

## CULTURE & MEDIA

Britain has an extremely vibrant cultural sector and world-leading creative industries. However, there are major challenges adjusting to the digital age and coping with the economic downturn. It is vital that the arts and the media remain free from political interference. Liberal Democrats will ensure the future success of the arts and the media in Britain by ensuring the right funding structures and regulatory environment are in place to encourage investment without compromising independence.

### Culture & the Arts

Britain has a thriving cultural and artistic sector which is internationally renowned. Our national cultural institutions are world-class and draw in millions of visitors each year. Liberal Democrats will continue to invest in the arts to ensure the same high-quality provision exists for future generations.

Liberal Democrats believe that the arts are confidence-building, self-affirming and identity-forming. We believe that the arts should be valued for themselves in a civilised society. We also value the huge contribution that the arts can make in other areas such as the economy, community cohesion, crime prevention, health and education and believe that the arts should be celebrated at all levels. We are committed to ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality cultural experiences and is given the opportunity to express themselves creatively.

The arts have suffered in recent years because of diversions of lottery money to fund the Olympic and Paralympic Games. While we fully supported the bid, the Government's early mismanagement of the budget has meant that money has been taken away from the arts, charities, heritage and grassroots sports. The Government has also failed to act to ease the negative effects of this decline in lottery money available for good causes. Liberal Democrats would put lottery money back into the arts by restoring the independence of the National Lottery and change the way the lottery is taxed to increase the money available for good causes.

In order to promote excellence in the arts and increase opportunities for all the Liberal Democrats will:

- **Put and end to Government meddling in the arts**, by restoring the independence of the National Lottery and re-asserting the 'arms-length' principle.
- **Give communities a greater say** in local decisions affecting cultural provision.
- **Give money directly to communities**, whenever possible, rather than unelected bureaucrats.
- **Change the way the National Lottery is taxed** to generate more money for good causes, including the arts.
- **Maintain free admission for National Museums and Galleries.**
- **Embed creativity as one of the fundamental principles of education.**

### The Media

Essential to a free society is a strong and diverse media free from government interference and pressure. Independent, impartial and trusted media sources are needed across the UK and its nations and regions. The Liberal Democrats will ensure that public service broadcasting remains

strong, free from interference and securely funded, not least to provide impartial news, independent of political and commercial pressures. We also recognise the vital roles that commercial radio, television and new media play. We will foster a climate in which diverse ownership and competition can thrive, and provide flexible regulation that adapts to the rapidly changing media environment.

## Digital Britain

The media and technology industries have undergone a rapid process of change in recent years. Digital switchover for television is now well underway but much work remains to be done to ensure universal internet access and digital radio switchover. The digital age creates new challenges for the established content industries - regulatory frameworks in particular need updating to support existing providers while enabling new entrants into the market.

In order to ensure that Britain maintains its position as a world leader in the creative industries and that the population has access to high quality content and technology, Liberal Democrats will:

- **Maintain a strong, independently funded BBC as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting**, while also ensuring that the BBC is more sensitive to the market and works in partnership with other media providers wherever possible.
- **Make the structural changes needed** to allow Channel 4, ITV and Five to be financially secure and maintain their public service commitments.
- Support commercial operators in the local and regional news markets by **reforming media ownership rules** to allow consolidation.
- **Ensure universal broadband access and make sure that rural areas don't get left behind.**
- **Promote the development of next generation broadband networks** to make sure Britain keeps pace with global developments.
- **Tackle the problem of illegal file-sharing in an effective and proportionate way to safeguard our creative industries.**