an urgent strategic priority and a deliberate instrument of cultural policy, founded on a truly collaborative approach. Following 15 years in which state arts education, in particular, has been hollowed out, cultural philanthropy is key to restoring Britain's cultural confidence and creative wealth. With the right incentives and support, public and private money and expertise can coalesce around a shared vision and goals and help reignite our country's creative imagination.

This paper proposes three transformative measures, together with a series of supportive recommendations and fiscal reforms.

1. TAX: Extend tax relief to artists' donations of their own work, together with a suite of tax-enabling measures	**Allow artists donating their own works to qualifying cultural institutions to receive tax recognition based on independent valuation.**
2. RECOGNITION: Establish a King's Philanthropy Medal for Culture	Create a prestigious national recognition for exceptional cultural philanthropy.
3. STRATEGY: Set up a national cultural match- and seed-funding programme with a regional focus	Use public investment strategically to unlock additional private giving, through match and seed funding, and early co-design, with an evidence-based route to ensuring country-wide provision.

Background

The UK holds some of the world's richest cultural assets. Its museums, theatres, historic buildings and collections, creative industries – and the IP its millions of creators, workers and businesses generate – are vital engines of economic growth and soft power. In 2024 the creative industries contributed an estimated £145.8 billion in gross

value added (provisional), remaining one of the UK's fastest-growing sectors and supporting more than two million jobs. Meanwhile, our cultural institutions underpin tourism, education, regeneration, hospitality and inward investment.[1] They also shape our national identity, the quality of our public life and our collective sense of well-being.

Yet the funding environment for culture has changed fundamentally. Public finances have tightened considerably over the last 15 years, government funding for the arts has declined and self-generated income – while a key area – has not succeeded in plugging the widening gap. In this challenging funding environment, government's focus has fixed increasingly on philanthropy.

Britain has a strong philanthropic tradition, but its potential for cultural giving remains unrealised. Gift Aid, Acceptance in Lieu and the Cultural Gifts Scheme have all delivered real benefits. None matches the scale, strategic focus or visibility of the leading international models. At the same time, UK philanthropy has fallen, many of the long-established foundations are spending down, and competition for philanthropic capital has intensified.

Wealth creation is now global, and rival nations are competing for major international donors with increasing sophistication and success.

This report argues that reforming our national approach to cultural philanthropy is a long-term investment in the UK's cultural capital. It can support creative education and strengthen cultural institutions, nurture creative communities and enterprises, and ensure that pre-eminent works of art are kept in the UK and made publicly accessible. But it needs to be shored up by a system that provides appropriate incentives and rewards and is founded on mutual respect and genuine collaboration.

A modern strategy should therefore combine five things: fiscal reform, public recognition and celebration, strategic match-funding, international engagement, and a far better story about why cultural giving matters. Government help with measures to increase public giving to the arts will reduce reliance on government funding and is of vital importance because the arts are economically and creatively immensely valuable to this country. An overarching and inspiring government vision for culture is an essential galvanising force.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Proposed reform
1. TAX Extend tax relief to artists' donations of their own works	Allow artists donating their own works to qualifying cultural institutions to receive tax recognition based on independent valuation.
1.1 Protect charitable giving through inheritance planning	Review inheritance tax rules so they encourage testamentary cultural giving.
1.2 Expand and simplify the Cultural Gifts Scheme and Acceptance in Lieu	Increase capacity, reduce administrative complexity and improve awareness among donors and advisers.
1.3 Simplify VAT treatment	Provide clearer rules for cultural donations, memberships, patron benefits and donor recognition.
1.4 Create an international cultural giving framework	Develop donor-advised structures and guidance to attract overseas philanthropy.

Recommendation	Proposed reform
2. RECOGNITION Establish a King's Philanthropy Medal for Culture	Create a prestigious national recognition for exceptional cultural philanthropy.
3. STRATEGY Set up a national cultural match- and seed-funding programme	Use public investment strategically to unlock additional private giving, through match- and seed-funding, and early co-design, with an evidence-based route to ensuring country-wide provision.
3.1 Develop a national strategy for new generations and regional giving	Make cultural giving visibly relevant, social and aspirational, and recognise it as shared investment in national cultural capital and our national story.
3.2 Create a Philanthropic Network and "Giving Generator"	Connect donors with projects, partners and evidence of impact through a shared brokerage service and personal introductions.
3.3 Map cultural provision, philanthropic funding and local need	Build a postcode-level picture of cultural and creative education provision to guide partnerships and investment.
3.4 Coalesce around a big idea: Arts for Every Child	Define a broad creative education offer for collective philanthropic support, with clear progression routes from first participation to further training.
3.5 Appoint a national philanthropy lead	Provide a visible point of contact connected to No. 10 for brokerage and a new government–philanthropy compact.

The UK's Current Philanthropic Landscape

The UK's system for tax-relieved giving reflects its history. Unlike the US, where itemised income-tax deductions drive giving, or France, where donors receive a 66–75% tax credit (dependent on the cause), Britain relies on Gift Aid and a handful of targeted reliefs against inheritance tax on death.

UK incentives are broadly generous, but they are structured very differently from overseas models. The practical result is that British donors give quietly and anonymously, while the US and other systems reward public foundations and naming opportunities.

Recent UK success stories show what focused giving can achieve. In 2025, the National Gallery announced Project Domani, a major transformation programme for which £375 million had already been secured, including two gifts of £150 million (from Crankstart – the charitable foundation of Sir Michael Moritz and Harriet Heyman, and the Julia Rausing Trust) – the largest individual donations ever reported by a UK museum.[2] The Science Museum also received its largest-ever international gift (an eight-figure

donation from India's Serum Institute) to overhaul a gallery.[3]

Donors respond when the story and their passions align. Mega-gifts, and major sponsorships, like Igor Tulchinsky's reported $6.8m sponsorship of the British Museum's Bayeux Tapestry exhibition (through his WorldQuant firm) are now essential to the enrichment of UK culture. At the grassroots level, the Big Give/NPAC *Arts for Impact* match-funding campaign (March 2024) raised £2.85m in total (including £1.3m in match funding), supporting 238 charities.[4]

Outlining the Challenges and Opportunities

- **Falling giving levels:** UK philanthropy is under strain. Charities Aid Foundation research shows a marked decline in giving to arts and culture over the past decade.[5] With government funding also falling, the case for fresh fiscal incentives is urgent.

