

# information



## History of Arts Council England

This information sheet is designed to provide a brief history of Arts Council England, our structure and aims. It is intended as a starting point for research on the arts funding system in England. Also included is a list of resources for wider reading and some basic facts and figures.

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# 1 Historical summary

The Arts Council of Great Britain was the post-war descendant of the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), which was formally set up by Royal Charter in 1940. The Arts Council was established and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1946.

CEMA was a scheme to improve national morale during wartime, as well as an attempt to provide employment for artists, whose usual opportunities were reduced by the effects of war. When the war came to an end, there was still a clear need for the arts to be made more accessible to the general public.

Whereas CEMA was heavily involved in providing arts directly, through promoting theatre and concert tours, the arrival of the Arts Council of Great Britain marked a reduction in direct provision, instead giving more of these responsibilities to individual arts organisations. The objectives of the Arts Council were to assist and encourage

- the improvement of professional standards of performance
- selective distribution of arts throughout the country
- local responsibility for promoting theatres, concerts, galleries, arts centres and festivals
- the provision of buildings for arts activities

The Arts Council was responsible to, and financed by, the Treasury through grant-in-aid. It was not a government department; no minister directed its policies or decided to whom funding should be awarded. This arm's length principle – which still exists today – meant that while the Arts Council had the freedom to make individual funding decisions without intervention from government, it had to be prepared to account for these decisions to government, parliament and the public.

## 1.1 Devolution to the regions

The move away from the Arts Council directly organising arts activities led to the setting up, from 1966 onwards, of regional arts associations, in place of the Arts Council's own regional offices. The primary function of the regional offices had been to handle arrangements for touring theatres and concerts in the regions; their closure was an acknowledgment that regional promotion could be more effectively carried out by local arts organisations. The regional arts associations were intermediate organisations, acting as a link between the Arts Council and the regions. In some regions, these were a consortium of local arts organisations, in others, they were set up by local authorities.

The 1989 Wilding report recommended the regional arts organisations be replaced, having found significant variation in the distribution of funding between regions, and as a result, the regional arts boards were created. The majority of their funding came from the Arts Council, although local authorities remained important partners.

## 1.2 The Arts Council of England

In 1994, the Arts Council of Great Britain was abolished, and its functions transferred to three new bodies: the Arts Council of England, the Arts Council of Wales and the Scottish Arts Council. Under a new Royal Charter, the objectives of the Arts Council of England were

- to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts
- to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public
- to advise and co-operate with departments of Government, local authorities, the Arts Councils for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and other bodies on matters concerned, whether directly or indirectly, with the foregoing objects

## 1.3 The National Lottery

The National Lottery was launched in November 1994. 28 pence from every pound raised was paid to the National Lottery Distribution Fund (NLDF), from where the money was divided into five good causes: arts, charities, heritage, millennium projects and

sport. The Arts Councils for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were given responsibility for distributing lottery funding to arts organisations in their respective countries. The 28% of lottery funding designated for good causes is now divided between the Big Lottery fund, which funds charities, health, education, environmental and millennium projects; the Arts Councils; the Sports councils; and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## 1.4 A single organisation

In April 2002, the Arts Council of England and the 10 regional arts boards merged to form a single organisation. The aims were to create a simpler, more transparent funding system for artists and arts organisations, and make savings on administration, which could be invested in the arts. On 17 February 2003 the organisation announced its new identity and name, Arts Council England.

# 2 Arts Council England today

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts. We are an independent, non-political body, working at arm's length from Government. We distribute public funds, including National Lottery funding; commission research; promote innovation in the arts; and provide advice and information to artists and arts organisations.

We are established by Royal Charter, our Chair and our national Council are appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; our funding agreement with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport sets out in broad terms what we do (see further reading). We are accountable to Parliament for our activities and expenditure.

We have nine regional offices and a national office. Our regional boundaries follow those of the Regional Development Agencies and many other national organisations.

Grant-in-aid funding (money coming directly from central government) is divided between these regions, according to population size. Full details of how this money, and our share of the

National Lottery good causes fund is spent, are available in our annual review.

In addition to regular funding for over 1,200 organisations, Grants for the arts is our main funding scheme. These grants are for individuals, arts organisations, national touring and other people who use the arts in their work. They are for activities that benefit people in England and that help artists and arts organisations from European Union countries to carry out their work.

We also have money that allows us to identify new opportunities for the arts, take on new initiatives, establish new partnerships and address particular ambitions for growth, such as cultural diversity, young people or support for the European Capital of Culture. These funds are not usually available through application.

Our national priorities are carried out through regular funding to organisations, Grants for the arts and nationwide initiatives such as Creative Partnerships and New Audiences. Ambitions for the arts contains further information about Arts Council priorities.

## 3 Further reading

### ***Arts Council England: annual review 2003\****

First annual review of activities as a single arts development and funding agency for England. Includes financial statements and accounts.

### ***Ambitions for the arts\****

2003

Arts Council England's manifesto for 2003 to 2006

### ***Ambitions into action\****

2004

Details recent Arts Council projects and initiatives

### ***Corporate plan 2003-06\****

2003

A summary of Arts Council England's corporate plan

### ***Arts Council England publication catalogue\****

Arts Council England, 2004

Catalogue of Arts Council publications, listing titles by subject.

