

NPPF MUST NOT BE SILENT ON CULTURE SAY MAJOR NATIONAL ARTS ORGANISATIONS IN A JOINT LETTER TO THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH PUBLISHED TODAY

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In a letter to the Sunday Telegraph published today, 20 major arts figures call for the inclusion of culture in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in response to the lack of recognition of culture and the arts in the Communities and Local Government department's draft NPPF.

The joint statement comes from national arts bodies with networks and members whose activities and audiences are directly affected by the planning system. Signatories include The Theatres Trust, ixia public art think tank, Arts Development UK, National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers, Voluntary Arts, Visual Arts and Galleries Association (VAGA), National Campaign for the Arts, Crafts Council, Little Theatre Guild (LTG), Dance UK, Independent Theatre Council (ITC), Axis - the online resource for contemporary art, Contemporary Art Society, The Society of London Theatre and the Theatrical Management Association, Audiences UK, a-n The Artists Information Company, Association of British Orchestras and the Museums Association.

Their letter voices the concerns of many in the arts and museums sector that the draft NPPF ignores culture and does not recognise culture's role in achieving economic growth, enhancing the built environment and developing sustainable communities.

Rob Dickins CBE, Chairman of The Theatres Trust, the organisation leading the call said, "If the NPPF continues to remain silent on culture then theatres, concert halls, art galleries, museums, libraries, public art initiatives, crafts venues and artists' studios will not be promoted or protected in national planning policy. Culture must have the same status currently afforded to leisure, recreation, sport and heritage. We are a nation that has built its reputation and economic success on the quality of its theatre, music, visual artists, and crafts and our wellbeing rests on providing people with the places, spaces and initiatives to pursue their cultural interests. Theatres are nationally and locally important buildings and must have proper protection through the NPPF."

Jonathan Banks, Chief Executive of ixia public art think tank said, "Artists engage people with places through public art projects, cultural organisations and other cultural initiatives. This is vital to providing places where people want to live, work and play. If the Government cares about the social, economic and environmental development of places then it must explicitly include cultural activities within the NPPF".

Duncan Smith, Chair of the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers and ACAVA Artistic Director added, "How can a government fail to acknowledge the importance of culture in such a critical document and one which will have a very real impact on our communities? NFASP has extensive evidence from both private and public sectors of the many ways in which the development of affordable studios within the planning mix can give back life to empty high streets, disused buildings and vacant homes".

The letter states,

"Greg Clark MP states in his introduction to the National Planning Policy Framework that planning is a "creative exercise to enhance and improve the places in which we live". This is a welcome observation on the importance of creativity in the planning process. However, we are

then let down by the NPPF's failure to promote and protect the facilities, spaces and initiatives which enable culture and the arts to take place.

As senior representatives of national arts bodies, with networks and members whose activities and wide ranging audiences are directly affected by the planning system, we are deeply concerned over the omission of policies that would explicitly promote and protect England's cultural infrastructure and activities. Our theatres, concert halls, art galleries, museums, libraries, public art initiatives, craft venues and artists' studios matter. They help promote economic growth, enhance the built environment and develop sustainable communities. They are also hubs around which our world-leading creative industries have sprung up and flourished.

We believe that culture must be referred to in the NPPF and its role in achieving social benefit, economic impact and sustainable development must be recognised.

The NPPF is currently silent on culture and as a result we are at serious risk of losing important cultural facilities and activities that can and do make a significant contribution to our civic pride, wellbeing and quality of life.

If we are to achieve "change for the better" we need a planning framework that promotes and protects culture. Not one that ignores it.

Yours,

Rob Dickins CBE, Chairman, The Theatres Trust
Mhora Samuel, Director, The Theatres Trust
Jonathan Banks, Chief Executive, ixia public art think tank
Lorna Brown, Chair, Arts Development UK
Duncan Smith, Chair, National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers and ACAVA Artistic Director
Helen Pike, Assistant Director, National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers
Robin Simpson, Chief Executive, Voluntary Arts
Hilary Gresty, Director, Visual Arts and Galleries Association (VAGA)
Kate Adie, Chairperson, National Campaign for the Arts
Rosy Greenlees, Executive Director, Crafts Council
Eddie Redfern, Chairman, Little Theatre Guild (LTG)
Caroline Miller, Director, Dance UK
Charlotte Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Independent Theatre Council (ITC)
Sheila McGregor, Chief Executive, Axis - the online resource for contemporary art
Paul Hobson, Director, Contemporary Art Society
Julian Bird, Chief Executive of the Society of London Theatre & Theatrical Management Association
David Brownlee, Chief Executive, Audiences UK
Gillian Nicol, Head of Programmes, a-n The Artists Information Company
Mark Pemberton, Director, Association of British Orchestras
Mark Taylor, Director, Museums Association