- **Concentration of giving:** Greater reliance on philanthropy also carries risks if cultural institutions become dependent on an increasingly narrow pool of very wealthy donors. Recent research suggests that widening wealth inequality is contributing to a more concentrated art market and, as public funding comes under pressure, could leave museums and artists increasingly exposed to the preferences and fortunes of a relatively small number of benefactors. A successful philanthropy strategy should therefore seek not only to increase the value of giving, but to broaden the donor base and protect institutional independence.[6]
- **Weak targeted incentives:** The UK relies on general reliefs and lacks art-specific ones. Leading cultural philanthropists tell us that extending Gift Aid to gifts of artworks, not only cash, would materially increase support for cultural organisations. Take the case of Tate, where a significant element of its fundraising for an endowment fund (launched in June 2025, with the goal of raising £150 million by 2030) is based on attracting donations of valuable artworks by contemporary artists. At present, Gift Aid applies only to monetary donations, meaning artists receive no equivalent tax benefit when donating cultural objects.

- **Low recognition:** Giving to the arts attracts too little public honour. While the UK recognises philanthropists through the Honours System (MBEs, OBEs, CBEs and knighthoods), arts philanthropists have been included in recent honours lists—for example, Hannah Rothschild received a Damehood in the 2024 Birthday Honours, Hans Rausing received a knighthood in the 2025 Birthday Honours, and American-British Carol Colburn Grigor received a Damehood in the 2026 New Year Honours for services to the arts, culture and women in the UK. Her inclusion recognises a contribution particularly associated with Scotland. **But there is no national honour dedicated to arts philanthropy**.[7]

France's Légion d'Honneur, its highest civilian honour, recognises outstanding service to the nation, including cultural philanthropy. Major arts patrons such as François Pinault[8] and Bernard Arnault[9] have received it for their significant contributions to France's cultural institutions. A *King's Philanthropy Medal for Culture* or similar national prize, and even an artist-designed medal, could make UK cultural giving feel aspirational and add a level of prestige. In short, philanthropy should be better recognised and celebrated, and philanthropists should be better thanked.

- **Arts undervalued:** The sector's image suffers at home. Leading sector figures say Britain "sells arts abroad" better than it sells them domestically. Audiences and potential donors underestimate what culture delivers locally. The arts need rebranding, with a far stronger narrative and vision about nurturing talent and community impact.
- **Global donors untapped:** Wealthy patrons in Asia, the Middle East and beyond could transform funding for UK arts, but few straightforward mechanisms exist to engage them. Currently the only workable routes are: (1) ad hoc "Friends of" charities, (2) bespoke donor-advised structures (DAFs) created through law firms such as Withers, and (3) occasional large one-off gifts arranged directly with institutions.
- **Weak match-funding framework:** The UK has only sporadic co-investment schemes (e.g. Big Give campaigns, the Wolfson fund) rather than a dedicated culture match fund. Government grants should work as co-investment in projects where there is a compelling vision. Without a national match-funding strategy, projects lose the multiplier and creative energy that co-funding delivers.

- **Place-based philanthropy:** At present, London consumes a third of all UK philanthropic funding. The government rightly set out to correct this imbalance in the recommendations of its 'Our Place to Give' report.[10] But this needs confident leadership and vision at a local level, rather than a reliance on local wealth creators.
- **Disconnect with young donors:** Younger generations are largely disengaged from traditional arts giving. The arts must feel aspirational, entrepreneurial and relevant to them.
- **Under-promoted existing schemes:** Better promotion of what already exists is a quick, low-cost win.

Limited capacity is a further barrier. Philanthropists have identified the difficulty small foundations face in extending their work beyond familiar places and the difficulty small cultural charities face in finding donors. A national strategy needs to help both sides make those connections, rather than assume that a compelling project will find support unaided.

Current Limitations

The UK's core challenge is that its incentives for private giving have not kept pace with international competition for private cultural investment. A modern approach should therefore build on existing mechanisms while addressing their limitations.

Gift Aid

Gift Aid remains the foundation of individual charitable giving in the UK. The scheme allows charities to reclaim tax on donations made by UK taxpayers. For every £1 donated, charities can generally recover an additional 25 pence, increasing the value of the donation without additional cost to the donor. Higher-rate taxpayers may also claim additional relief through their tax returns.

Gift Aid has generated many billions of pounds of additional income for UK charities. In 2024–25 HM Revenue & Customs paid £1.71 billion in Gift Aid to charities.[11] However, Gift Aid has a significant limitation: it is primarily designed around cash donations.

This creates a particular challenge for the cultural sector. A donor who gives money to a museum or gallery may

receive tax recognition. An artist who gives a valuable artwork directly may receive no equivalent benefit. The tax system therefore rewards financial contributions but not contributions of cultural value. Reform here, as proposed in discussions with the South London Gallery – which serves its community for free – could unlock significant new giving.

Acceptance in Lieu

Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) is one of the UK's most important mechanisms for preserving national heritage. The scheme allows taxpayers to settle inheritance tax liabilities by transferring important cultural objects to the nation. Eligible objects can include paintings, manuscripts, archives, historic objects and other significant works of art.

Administered by Arts Council England, the scheme has enabled thousands of important objects to enter public collections. AIL is an unusually effective partnership between the state and private owners. Rather than buying cultural assets, government converts tax liabilities into permanent public cultural wealth. Demand for the scheme shows there is further potential.