\*The most recent versions of these publications are available free of charge through our website or through our distributor, Marston Book Services (01235 465500)

### ***Funding agreement between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Arts Council***

Agreement for period between April 2001 and March 2004

### ***Guide to arts funding in England***

DCMS Arts Division, 2003

The purpose of this guide is to help artists and arts organisations navigate their way around the arts funding system in England and identify specific funding opportunities.

Both of these documents are available free of charge from the DCMS website or in hard copy from the DCMS Information centre:

2-4 Cockspur Street  
London SW1Y 5DH  
Tel 020 7211 6200

***The glory of the garden – the development of the arts in England***

Arts Council of Great Britain, London 1984

A report reviewing policies and funding over the first 40 years of the Arts Council.

***The arts in England***

Evans, B and Glasgow, M

Falcon Press, London 1949

A study into changes in the public provision of arts between 1939 - 1949

***Arts and Cultures – 50 years of the Arts Council of Great Britain***

Sinclair, Andrew

Sinclair-Stevenson, London 1995

A social history of the Arts Council from 1945-1995

***The state and the arts***

Pick, John (ed)

John Offord Publications Ltd, Eastbourne, 1980

A collection of essays covering 35 years of the Arts Council's evolution, policies, its relationship with the artist and its achievements.

***Supporting the arts: a review of the structure of arts funding***

Wilding, Richard

Office of Arts and Libraries, London, 1989

Known as 'The Wilding report', this is a review of the structure of arts funding in England and, in particular, how the Arts Council, the Regional Arts Boards, the British Film Institute and the Crafts Council allocate their funds

### 3.1 Web resources

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Our website provides information on current projects, funding opportunities and publications

[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)

Website of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

[www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk](http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk)

Provides information on the distribution of lottery funding

[www.creative-partnerships.com](http://www.creative-partnerships.com)

National initiative, funded and managed by Arts Council England, to establish collaborative partnerships between schools and creative organisations

[www.newaudiences.org.uk](http://www.newaudiences.org.uk)

National scheme, funded and managed by Arts Council England, aiming to bring new audiences to the arts and take new art to audiences

[www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland website. Provides information on policy, initiatives and a brief history

[www.scottisharts.org.uk](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk)

The Scottish Arts Council website. Includes information on organisational structure, initiatives and funding

[www.artswales.org](http://www.artswales.org)

The Arts Council of Wales website. Includes information on structure and funding

## 3.2 Archives

The Arts Council of Great Britain archive contains records from between 1928 –1997. These are held in the National Art Library, housed by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The archive reading room is open to the public Tuesday – Thursday, 10.00 – 16.30 by appointment only.

You can search for documents via the online catalogue:

<http://ipac.nal.vam.ac.uk> and arrange an appointment by emailing [archive@vam.ac.uk](mailto:archive@vam.ac.uk) or calling 020 7603 1514

## 4 Appendices

### 4.1 Chairs

Lord Macmillan	1940 -1942: CEMA
Lord Keynes	1942 -1945: CEMA
	1945 -1946: Arts Council
Sir Ernest Pooley	1946 -1953
Lord Clark	1953 -1960
Lord Cottesloe	1960 -1965
Lord Goodman	1965 -1972
Lord Gibson	1972 -1977
Rt Hon Sir Kenneth Robinson PC	1977 -1982
Lord Rees-Mogg	1982 -1989
Lord Palumbo	1989 -1994
Lord Gowrie PC	1994 -1998
Gerry Robinson	1998 -2003
Sir Christopher Frayling	2004 -

### 4.2 Secretaries-General / Chief Executives

#### **Secretaries-General**

Mary Glasgow CBE	1940 -1946: CEMA
	1946 -1951: Arts Council
Sir William Emrys Williams	1951 -1963
Nigel Abercrombie	1963 -1968
Sir Hugh Willatt	1968 -1975
Sir Roy Shaw	1975 -1983
Luke Rittner	1983 -1990
Anthony Everitt	1990 -1994
Mary Allen	1994 -1997

#### **Chief Executives**

Peter Hewitt	1998 -
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### 4.3 Parliamentary grant-in-aid from 1979/80

1979/80	£63.125 million
1980/81	£70.97 million
1981/82	£80.45 million
1982/83	£91.3 million
1983/84	£96.08 million
1984/85	£101.9 million
1985/86	£106.05 million
1986/87	£135.6 million
1987/88	£139.3 million
1988/89	£152.411 million
1989/90	£155.5 million
1990/91	£175.792 million
1991/92	£205 million
1992/93	£221.2 million
1993/94	£225.83 million
1994/95	£185.99 million*
1995/96	£191.1 million
1996/97	£185.133 million
1997/98	£186.1 million
1998/99	£189.6 million
1999/2000	£227.3 million
2000/01	£237.5 million
2001/02	£252.4 million
2003/04	£336.8 million
2004/05	£365.4 million
2005/06	£410.4 million

\*From 1994/95 the figures refer to the Arts Council of England. Previously the figures related to the Arts Council of Great Britain and so included grant allocations to Scotland and Wales.

The following flow diagrams are available as separate documents from our website:

### 4.4 Government funding for the arts

### 4.5 Lottery funding for the arts

# Contacts

If you would like information on current initiatives, or are interested in applying for funding, please contact our enquiry service on 0845 300 6200, email [enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk) or visit our website at [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

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