**Mags Patten:** Hello, and thank you for joining us today. I'd like to start with some introductions. I'm Mags Patten, I am Executive Director of Communication and Public Policy, and I'll audio describe myself for visually-impaired people who are joining us. I've got mid-length brown gently-growing hair and I'm wearing tortoiseshell specs.

**Darren Henley:** I'm Darren Henley, good morning. I'm Chief Executive of Arts Council, England. I'm wearing a dark suit, a white shirt and black rimmed glasses.

**Nick Serota:** Hello and I'm Nick Serota, Chair of Arts Council England, and I'm also wearing a dark suit and a white shirt, but my glasses have no rim.

**Mags Patten:** Also with us is Harry Wadsworth, who is our BSL interpreter, and Farrell Kopecky is providing live captions for us. We're coming to you today from our head office in Manchester. It's a lovely contemporary wood-panelled room and we're sitting at a white table. We'll be talking you through our 2023-26 Investment Programme and following that we'll be taking questions from journalists. And a note for those journalists who are joining us: Welcome, and when you submit your questions online, please can you remember to add your name and your publication alongside the question? This morning we let organisations know the outcome of their applications. And just this minute, we've published a list of who we're funding from next year. We've got a lot to share with you today, but before we begin, here's a short video that gives you some of the headlines.

**Nick Serota:** So, there you have the headlines and for those of you who want to use the captions, please press the button in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen. Before I go on, I know a lot of organisations who made an application will be watching this morning. Today's announcement was initially planned for last week. I want to say to all those organisations who've eagerly awaited news that we're really sorry for the disruption and anxiety caused by the delay. Thank you for being so patient. We're very glad to be able to share the decisions with you today. So, to begin, I want to summarise some of the key stats. We are investing £446 million each year from 2023 to 2026. That investment will be made in 990 museums, libraries and arts organisations across the country. This includes 276 organisations that will be joining the programme. Funding for organisations outside of London would increase by nearly £45 million each year. This investment means that we're supporting more people in more places. Over the past five years, we've done research and spoken to people and they've told us that they want easy access to the best cultural events and creative activities where they live. That idea lies at the heart of our 10-year strategy: Let's create. And with this programme we're bringing that idea to life. We've invested so that as many people as possible in England can enjoy the very best of creativity. This means no matter where you live, whatever your background, you'll have culture close to your home. In particular, levelling up for culture places will see a 95% increase in investment. These places with historically lower levels of cultural activity, are set to receive £43.5 million every year. From Stoke to Slough, Blackburn to the Isle of Wight, and from Gloucester to Wigan. We're supporting excellence and talent everywhere. We received a large number of high-quality applications. These applications confirm what we already know. It's clear that there is a creative excellence and talent across the country. We'll be funding ambitious and innovative museums, libraries and arts organisations of all shapes and sizes. Established names, along with joiners, will deliver fantastic, imaginative, creative work for their communities. During the first year of funding, this investment will generate over 1 million days of activity, from family friendly workshops to world-class performances. Now, I'll pass over to you, Darren.

**Darren Henley:** Thanks, Nick. So, we are investing in the next generation. We're particularly excited this portfolio means a significant increase in activities for children and young people across the whole country. We're investing in 20% more organisations who'll produce work for children and young people. We're investing in the writers, actors, musicians, artists and creative talent of the future right across England. Now Nick's already said that we received a lot of excellent applications. I just wanted to reflect that, in fact, this was our most competitive round ever, with more than 1700 organisations making an application. To those organisations who didn't get investment, we know you're doing valuable and exciting work and we want to make it clear that other funding is open to you. We had tough decisions to make. We're increasing investments across all of England while making sure our investment in London still supports our world-class creative capital. We've also rebalanced our investment in London. In this new portfolio, more funding is going to London's outer boroughs than it does at the moment. The pandemic was tough for the creative and cultural sector, as it was for many industries. We know that the current economic climate means that it's still tough. Our job is to develop and champion creativity on the cultural sector and to make sure it provides inspiration, opportunity and hope. Something I'm really pleased to share is that this portfolio now looks much more reflective of England in terms of who we are, where we live, our passions, our backgrounds and our futures. We want to make sure that the taxpayers' and National Lottery players' money that we'll invest offers opportunities to everyone. We said in the past 'talent is everywhere, opportunity is not'. This portfolio sets out to change that, and we're very excited to share it with you today. And now I'm going to pass back to Mags.