In recent reporting periods, Acceptance in Lieu and the Cultural Gifts Scheme together have brought cultural objects worth approximately £60 million into public collections.[12] The scheme should be expanded, promoted more effectively and made easier for donors and advisers to understand.

Cultural Gifts Scheme

The Cultural Gifts Scheme was introduced in 2013 following the recommendations of the Goodison Review. It allows individuals and companies to donate pre-eminent cultural objects to the nation during their lifetime in return for a reduction in income tax or corporation tax liabilities.

The scheme has several important advantages:

- Donors can see the public benefit of their gift during their lifetime;
- Museums can secure important works before they leave the UK;
- Government converts tax liabilities into permanent cultural assets.

Uptake, however, remains limited.

Barriers include:

- Lack of awareness;
- Administrative complexity;
- Uncertainty around eligibility;
- Limited flexibility around tax credit allocation.

Announced reforms, due to take effect from 6 April 2027, would allow gifts of jointly owned objects and one revision to the remaining tax credit allocation. These are welcome; further simplification would help unlock additional giving.[13]

Social Investment Tax Relief and Cultural Investment

Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) provided income tax relief for individuals investing in qualifying social enterprises. SITR closed to new investments in 2023, but its legacy matters: it showed that private capital can be drawn into organisations delivering social and community value.

The closure of SITR has renewed interest in developing investment models specifically suited to cultural and creative organisations.[14]

International Models: Lessons for the UK

The most successful international examples demonstrate that cultural philanthropy grows when several elements work together. These comprise:

- Attractive incentives;
- Public recognition;
- Simple giving mechanisms;
- Donor networks;
- Government partnership and ambition.

The UK should not set out to copy foreign systems wholesale. But the comparisons below point to principles that should inform UK policy.

France: Cultural Philanthropy as National Strategy

France is the strongest example of using tax policy to drive cultural giving. The 2003 Aillagon Law created one of the world's most generous corporate philanthropy frameworks. Companies can generally receive a tax reduction

equivalent to 60% of qualifying donations to eligible public-interest causes, including culture, subject to statutory limits. Major beneficiaries have included the Louvre, Versailles and the Centre Pompidou.[15]

The reform transformed the relationship between business and cultural institutions. But the French model's significance goes beyond the tax rate: France has embedded cultural philanthropy in a national strategy. President Macron has a cultural vision that donors can buy into.

Private giving is presented as contributing to:

- National patrimony;
- International influence;
- Corporate citizenship;
- Cultural leadership.

The lesson for the UK is that incentives are most effective when accompanied by a compelling national narrative. 'Patrimoine' is a powerful cultural concept, encompassing not only heritage but also France's intangible heritage and its aspirational 'way of life'.

Italy: Art Bonus

Italy's Art Bonus scheme provides a 65% tax credit for eligible donations supporting public cultural heritage. The scheme supports: museums, monuments, restoration and public cultural institutions. Its strength lies in simplicity. Donors can clearly understand:[16]

- What they are supporting;
- What benefit they receive;
- What public outcome their contribution creates.

The UK should consider how greater simplicity and visibility could strengthen its own cultural giving mechanisms.

Germany: Civic Commitment

Germany offers another comparison. Individuals and companies can deduct qualifying donations up to 20% of income or, alternatively, 0.4% of the sum of turnover and wages and salaries. The German model reflects a broader civic culture in which philanthropy is seen as part of social responsibility.[17]

The lesson is that tax incentives are most powerful when they reinforce a wider culture of participation and public contribution.

United States: Recognition and Major Philanthropy

The United States offers a different but equally instructive model. American cultural philanthropy has been shaped by tax relief for qualifying charitable gifts, alongside:[18]

- Major private foundations;
- Donor recognition;
- Naming opportunities;
- Strong institutional fundraising.

National recognition mechanisms include:

- The Presidential Medal of Freedom;
- The National Medal of Arts.

These awards explicitly recognise cultural contribution and public service. The American experience demonstrates that philanthropy is encouraged not only through financial

incentives but through prestige, celebration and fulsome public acknowledgement.[19]

Reforming the UK Framework for Cultural Philanthropy

The UK has strong foundations for cultural philanthropy. But the current system has grown up incrementally and does not match the scale of the opportunity.

A modern framework should have four objectives:

- Make cultural giving easier and more attractive;
- Encourage lifetime giving as well as gifts through inheritance;
- Increase the number of nationally important works entering public collections;
- Create a national vision for culture in which philanthropy is recognised as a contribution to national life – and embraces 'every postcode'.

The following recommendations for government are designed to be practical, targeted and capable of implementation, while maintaining appropriate safeguards against abuse.

1. TAX

Extend Tax Recognition to Donations of Artists' Own Works, alongside a Suite of Tax-Enabling Measures

Artists are distinctly disadvantaged by the current tax framework. When they donate their own work to a museum or gallery, the tax system is neutral: no taxable trading receipt, but no relief based on the work's market value. Nothing allows them to offset the market value of the work, even where the charity converts it into substantial public benefit. For works held as trading stock, the relevant relief concerns trading profits rather than capital gains tax. Artists can receive relief for the cost of producing the donated work, but cannot deduct its market value.

The rules therefore distinguish sharply between qualifying cash donations, which attract Gift Aid and may provide additional relief for higher- and additional-rate taxpayers, and a work of art donated directly outside the Cultural Gifts Scheme, which attracts neither Gift Aid nor income-tax relief based on its market value – even where the artwork funds the recipient's mission just as effectively as cash.

HMRC's rationale is an understandable fear of overvaluation. But the Cultural Gifts Scheme (Finance Act 2012) applies only to 'pre-eminent' works, excluding works donated by professional contemporary artists that do not meet this threshold. At the moment small galleries, like the South London Gallery, benefit from gifts from significant contemporary artists and would like to encourage more.

