

# GPS Culture

## A New Destination for the Arts

### Reflections, Recommendations and Conclusion

Christopher Gordon, David Powell and Peter Stark have decided to draw to a close the current phase of their work together as GPS Culture. We will do this on February 25th 2015, symbolically the 50th Anniversary of the publication of Jennie Lee's 'A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps', still the only White Paper addressing National Policy for the Arts in the UK. By that date we will have completed two years of intensive, self-funded research into policy and practice in the support of the arts in England.

From the beginning we have intended our work to be objective, evidence based and 'non-aligned' politically. In the general election period we may become more directly engaged as advocates and – possibly – as parties to new policy design and implementation. There will also be other calls on our time, from the gods and – necessarily – from mammon.

As a final public contribution to this collective debate we have produced a brief summary of our reports and recommendations as 'A New Destination for the Arts', accessible at: <http://www.gpsculture.co.uk/>

We warmly acknowledge the support and help of family, friends and colleagues who have assisted and encouraged us throughout this project, and record our very particular thanks to Steve Trow and Emily Tattersall for their invaluable contributions to the research.

### Context

In October 2013, we published '[Rebalancing our Cultural Capital](#)' (The RoCC report) – an analysis revealing the scale of imbalance of resources for the arts between London and the rest of England. Six months later, our second report, '[Policy for the Lottery the Arts and Community in England](#)' (The PLACE report), complemented the case for geographic redistribution of resources by analysing the failure in deployment of Lottery funds for the arts as being neither equitable within society, nor promoting wide and effective local participation in the arts and individual and community wellbeing. In October 2014 '[Hard Facts to Swallow](#)' demonstrated conclusively that Arts Council England's investment plans for 2015–18 not only failed to address these issues but would cumulatively exacerbate the problems identified.

All three reports and 'New Destinations' can be found on our website: <http://www.gpsculture.co.uk/>

On 5th November 2014 the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee published the report '[Inquiry into the Work of Arts Council England](#)'. The Select Committee gave very substantial cross-party backing to, and acknowledgment of, the arguments advanced by the three GPS Culture reports. From the reaction to the Committee's report it now appears that there is an emerging cross-party and cross-sector consensus amongst the leaders of arts and cultural organisations, national and local politicians and commentators that could form the basis for change towards a fairer, more honest, and more effective cultural policy for England. One that would promote the highest standards and the achievement of excellence by investing in the broadest possible base.

The current debate on arts policy to which all of these reports contribute is taking place in a vigorous public policy context. Plans for a high-speed rail link network, a new global city connecting the North West and Yorkshire, and the Scottish Referendum's impact have reopened and fuelled debate on the future governance of the country and, within that, the role of major cities, city clusters, rural areas and regions. These national debates are producing new thinking on national governance. In turn, these debates bring new opportunities for the arts and culture to embed themselves in such arrangements even as continuing and long-term austerity measures bite bone-deep into local government's capacity in all current discretionary areas of its responsibilities.

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