**Mags Patten:** Thank you. So we've had some questions coming through since we came online. and what I'll aim to do is put those to Nick and Darren. Just to know, they're coming through on my laptop, so I will be looking down a bit, but let's get sorted. Can I ask people, when they submit questions, it's just helpful if you can put your name and publication. Otherwise, I'm asking without being able to identify that. But a question that has definitely come up recently... [unclear] What you're doing to support organisations to deal with escalating running-costs down.

**Darren Henley:** We're very, very aware that the macroeconomic environment is very tough and very challenging. And we also know that the organisations that put their applications in was at the beginning of this calendar year and obviously a lot of things have changed and developed in the months since. So, what we'll be doing over the next few months between now and the end of this financial year, between now and February-March time, is to have bespoke individual conversations with all of the successful applicants. And we'll be talking to them about the scale of the work they're doing and to make sure that our funding is appropriate for that. So, there's very much a conversation that we'll be having. It's a process that we have between our team of relationship managers based in all nine of our officers across the country and with those successful applicants. And we look forward to having that conversation and we'll be in a very strong position then, we feel, to go forward for the next three years with those successful applicants.

**Mags Patten:** Thank you. Can we... So, the question about expanding the portfolio, which is obviously the largest number of organisations we funded, is that a risk when organisations are under that stress?

**Darren Henley:** Again, I would say, you know, one of the things we need to do... We last made our founding decisions five years ago and the world has changed enormously. And one of the things we're very, very keen to do, as England's National Development Agency for Creativity and Culture across the country is to make sure that creativity is [able] to grow for future years. So, what we're doing here, is looking at how England looks and feels across the country. And we're understanding what we can do in different places, and one of the things that excites me the most is we'll see centres of production excellence springing up all across the country. We'll be taking really high-quality work to people on their doorsteps, in their neighbourhoods, and we'll also be touring the best work around the country as well. So, we do know that there are more organisations, but that's important, we're working in the creative industries here, and we want innovation, we want new, and that's what this portfolio delivers.

**Nick Serota:** And Darren, can I just add a point really? Which is that, obviously during the cultural... during the pandemic the Cultural Recovery Fund was established and it brought support to Art organisations across the country, many of which we had not previously been working with as an Arts Council, and I think it became clear to us that there was an enormous quantity of activity that really demanded support. And certainly deserves support. So, it was natural in the way that, if we could, we wanted to increase the number of organisations within the portfolio. And as you've said, we had 1700 applications. Last time we did this exercise, five years ago, we only had 1100. So, it's partly a reflection of that increase that we see many more organisations in the portfolio.

**Mags Patten:** Okay, I'm having some trouble seeing the questions coming through, so I just wanted to check whether they're... getting across to me. I've had a couple and I haven't had all of them. Sorry there. Coming through now. Thank you. Great. Okay. Can you just help me expand the screen? Sorry, the tech was always going to get us.

**Nick Serota:** Here we go.

**Mags Patten:** Thanks everyone. Katie Russell from the BBC has asked: the ENO put a statement out about moving to Manchester. Can you comment on whether the Arts Council's driven that, please? Over that to you Nick.

**Nick Serota:** English National Opera is one of the most dynamic and imaginative organisations working in the country, as we saw during the pandemic with, you know, Breathe and their drive in Opera at Alexandra Palace and whole range of other activities. And when they put in their application for the next three years, that application had within it continuation of work at the Colosseum, but also a very imaginative programme of work across the country. English National Opera is being limited to working in London in recent years. And they wanted to be able to work outside London. So, we've taken that, and in discussion with ENO, we have set aside the sum of money that will allow ENO to develop a plan to transform the organisation and to base it outside London. Manchester is one of the possible locations and we'll want to work with the Leadership of English National Opera, over the next year or so, to think through the opportunities that might exist for a company to work in that way.