Present Situation for Artistic Works

Consider an artist who donates one of her newly created works to a museum. The work is treated as a gift of *trading stock*, and although Section 108 of the Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005 prevents a taxable trading receipt arising, relief is limited to the cost of producing the work, rather than its market value.[20]

When the museum later auctions the piece to further its charitable purposes, generating, say, £10,000, the charity receives the proceeds but cannot claim Gift Aid, because the original donation was not cash. The result is that the artist's creative contribution, worth £10,000 in this example, generates no tax relief based on that market value, while a cash donor giving £10,000 would secure full Gift Aid. The same principle applies to any gift of their own artwork by

older artists: no taxable trading receipt where the trading-stock rules apply, but no market-value relief comparable to the treatment of a qualifying cash gift.

Why it matters

Where the trading-stock rules apply, an artist is not taxed on the market value of the donated work, but nor does the system provide relief based on that value. By contrast, a cash donor contributing the same amount would receive generous relief and the charity would receive Gift Aid.

Proposed reform

Artists should be able to claim tax relief on a value assessed by the existing AIL panel (discussed above) or a comparable independent process.

Under this proposal:

- The AIL valuation could become the definitive valuation for tax purposes, a principle already accepted in other parts of the tax system;
- Artists could elect to treat the valuation as their charitable gift for income-tax relief;
- The charity could claim Gift Aid on the value of the gift;

- HMRC would be protected from over-valuation risk.

This reform would encourage:

- More artists to donate works during their lifetimes;
- Stronger relationships between artists and public collections;
- Greater access to contemporary art for museums and galleries;
- More gifts of works of art for the purpose of charitable auction.

This would particularly benefit smaller and regional institutions, which often rely on direct relationships with artists. A modest reform could therefore generate substantial cultural value.

Further Tax Measures

1.1 Reform Inheritance Tax Rules to Support Cultural Giving

The UK has historically encouraged charitable giving through inheritance tax relief. However, changes introduced by the Finance Act 2026 have narrowed the

exemption for certain testamentary gifts. Direct gifts to qualifying UK charities continue to receive inheritance tax relief, but gifts left on trust for general charitable purposes may no longer qualify automatically unless the trust meets the relevant statutory requirements. This has created uncertainty for some existing wills and charitable estate-planning arrangements.[21]

Proposed reform

Government should review and clarify inheritance tax rules to ensure that legitimate charitable giving arrangements continue to receive appropriate treatment.

1.2 Expand and Simplify the Cultural Gifts Scheme and Acceptance in Lieu

The Cultural Gifts Scheme and Acceptance in Lieu are among the UK's most successful mechanisms for converting private assets into public cultural wealth. Their potential remains underused. The current CGS/AIL scheme has run at near capacity since 2014, with a cap of £40m, which applies to tax settled rather than the value of the objects. It was exhausted in 2019–20. We recommend uprating it in line with RPI, raising the cap from £40m to

approximately £63m in 2025 prices. We also recommend that the mechanism for the relief is simplified. At present you must specify in advance in which years you want to use the tax relief. If your income varies unexpectedly the relief is wasted. The announced reforms would permit one revision to the remaining allocation from April 2027, but further flexibility should be considered.[22]

Proposed reforms

- ***Increase capacity***

The Cultural Gifts Scheme has operated with a limited annual cap. Demand has periodically exceeded available capacity. The cap should be reviewed and increased in line with inflation and demonstrated demand. A revised cap would ensure important works are not lost simply because the relief has run out.

- ***Simplify administration***

The current operation of tax credits can create unnecessary complexity. For example, donors may need to specify in advance how tax credits should be allocated over time. This creates difficulties where income changes

unexpectedly. The system should provide greater flexibility while maintaining appropriate controls.

- ***Improve awareness***

Many potential donors and professional advisers remain unaware of these mechanisms. Government, Arts Council England and cultural institutions should jointly improve guidance for collectors, artists, advisers and families considering estate planning.

The aim is simple: where culturally significant objects would otherwise leave the UK or disappear into private hands, the tax system should keep them in public ownership.

1.3 Simplify VAT Rules Affecting Cultural Philanthropy

VAT rules create unnecessary complexity where donors receive limited benefits from the organisations they support, such as:

- priority access;
- invitations to events;
- minor membership benefits;

- recognition schemes.

Proposed reform

The VAT rules should be reviewed, simplified and consistently applied in the context of charitable donations and interest-free loans where donors are offered minor benefits that are then deemed subject to VAT. This complicates the position for the charity as well as the donor. HM Treasury should review VAT treatment in the context of cultural philanthropy with the objective of:[23]

- Creating clearer guidance;
- Ensuring proportionate treatment of minor donor benefits.

Why this matters

The complexity discourages giving by making simple philanthropic relationships look administratively burdensome. A clearer framework would strengthen relationships between donors and institutions.

1.4 Create a National Framework for International Cultural Philanthropy

The UK has enormous appeal for international philanthropists. Major donors from North America, Asia, the Middle East and Europe already support British institutions. But no simple national framework exists to encourage and facilitate that giving.

Current barriers

International donors often face:

- complex tax issues;
- uncertainty about giving structures;
- administrative costs;
- lack of central guidance.

US donors, for example, frequently require specialised structures to obtain tax-efficient treatment for gifts supporting UK institutions.

Proposed reform

The UK should develop a national mechanism for international cultural giving. This could include:

- a network of culturally focused donor-advised funds;
- partnerships with established international giving vehicles;
- clearer guidance for overseas donors;
- a central advisory service for major cultural gifts.

The UK competes for philanthropic capital, and the countries that make giving easy are the ones that attract it. The objective should be to make Britain the easiest and most attractive place in the world to support culture.

