



General Election 2010

NCA Advocacy Toolkit

Introduction

The General Election must take place by Thursday 3rd June, 2010. This election is ultimately fought at a local level, since candidates' policy priorities will be based on the concerns and opinions expressed by their local constituents. Individual members and member organisations have received copies of The Arts Manifesto. The NCA urges members to use the Manifesto as an advocacy tool to promote the importance of art in your constituency. Contacting local politicians can make a real difference, especially at election time, so please put pen to paper for the sake of the arts.

How to contact candidates

A full list of candidates is often not announced until the election is called and it is very rare to know the names of Independent or minority party candidates in advance of the official campaign. However, a good number of candidates have already declared their intentions.

There are two ways of finding the details for candidates prior to the official campaign. The first is to enter the name of your parliamentary constituency (if you know it) and the name of a political party into an internet search engine. This will usually direct you to the party's candidate or, more usually, to the party's local organisation which will be able to furnish you with their candidate's contact details.

The second method, which is available only to NCA members, is to send an email containing your FULL postcode to campaigns@artscampaign.org.uk and we will respond within 1 working day with a full set of contact details for all declared candidates in your Parliamentary Constituency. If you would like the names and details of candidates in other constituencies (maximum of 3 per request) please include the names of the other constituencies in your email.

This method of obtaining contact details will be available right up until polling day. However, during the campaign your local Returning Officer will publish the *Statement as to Persons Nominated* which is the final list of candidates who will appear on the ballot in your constituency. When this is published, the details should be available from your local council's website.

Members should write to as many of the candidates standing for election as possible, prioritising those from the major political parties. Minority party candidates have more freedom to express their own ideas and may be more easily convinced to champion our cause using the platform available to them. However, in order to affect real change, we will need to ensure that our focus across the whole of the UK is on the main political parties in each of the countries. Members should highlight that the arts are an electoral issue and that their engagement in this debate will affect votes at the General Election.

Some Public Sector organisations and Civil Servants will be restricted from taking an active part in lobbying political parties during the election. Please be aware of any relevant restrictions that may apply to you before embarking on any advocacy programme during the election.

Using the Arts Manifesto

The NCA urges artists and arts organisations to invite candidates to read the Arts Manifesto online: <http://xr.com/Ovs> and to convey what they feel to be the most important aspects of the manifesto. Where possible, members are encouraged to link these aspects back to their own experience and practice or the work of the organisation with which they are associated.

Some strong summary points to make from the manifesto are:

- **Education**
We need a balanced and creative curriculum to forge a society of imaginative, creative and inquiring human beings. Ensuring that the arts and culture are at the centre of the curriculum and that opportunities exist for interaction with artists at all stages of learning will ensure that we develop a skilled, culturally educated population that is innovative and able to adapt to the challenges of a changing world.
- **Economy**
The arts feed the creative industries which are fundamental to the future competitiveness of British business and are seen as our best route out of recession. Between 1997 and 2006 the creative economy grew faster than any other sector, accounting for 2 million jobs and £16 billion of exports in 2006.
- **Communities**
The arts and culture are often at the heart of successful places, bringing people together, reflecting a sense of place and identity and helping to boost local economies. For example, Gateshead's regeneration has centred on the Baltic and the Sage and the creation of a vibrant cultural quarter; during Liverpool's Capital of Culture 500,000 people visited the city in one day for one artistic event. Local authorities must address culture and the arts within their local strategic plans.
- **International standing**
Less than 0.1% of the total Treasury Budget is spent on the arts. The current level of funding for the arts costs around 39p a week per household – less than a pint of milk. In return we have world-class arts and artists, a sector that gives Britain an international edge as an exciting and creative place to live, work and do business, and the largest cultural economy in the world related to GDP. Cut investment in the arts and the spiral of decline will be swift – not only in audiences, quality and talent, but also in the impact on our creativity as a nation and on Britain's world standing.

Specific points to include

When contacting local politicians, be sure to heighten their interest by outlining who you are, what you do and why the arts are important to you. Some specific points to include are:

- If you are associated with an arts organisation, the name of your organisation and where you are located in the constituency.
- The type of work that you do or art/craft you are involved in/passionate about.
- The area of the community you serve or work with/in (if your work/interest extends beyond the constituency boundaries it is useful to say so – this demonstrates the draw the arts has on people coming into the area).
- If applicable, the number of people you employ both directly (full and part time members of staff) and indirectly (suppliers and other services used by your organisation). The economic power of your organisation will be important to the candidate.
- The number of volunteers who work with you or your organisation, if relevant.
- Your audience demographic if known, eg numbers of children and young people, disadvantaged groups, etc. who attend or participate in your events.
- Local issues and examples to strengthen your case.