**Mags Patten:** There's a follow up on that from David Sanderson from the Times, which is, what was the thinking behind cutting English National Opera entirely.

**Nick Serota:** Well, the thinking is about the opportunity that exists for English National Opera to become a different kind of company, working across the country rather than being based in London. And they are capable of responding, in our view. They've got great leadership. They have great achievement and there seems to us to be an opportunity here that we should grasp.

**Mags Patten:** Fine. So I had a question that has come in as anonymous, was the announcement delay as a result of any change to the funding available or the plan for its distribution?

**Darren Henley:** Absolutely. We can categorically say that these decisions were all made by our area councils and our National Council, 2-3 weeks ago, and none of those decisions at all have been changed as a result of the funding delay.

**Mags Patten:** Thanks, Darren. And another quite technical question on the budget from [xxx profit] Arts Pro, the budget detailed, previously listed at 428 million per annum, today listed at 446 million. So, is that a funding increase or a separate funding stream included?

**Darren Henley:** So, what we've done there is to move some of our National Lottery funding into the portfolio. So, there's extra money going into the portfolio from National Lottery players.

**Mags Patten:** And we're getting some questions coming in about the programme. So, Neil, again a follow up: How many organisations applied for the transfer programme and how many were accepted?

**Darren Henley:** So... we don't tend to talk about applications that weren't successful, but in terms of the organisations coming through, those organisations are currently refunded in London, for the first two years, and will then move into the transfer programme for the third year. There's £8.2 million of funding going into that. 24 organisations will be making the move.

**Mags Patten:** And David, from The Times, has asked a more specific question about that: Which organisations are going to be asked to move to the capital by year three in order to get the 8 million for levelling up.

**Darren Henley:** There's a list of 24 of them, we'll be able to share that with you. An example of one industry in opera, for example, will be moving, and actually they will soon receive an uplift in their funding as well, but we can share that entire list with you.

**Mags Patten:** Yes, we've got, we can follow up on any... ...organisations afterwards. -Katie...

**Nick Serota:** Perhaps it's just worth saying, none of these organisations are actually being compelled to leave London. We simply invited those that felt that they would be interested in working outside London and from a non-London base, to make an application, and 24 have been successful and 8.2 million is going to be made available for them to do that, just that.

**Mags Patten:** So, Darren, Katie Russell's following up with a question about libraries. So, you're funding libraries for a second time, is that the place of the Arts Council or is it a sign of the lack of funds from local authorities?

**Darren Henley:** Statutory funding for libraries is from local authorities. We have a different goal as the National Development Agency for libraries. I'm really excited by the work that we do with libraries. I think when you go to towns and cities across the high street... across the country, as I do very often, you see those libraries have great spots on high streets, they have really strong relationships with their communities. Much of the work that they're doing is working with other artists and other cultural organisations in their places. And I think, for us, in terms of delivering less [create], which is about taking high-quality cultural activities to people's doorsteps, libraries are absolutely at the heart of that and I'm very proud that we've got them in the portfolio. I think they do really exciting work. They're also...you know, if I said to you, 'Today we're going to invent a network of places on high streets, staffed by really welcoming, knowledgeable people, where we'll share information and people will be able to come together in a very egalitarian way', you'd say, 'that's fantastic!' and I would say 'that's what library services up and down the land do for us'.

**Mags Patten:** We've had an unattributed question which is a bit really about transfer again I think. But, have any organisations offered to move outside London? I think that was the point of the transfer programme, to create that.

**Darren Henley:** So, the transfer programme was a programme that people specifically applied into. There are one or two organisations who completely separate from that have made applications from different parts of the country who were previously based in London. We would see that almost in every portfolio in the past as well.

**Mags Patten:** So, Neil again, from Arts Pro: Will conditions on funding offers be tightened or changed in any way for the 2023-26 programme?

**Darren Henley:** Well, we'll be working with organisations, and, you know, all of our Terms and Conditions will be subject to their agreement and that's what they have to do in terms of getting public money. It's worth saying every investment we make is taxpayers' money or National Lottery players' money, so it's really, really important that we have rigorous and proper procedures to protect that investment. So, there will always be things that we will do and in some cases there will be bespoke Terms and Conditions depending on the funding agreement we arrive at with each of the organisations.