Philanthropists have also warned that changes affecting internationally mobile donors could have consequences beyond the largest institutions. One institution reported losing three major philanthropists following recent policy changes; smaller charities may find such relationships harder to replace. This is evidence of donor concern, rather than a quantified assessment of the national impact. Treasury and DCMS should nevertheless consider the implications for cultural giving when developing tax policy and explain the available routes into giving clearly to donors and their advisers.

2. RECOGNITION

Establish a King's Philanthropy Medal for Culture

The UK recognises many forms of public contribution, but cultural philanthropy has no distinctive national honour. **Our competitors treat honours as a deliberate instrument of cultural policy.**

In the United States, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the National Medal of Arts explicitly honour arts patrons; the financier David Rubenstein received the Medal of Freedom for his philanthropy towards America's cultural institutions. France uses the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and the Légion d'Honneur to the same end and awards them to foreign benefactors: the American patron Agnes Gund was made a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 2023, at a ceremony in New York. South Korea's Order of Cultural Merit is open to Koreans and foreign nationals alike.[24]

Britain has its own precedent. As Prince of Wales, King Charles established a Medal for Arts Philanthropy, presented at St James's Palace to donors including Sir Terence Conran and Terry Bramall; it was administered by

Arts & Business, now defunct. Institutional recognition also takes the form of naming rights and patrons' councils – Tate Modern's Blavatnik Building is the best-known example. There is no current national award dedicated to cultural philanthropy. We recommend the establishment of a King's Philanthropy Medal for Culture.

Proposed approach

- ***Set a high bar*** — The medal should be reserved for exceptional giving: sustained support, significant impact on UK arts and culture, and demonstrable public benefit. Scale, longevity, innovation and a willingness to fill funding gaps should all count.
- ***Recognise public benefit, not wealth alone —*** Recognition should reflect the demonstrable cultural and public value of philanthropy rather than simply the size of a gift. This would ensure that national recognition rewards responsible cultural stewardship and sustained public benefit, rather than reinforcing the concentration of cultural influence among the wealthiest donors and institutions.

- ***Give it ceremonial weight*** — An annual investiture at a royal palace, with the medal conferred personally by the King alongside cultural leaders, would give the award the standing of its American and French counterparts. Pairing it with a gala or a national arts moment would widen its reach.
- ***Open it to international donors*** — The rules should admit non-UK citizens, as France's do. Foreign nationals can already receive honorary British awards. Presenting the medal as the British counterpart to the Presidential Medal, and holding occasional ceremonies at British embassies, would make it tangible to US patrons and to the media that cover them.[25]

The objective is an aspirational culture in which supporting the arts is recognised as a major contribution to national life.

Philanthropists have also highlighted to us the global importance of the King's convening power in this area. Alongside a medal, bringing philanthropists, artists and cultural leaders together around a clear national ambition could encourage new relationships and sustained support. Recognition should extend to the work a gift makes

possible, with smaller organisations and regional projects represented alongside national institutions.

3. STRATEGY

Establish a National Cultural Match- and Seed-Funding Programme with a Regional Focus

Match-funding is among the most effective tools government has for increasing philanthropy, especially for projects outside London. It changes the psychology of giving: the donor knows their pound goes further. A survey of Big Give donors found that 84% of respondents said matching made them more likely to give. Both sides gain – government steers support to priority projects, philanthropists get more impact per pound.[26]

Key examples from the UK include:

- **DCMS–Wolfson Fund:** A long-running partnership between DCMS and the Wolfson Foundation has upgraded museums through matched grants.[27] In April 2026, the partners announced £4m (including £2m match) for regional museum improvements. Since 2002 the partnership has awarded more than £50 million, funding lifts, displays and other access improvements in hundreds of local museums.[28]
- **Big Give – "Arts for Impact":** Charities have pioneered digital match campaigns. In March 2024 the inaugural "Arts for Impact" drive (led by the Big Give and arts funders) raised £2.85m through 12,386 online donations. Approximately £1.3m came from philanthropists who provided matching pledges. Notably, 66% of supported charities had annual budgets under £1m and 76% of funds went to projects outside London. As a result, 65% of participating charities received more donations than usual and 67% received larger donations. These statistics show that match campaigns engage new donors and amplify giving for smaller and regional arts organisations.[29]

- **Place-based schemes:** Local co-funds are also emerging. For instance, Stoke-on-Trent's "Made in Stoke" and Blackpool's "Pride of Place" pool council money with private gifts for city arts and youth projects. In such models, local donors see exactly where their money goes, making philanthropy more tangible.
- **Co-design and prospective fundraising**: A new 'Music in Libraries' programme is to be co-designed with the Ed Sheeran Foundation and other partners, with at least £12.5 million committed by Government through the UK's Dormant Assets Scheme. There is a shared ambition to raise additional support from philanthropists and the music industry. That ambition should be distinguished from the funding already committed: this is not yet a confirmed financial match-funding arrangement.[3031]

- **Public–private partnership – National Year of Reading:** Government commissioned the National Year of Reading 2026, delivered by the National Literacy Trust. Part-funded by the Department for Education, with additional funding and support from philanthropic and commercial partners, it illustrates how public funding and a clear national ambition can bring together schools, libraries, businesses and philanthropic partners. This is a complementary approach to match-funding, rather than an example of a pound-for-pound funding agreement.[32]

Proposed reforms

Match-funding

Government should establish a dedicated national cultural match-funding programme around a compelling national vision and place-based narrative. A fund of this kind would mobilise more donors, ensure every public pound attracts a private one, and deliver visible cultural return on public investment. Alternatively, Government could co-design schemes with donors, or a cohort of donors, who

specialise in priority places and priority areas. Such priority areas could be cultural enrichment, for instance, or supporting talented young people.

A seed-funding route for cultural partnerships

Match-funding works best when a project is sufficiently developed to attract commitments. It does not always meet the earlier need to test an idea. Philanthropists have emphasised their willingness to take on this early risk and contribute specialist knowledge.

