



Cllr. Chris White  
Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P 3HZ

2 March 2011

Dear Chris

**Arts Council England and Local Government: working in partnership on a vision for culture**

Arts Council England and local government have a long track record of partnership working endowing our country with outstanding cultural assets and opportunities for communities across England to benefit from enriching arts experiences.

As you know, DCMS has asked Arts Council England to assume responsibility for the following MLA functions, with effect from the 1 April 2012:

- The Renaissance in the Regions programme for regional museums (including completing the redesign of its content and operation)
- The regional museums improvement and development agenda, including the Accreditation Standard and the Designation Scheme and projects relating to the 2012 Cultural Olympiad
- The libraries improvement and development agenda
- Cultural property functions including, for example, export licensing, Government Indemnity, acceptance in lieu and security advice.

We firmly believe in the importance of working in partnership with local government in achieving an effective transition from MLA to the Arts Council in discharging these functions, and this letter aims to set out a number of shared principles by which we believe our partnership can be most effective.

We recognise that together, local government and Arts Council England represent a partnership of equals with complementary skills and expertise: the Arts Council

**Arts Council England**, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Phone: 44 (0) 845 300 6200 Fax: 44 (0)20 7973 6590 Text Phone: 44 (0) 20 7973 6564

Email: [enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk)



brings an expert national overview and local reach; local government has the depth of understanding of the communities they serve. Together, we will recognise and value the distinctiveness of place and the role of culture in shaping and reflecting communities and community identity.

We share an ambition to create a strong cultural offer comprising excellence in arts, libraries and museums, with greater collaboration between these sectors. The benefit of the alignment of arts, libraries and museums in one national organisation will mean that we can have a single, coherent conversation with local authorities about the cultural portfolio at a local level.

We know it won't be easy: financial challenges are impacting on us all and we will together need to re-imagine our approach to support for culture in a different financial context but, in doing so, not lose sight of our shared long term ambitions. That's why creating conditions for innovation, self-improvement and sharing best practice will be vital. We recognise the importance of leadership, and will seek to support and build capacity in leadership at a local level. We want to share and celebrate excellence by councils who in partnership with cultural organisations enable a thriving local cultural offer, and we will look for shared commitment from local authorities in their support for culture and prioritise partnerships with those councils showing a real dedication to, and investment in, culture.

As the public sector changes, with a greater emphasis on commissioning, we will seek to work with local government in joint commissioning activity at a local or pan-local level. We share a goal to improve the commissioning environment for culture, including building capacity within arts and cultural organisations to play a key role.

In assuming responsibility for libraries and museums, the Arts Council will consider how far our recently published 10 year strategic framework for the arts – Achieving great art for everyone - reflects the ambitions and development needs of the library and museum sectors. We will also review MLA programmes such as Renaissance and Future Libraries programmes, building on what's been achieved and consider how we might align these with the work of the Arts Council. We will be undertaking stakeholder engagement and consultation as part of our transition plans, and the relationship with local government will be a key part of this.

In sharing a broader vision for culture, I believe that together we can build an ambitious, ideas-led approach to a sustained cultural offer at the heart of our communities.

We look forward to working with you,



Liz Forgan

Liz Forgan  
Chair