**Mags Patten:** So we've had a question that I'll deal with from Lee, from The Arts Newspaper, which is, who's left the national portfolio? and which organisations are at standstill or got less in London? So, we don't publish... Applications to the portfolio are confidential. So, we don't publish details of those applications. You will be able to... Obviously, we will publish the new national portfolio, so you will be able to see who is current... who is funded for this next period on our website. I think that that will be live now And, again, now we'll publish details of their funding levels, so that will give you an indication of how much they getting, whether that's standstill or whether they had less money, because you will be able to do your own research to compare to the previous portfolio. Hopefully that's dealt with that. Liam Kelly from Sunday Times: what support will there be for London organisations that have been cut entirely?

**Darren Henley:** For all organisations, we are England's National Arts Council, so we care passionately about organisation in London but across the whole country as well. So, all organisations will have... subject to an application process, will have funding visibility for the next 12 months. So, everybody is already funded for five months right now. And for those organisations that leave the portfolio, they'll be able to apply for a further seven months of money. So, that will take them to, at the current level, through till the end of October 2023. We also have a programme for those organisations who are still in the portfolio but have had reductions in their funding to be able to remodel their business plans. And we'll work with those organisations over the next few months to help them to understand how that programme works and what they need to do to apply into that. But that will be looking to substantially restructure their organisations to do things differently to develop their business models for the future. And all organisations who are outside the portfolio will continue to be able to apply into other funding streams, so national [unclear] project grants, and other funding streams that we announced in due course.

**Mags Patten:** So, we're being asked about the Donmar Warehouse which is not funded in this portfolio. We're not going to comment on individual organisations. It's up to them if they want to discuss that. But I think maybe, Nick, I could ask you to talk about the approach to theatre, generally in London.

**Nick Serota:** I think the position was [relatively made] clear when the Secretary of State instructed us to take money out of London. And also to take money, not only out of London, but also from central... encouraged us to take money from central London to some parts of the city that haven't previously had funding. So, I think it was almost inevitable that we would have to take some money away from some of the main theatres in London. We are still going to be funding nearly 60 theatre organisations in the capital, and we are funding some new organisations in boroughs, in the outer London boroughs, but I think, in principle, we feel strongly that the theatre ecology demands that. And we've just simply had to make some very invidious choices about where we fund, Mags.

**Mags Patten:** Thank you. Do you want to add...

**Darren Henley:** Just worth saying, we are still, across the whole portfolio, funding 196 theatres, 48 new ones to a total of nearly £112 million, so, our investment in theatre as a sector is absolute.

**Mags Patten:** Okay, I'm not seeing any other questions come in so, can I just check if we got... We got 1-2 more, they've just...right. Sorry, they're just popping up on my screen in real time so. I have to get my brain cells going. From Neil again, Arts Professional: What drove the decision to provide more funding to organisations led by people of colour?

**Darren Henley:** I think it's really important that we, as I've said before... Our money comes from taxpayers' and National Lottery players' all across the country, and we want to make sure that we have a portfolio that's reflective of the way England looks and feels in the 21st century. And it's really important we do that and also that we reflect the culture and creativity that's being created by communities in villages, towns and cities across the country and people of all backgrounds. And I'm really excited by that. I think one of the exciting things, when you talk to creative people, you see creativity in action. It's when you see people with different life experiences, different journeys, coming together, talking, thinking, doing, innovating... That's where I see creativity. And I'm very excited as to what this portfolio will do to enable that to happen for more people in more places across the country.

**Mags Patten:** Thanks, Darren. So, that's the end of the question stream coming in from journalists. If anyone still got anything they want to ask us from the media, our press team will be working hard all day to support you and answer any further questions. But that marks the end of the session. So, thank you for joining us today. I just want to thank Harry for your BSL support and Farrell for your captioning. A recording of this event will be available on our website very shortly along with the transcript. And you can find all of the information that we've discussed today on our website at artscouncil.org.uk/investments23 So, thanks for coming again and goodbye.