Government should establish a seed-funding route alongside the national match-funding programme. Either public or philanthropic partners could provide the initial funding, according to the project's needs. Philanthropists could support the development and testing of projects that appeal to them, while government seed funding could establish the capacity and confidence needed to attract further giving. Both should be involved early enough to consider how successful approaches might be sustained or extended. This should include creative education initiatives and enrichment partnerships between schools and cultural organisations.

Each pilot should have an agreed purpose, a realistic timetable and proportionate evaluation. Partners should establish at the beginning what evidence would justify expansion, who would take that decision and how continuing provision might be funded. Public support for expansion should depend on results and available resources, rather than be promised automatically.

Funding should cover the practical costs of development, including staff time, coordination and evaluation. A promising small charity may need this support before it can deliver a larger programme. Co-design should bring donors' knowledge into the work while retaining the public responsibilities and institutional independence set out above.

The Match- and Seed-Funding Programme should:

- Leverage private funding: Every public pound should aim to attract additional private investment;
- Support regional diversity: funding should be purposefully concentrated outside of London, as well as funding priority projects in the capital itself;
- Encourage new donors: the priority should be expanding the donor base;

- Reward ambition: projects should demonstrate clear cultural and public benefit;
- Build on donors' expertise, appetite for risk and example;
- Protect public priorities and institutional independence: Co-investment should complement rather than displace public decision-making. Public bodies should retain responsibility for setting overall priorities, with transparent criteria governing donor involvement and safeguards against individual donors exercising disproportionate influence over publicly supported institutions or programmes.[33]

Further Supportive Initiatives

3.1 Develop a National Strategy for New Generations and Regional Giving

It is expected that by 2050 between £5–£7 trillion will pass from the older generation to the next. According to the government's 'Our Place to Give' April 2026 DCMS strategy, this will make the younger generation the most significant donors in history. However, engaging young donors will require a different approach: it will mean "changing the culture about culture" as one next generation

philanthropist told us. In practice this means a sharper focus on lifetime giving and on making philanthropy more entrepreneurial, relevant, aspirational and fun. For example, combining arts giving with other cultural experiences – music festivals, fashion collaborations, cutting-edge technology, galas, and pop-up events – could reach millennials and Gen Z. Digital platforms are also key to regular giving: using social media drives, online challenges or gamified fundraising (as the Big Give does) can meet young people on familiar ground. By linking arts philanthropy to music, fashion, tech, and creative education – and by building peer networks – the sector can inspire the next generation to support cultural talent and causes that matter to them.

With inherited wealth now such a significant factor, philanthropic planning should be made a part of routine financial advice. The government should work with the Financial Conduct Authority and HMRC to develop a new 'philanthropic planning qualification' as part of its plan to deliver stronger philanthropic guidance to all.

In line with its youth strategy, the government could also take a bold step and provide a cohort of young people with a 'philanthropic capital pot' – e.g. a percentage of Dormant Asset Funds earmarked for enrichment – together

with the responsibility for investing it. This could provide a high-profile opportunity for learning by doing, in partnership with established philanthropists who could supply mentorship. The aim would be to show how collaborative and rewarding giving can be, bringing the next generation into the world of philanthropic decision making. This would go a step further than the government's current 'think philanthropy' strategy: it could be more of a 'how to think like a philanthropist', with reciprocal learning at its core.

There is also scope for young people to contribute as practitioners. Philanthropists have raised with us the idea of a "Teach First" for creative communities: a supported programme in which young artists and creative practitioners teach other young people through local organisations. Philanthropists could help fund and develop a pilot, with training, payment and supervision built into its design. It should add capacity to local creative education and provide a route into sustained work for participants.

An extra challenge for government is how to marry the charitable giving habits of young tech entrepreneurs with cultural strategies and priorities. For the tech community, giving is largely driven by different imperatives: for example, David Silver, CEO of Ineffable Intelligence, wants

the proceeds of the eventual sale of his company to go entirely to "saving lives". As Wired magazine recently reported: "Silver is the latest in a growing line of AI founders to pledge equity proceeds to charity. Others include Mustafa Suleyman, a DeepMind cofounder and the CEO of AI at Microsoft, and Anton Osika, the founder of automated coding platform Lovable."[34]

If Anthropic and OpenAI go public, the AI industry will soon represent an outsize proportion of new wealth. The scale of this opportunity could be considerable. Recent debate in the United States has described the prospective transfer of AI-generated wealth into charitable giving as a potential 'third wave' of American philanthropy.[35] But it also raises questions about how such wealth is deployed: whether it is spent within a reasonable timeframe, how transparently decisions are made, and how major private gifts can support pluralism and experimentation without allowing concentrated private wealth to determine public priorities.

Inspirational storytelling

One of the key criticisms from philanthropists is that arts organisations and government alike often struggle to tell a compelling story. Yet strong narratives are what generate

enthusiasm and motivate giving. Donors back ambitious vision, inspirational ideas, confident leadership and clear, measurable goals, and increasingly want target-driven projects with tangible outcomes. In practice, this means framing arts initiatives around national or local transformation and real social benefits (e.g. education, health, community cohesion) or entrepreneurial outcomes.

And donors want their success stories to be celebrated. Recipients and government need to share the personal and inspirational giving stories behind major donations as well as the stories that they want to tell: for instance, highlighting how a major gift was inspired by a benefactor's passion, personal history, or relationship with an artist, or personal ties to a youth initiative, club, town, city or region. By showcasing the social or human value of past gifts, arts institutions can also make future patrons feel their contributions matter. In short, building a compelling narrative – one that connects donors personally to cultural impact and draws on their own interests – is vital to engage both existing and next generation philanthropists.

The voices of those who benefit should be central to this story. Hearing from a young person about a first performance, a new skill or a route into training makes the

purpose of giving concrete. There are also opportunities to reach younger donors through the connections between culture, climate, health and well-being. These connections can widen the appeal of cultural giving while preserving the value of the artistic work itself.