If you are associated with an arts organisation, check to see if the candidate has ever visited your venue/seen your work. This can be a starting point to open a dialogue, inviting further discussion.

Some useful facts

Below we've listed some key facts about the contribution the arts and cultural sector makes to life in the UK. These can be used to illustrate points you make when talking to politicians and policy makers.

- The UK is one of the top three countries in the world for culture.
- The ten most visited attractions in the UK last year were all cultural.
- 8 out of 10 people attend arts events or visit historic places or museums.
- There are 1.2 million cultural volunteers. Many gain new skills useful in other areas of life.
- Culture in the UK has a mixed funding model: one third of income is self generated, just over half comes from public funding and the remainder is raised from philanthropy.
- Investment in culture leverages further investment: Liverpool European Capital of Culture generated an estimated £800 million for the regional economy.
- People believe that culture and heritage make places more attractive and build local trust and confidence.

Thanks to Arts Council England, English Heritage, NMDC and the MLA for the above statistics. For more handy facts and stats visit: www.artscampaign.org.uk go to the information section and click the link for the Arts Fact file.

Template letter

By writing to your candidates, you can let them know that the arts are an electoral issue. Personalised letters generally get a better response than ones which appear to have been copied from a template, but you could use the letter printed below as a starting point. Include local issues or examples to support your case and make it clear that arts policy will affect your vote.

Dear **NAME OF CANDIDATE**

I am/We are a (nature of your work/practice/organisation) based in (location) making/working with (art form you are involved with). With the next General Election just weeks away, I am writing to urge you to press your party to announce that, should it form the next Government, it will protect and champion the arts in the United Kingdom. Your plans for the arts will play a role when I decide my vote in the coming General Election. My colleagues will also be very interested to hear what you have to say on this subject.

It is not just my vote that will be affected by your arts policy. The arts have become embedded in all of our lives. They are not just an 'add on' for the rich and privileged. They drive our economy and support our society. The creative industries are the fastest growing sector of the UK economy.

The arts in the UK have an international reputation that should be the envy of any sector. Politicians ought to be prouder and more outspoken about the high quality and economic importance of Britain's artistic life. They also bring pleasure and fulfilment to millions of people. In 2007 (77% adults in England/90% of adults in Scotland/76% adults in Wales/76% adults in Northern Ireland) attended in or participated in an arts or cultural event. That is an awful lot of voters.

I would also urge you to give your support to the Arts Manifesto. This is available from the National Campaign for the Arts' website at www.artscampaign.org.uk. It has been written in consultation with the arts sector to provide realisable goals that are ready to become your manifesto pledges. Points that (I/your organisation) feel particularly strongly about include: (use examples from above, or examples of your own choice)

Finally, and most importantly, the key pledge that I would like to hear from you as my local candidate and your party nationally is the promise to retain arts funding at current levels. The arts budget is a small proportion of government expenditure yet it is enormously good value. The arts sector is valuable not just for its own sake but to many other sectors of the economy as well; blanket cuts to the arts will cause disproportionate damage.

Even in the current economic circumstances, the arts have proved their resilience and popularity. The voters in this constituency care about the arts. The arts can have a positive impact on almost every area of government policy. They matter to a lot of voters' lives and they deserve your support.

Please do not hesitate to contact...

Yours sincerely...

Please let us know if you contact your local candidates during the election. We would be especially interested to receive copies of the responses you receive. We can then build a good picture of how candidates and parties are responding to the concerns of the arts constituency.

Please send copies of replies to: **Campaigns Manager, NCA, 1 Kingly Street, London, W1B 5PA** or email scanned copies to: campaigns@artscampaign.org.uk

Sustaining the relationship

It is important that once you have made contact with local politicians that you sustain your relationship with them. This helps to build long term understanding among politicians and policymakers of the value of the arts to local communities.

In order to build good relationships with local politicians:

- Provide regular updates on what your organisation is doing. Send your local candidates your press releases or annual reports. Highlight information that you might think will be of particular interest to him or her and remind them of past contact you may have had.
- Invite them to opening nights, launches or exhibitions.
- Offer to provide a behind the scenes guide or tour of the premises, with the opportunity to meet some of your staff and some of the people who benefit from what you do. Candidates are usually keen to have the opportunity to meet more of their constituents; after all, they are voters.
- Follow up your contacts; always refer to past correspondence, so it is clear that you have been engaged with them in an ongoing way.

If you require any further help with engaging local politicians and decision makers in the run up to the general election and beyond, please do not hesitate to contact the campaigns team:

By post:

Campaigns Manager
National Campaign for the Arts
1 Kingly Street
London
W1B 5PA

Telephone:

020 7287 3777

Email:

campaigns@artscampaign.org.uk

Or for more information about the work of the NCA, information about the arts and for more advocacy tools, visit our website:

www.artscampaign.org.uk