Growing outside London

Cultural philanthropy remains heavily concentrated in London. It needs to be relevant and visible to people across the country.

Broadening philanthropy beyond the capital should be a clear priority, and it needs targeted regional strategies. Place-based philanthropy – pooling local funds for local projects – is vital. For example, showcased initiatives like Stoke's "Made in Stoke" and Blackpool's "Pride of Place", where local councils and philanthropists co-create funds for community arts, tap local pride: donors contribute to projects in their own city, seeing direct impact. In the arts, similar models could fund regional museums or festivals. A modest ACE-funded initiative, Figurative Philanthropy for Arts and Culture, has developed 20 place-based philanthropic partnerships based on impact investment.

Government has recently committed to building a much stronger relationship with philanthropists across the country. In its 'Our Place to Give' strategy it has committed to working with a third party to establish a 'Community of Practice', which existing place-based initiatives will be invited to join. This will be supported by £1m of government funding over three years.[36] Additionally, government's new 'think philanthropy' approach will be focused on identifying philanthropists who share common goals for specific co-investment in priority organisations or places (this will be co-funded from the £5.8 billion government 'Pride in Place' programme). Government will also convene place-based 'ambassadors', such as Roger de Haan; de Haan's focus has been on transforming Folkestone through the power of the arts.

Such partnerships, however, will require proper co-investment and a truly collaborative approach.

A practical starting point is to identify provision and need by postcode, then build relationships around that knowledge. Philanthropists favour this approach over introducing differential tax relief for giving outside London. Connections may begin with a donor's birthplace but can also grow from an interest in local artists, ties with institutions such as universities, or history. Mayors and

local government should help shape these partnerships, with support for the staff and fundraising capacity that smaller organisations need to sustain them.

3.2 Create a Philanthropic Network and "Giving Generator"

Philanthropists need a clearer route from an interest in culture to a project they can support. The core need we have defined is for a shared online portal where donors can be matched with opportunities, hear from beneficiaries and see the results of previous funding. Government should develop this with existing philanthropic and cultural organisations, rather than create another disconnected directory.

Proposed approach

A "Giving Generator" could provide a secure online space for philanthropists and their advisers, with projects organised by place, artform and purpose. It should include a named contact, the support sought and a clear account of what a gift would make possible. A donor interested in creative education, for example, should be able to find

local partners and understand how their work connects to schools and wider provision.

The service should combine information with personal introductions. Participation should be voluntary and sensitive to individual preferences: a database can help start a relationship but cannot supply the trust on which giving depends.

Smaller charities should receive help to present their work and participate. The donor-facing service should be supported by public information about funded projects and outcomes, so that an invitation-only network does not become the only route through which organisations can seek support.

3.3 Map Cultural Provision, Philanthropic Funding and Local Need

A national picture of existing provision is needed before government and donors can decide where additional support would be most useful in such a cross-government approach. Philanthropists have raised basic questions that remain difficult to answer: which creative education projects are already funded, who is working effectively in a place, and what would allow that cultural work to grow?

Proposed approach

DCMS and DfE should commission a shared map of cultural and creative education provision, drawing on local authorities, schools, libraries, cultural organisations and philanthropic funders. It should record the reach of existing projects, available funding and gaps in access, with information that can be used at postcode level. Data collection should be proportionate, especially for small charities and foundations.

The priority areas in our discussions have been about providing an initial testing ground. Government should identify these areas clearly, publish the basis for selection and invite local partners to describe both the provision already in place and the support they need. This would allow donors to contribute to an informed local plan.

The map should inform the Giving Generator, regional match-funding and the wider Cultural Giving Strategy. It must recognise need within London as well as beyond it and allow local organisations to challenge gaps or inaccuracies in the national picture.

3.4 Coalesce around a big idea: Arts for Every Child

One ambition that seems to unite cultural philanthropists is that every child should be entitled to a creative education, have meaningful encounters with the arts in and out of school, participate regularly, encounter role models, and progress as far as their interests, talents and abilities take them. Sport offers a useful comparison: its visible routes from school to early participation in clubs, academies and professional training help explain what support is needed at each stage, as well as spawning ambassadors and mentors. Cultural provision needs an equally intelligible and inspiring offer.

Proposed approach

DfE and DCMS should agree a broad working definition of creative education and describe the pathways from first access to sustained participation, specialist training and employment. The approach should be artform neutral and recognise emerging practices, including game-making. It should distinguish a universal entitlement to participate, beginning in the classroom, from specialist support for those pursuing further training.

Schools cannot deliver this alone. Libraries, local arts organisations, youth charities and cultural institutions should be part of the plan, with the newly established National Centre for Arts Education providing a point of coordination. Government should build on organisations already doing effective work and involve philanthropists in the design of partnerships from the outset.

The appointment of Etio to lead the Centre also gives philanthropy an explicit place in its work. Moira Sinclair, former Chief Executive of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, has been appointed its senior adviser on philanthropy, and the Centre's published remit includes philanthropic coordination. This recognises the scope to attract additional support alongside government funding. The Centre should use that role to develop partnerships around gaps in provision, connecting donors and foundations with schools and cultural organisations.[37]

A clear national ambition would also make the case for support stronger. Once the core offer and gaps in provision are defined, government can cost them and invite public and private partners to support particular stages. The objective is a sustained route through creative education, rather than a succession of isolated encounters.

3.5 Appoint a National Philanthropy Lead Connected to No. 10

A clearer point of contact is needed for philanthropists who want to complement and partner in work across government. No. 10 has the Office for the Impact Economy, now housed in DCMS, but its role was unfamiliar to the philanthropists we have engaged with. Whatever structures exist, the route into them needs to be visible and useful.

Proposed approach

Government should appoint a senior philanthropy lead, connected to No. 10, with responsibility for convening partners and brokering relationships across departments. The "Philanthropy Tsar" should have a defined remit and access to decision-makers. The role could sit within the existing Office for the Impact Economy, avoiding duplication.

For culture, the lead should work with DCMS, DfE, Treasury and the proposed Cultural Philanthropy Taskforce. Their responsibilities should include making introductions, resolving practical barriers and helping donors understand where their expertise and funding can contribute. And the

relationship should be two-way: helping philanthropists fund what matters to them. Mayors and local government should have a direct route into this work.

The lead should help develop a compact between government and cultural philanthropists: early involvement in project design, clear incentives and responsibilities, reliable points of contact and regular reporting on progress. This would give practical expression to the mutual respect on which a stronger partnership depends.

Implementation

Delivering a National Strategy for Cultural Philanthropy

These recommendations are mutually reinforcing. Tax incentives alone will not transform cultural philanthropy, and nor will recognition, match-funding or donor engagement in isolation. The most successful international examples demonstrate that cultural philanthropy grows when government creates an ecosystem in which giving is:

- Easier;
- More visible;

- More rewarding;
- More strategically aligned with public benefit;
- More strategically aligned with a national cultural vision and a nation's aspirational 'way of life'.

The UK should therefore move towards a coordinated national strategy.

Establish a Cultural Philanthropy Taskforce

Building on the summary recommendation in Dame Margaret Hodge's independent review of Arts Council England – that the government must find "innovative ways of responding urgently to the underfunding that has undermined the arts over the last decade" – the government should establish a cross-sector Cultural Philanthropy Taskforce bringing together:[38]

- HM Treasury;
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport;
- The Creative Industries Council;
- Arts Council England;
- Representative cultural institutions;
- Philanthropic foundations;

- Professional advisers;
- Representatives of donors and family offices.

The purpose of the taskforce would be to create a national cultural giving strategy, improve the donor infrastructure, strengthen donor relationships and provide clear measures of success.

The taskforce should also draw on DfE, local government and voices from smaller cultural organisations and younger philanthropists. It should work with the national philanthropy lead to turn the creative education, mapping and seed-funding recommendations into a delivery plan, with named responsibilities and published milestones.

Create a Cultural Giving Strategy

The UK has strong individual institutions but no national narrative around cultural philanthropy. A Cultural Giving Strategy should establish clear priorities:

- **Preserve national cultural assets**

Encourage gifts that ensure important works of art, archives and heritage assets remain accessible to the public.

- **Expand participation**

Increase the number of people who engage with cultural philanthropy, not only the number of major donors.

- **Protect pluralism and institutional independence**

Ensure that a stronger culture of philanthropy broadens the range of people, organisations and ideas supported, while maintaining the independence of cultural institutions and preventing excessive reliance on individual benefactors.

- **Attract international capital**

Position Britain as a leading destination for cultural philanthropy with a clear cultural vision.

- **Strengthen regional culture**

Ensure that philanthropic investment reaches communities across the UK.

Measure Progress

A national strategy should include clear measures of progress. Measures could include:

- Annual private giving to arts and culture

- Number of cultural donors
- Value of major gifts
- Regional distribution of donations
- Number and value of works entering public collections
- Use of Acceptance in Lieu and Cultural Gifts Scheme
- Reduction in nationally important works leaving the UK
- Distribution of giving between major donors and the wider donor base
- Reach of creative education and cultural provision funded through new partnerships

Expand the Donor Base

Measures could include:

- Younger donor participation
- Regional donor growth
- International donor engagement
- Corporate and foundation cultural partnerships

Effectiveness of Public Investment

Measures could include:

- Private funds unlocked through match schemes
- Ratio of public investment to additional private investment
- Economic impact generated
- Number of seed-funded projects sustained or expanded following evaluation, and the time taken to turn a proposed partnership into funded activity

Conclusion

Philanthropy is far more than generous donations. Research shows UK philanthropists increasingly want real collaboration, measurable evidence of impact and a hand in shaping outcomes – not simply to write cheques. Match-funding is one way of immediately amplifying impact. For example, New Philanthropy Capital analysis found that during the Covid crisis £20m of public funding attracted £20m of private donations via match-funding, doubling the funding available.[39] Donors bring innovation, flexibility and a tolerance for risk – qualities public funding often lacks. As Orlando Fraser, then Chair of the Charity Commission, stated, philanthropy "can facilitate innovation" and in the arts it allows grant-making to be nimble and to fund long-term capacity.[40] Government and philanthropists bring

complementary strengths: public bodies set priorities; private funders add capacity and creativity. That distinction matters. Philanthropy is strongest when it expands pluralism, enables experimentation and adds resources to public cultural life, rather than allowing concentrated private wealth to substitute for public judgment. A successful strategy must therefore increase philanthropy while simultaneously broadening the donor base, maintaining transparency and safeguarding the independence of cultural institutions.

The consensus is clear: reviving arts philanthropy requires a shared mission between government and donors, not charity alone. Philanthropists want to work in partnership with public bodies, helping set priorities and sometimes co-designing policies. A coordinated strategy – with targeted tax incentives, national honours, and co-funding programmes – will create a virtuous cycle. Without action, the burden of sustaining culture will fall on a shrinking donor base.

Our conversations with philanthropists have demonstrated that there is an appetite to make that partnership work. The immediate task is to give it a practical form: a clear point of contact, a shared picture of need and early opportunities to develop projects together. A national

ambition for creative education can provide a common purpose, while leaving space for the personal connections and passions that bring people into giving.

What is also needed is a reinvigorated national narrative around culture. Britain had its ‘Cool Britannia’ cultural epoch in the 1990s, and its Danny Boyle Olympics ceremonial cultural moment in 2012, but arguably it has lacked a galvanising cultural vision ever since. If government and philanthropists seize this opportunity, the UK’s arts sector can flourish on both shared aspiration and sustained public/private support.

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