



# Cultural Manifesto – 2025

## Introduction

Culture belongs to everyone. TUC Yorkshire and the Humber (TUC YH) seeks public and political support for this eighth Cultural Manifesto, which has been drafted by the TUC YH Creative and Leisure Industries Committee (CLIC).

The TUC YH 2025 Cultural Manifesto puts forward policies for increased public investment in the arts and decent pay and conditions for those working in the cultural sector. The Cost of Living Crisis has led to these policies being more relevant and necessary than ever. The manifesto also covers equality, regional inequalities in arts funding, and Brexit.

### Article 27 of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights says, of culture:

- Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which they are the author.

## National and international issues

■ **Cost of living crisis:** The cost of living crisis preceded by the pandemic has left the creative industries and arts venues suffering from increased costs and cuts to income. The government must support the sector and those who work in it. Freelancers, whatever their trading status, would benefit from a basic income guarantee (for example a Universal Basic Income). TUC policy is for a minimum wage of £15 per hour.

■ **Brexit:** TUC YH supports the government's commitment to improving the UK's trade and investment relationship with the EU by removing barriers to trade and helping touring artists. Transport, cabotage and other problems affecting touring need to be resolved. Work advertisements asking EU passport holders only to apply must be opposed. Rejoining Creative Europe should be considered.

■ **Public Service Broadcasting (PSB):** TUC YH calls on the government to urgently increase funding to the BBC to enable it to end the cuts and to thrive as a public service broadcaster. The BBC needs to be properly funded via the licence fee; subscription models must be rejected by the 2027 Charter Review. TV licences for all over-75s should revert to being funded from general taxation.

Strengthening the PSB remit for impartial, regulated broadcast news is critical as the viability of regional print and online news outlets is uncertain. TUC YH supports the NUJ News Recovery plan. (<https://tinyurl.com/nuj-news-recovery-24>)

■ **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** The government needs to recognise the threat from AI, update the law, and get industry leaders onside so that creatives can feel safe in the knowledge that their intellectual property is protected. The TUC's work on AI should include this.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/artificial-intelligence-ai>  
The unlicensed use of creative works for training generative AI must be prohibited. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from AI must be minimised.

■ **Public funding for arts and culture must be equitable:** Arts funding as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product must be raised to at least the European average level. There remains a huge imbalance in public funding for the arts between London and elsewhere in England. This must be redressed without cuts or disruption to London-based arts organisations. Arts provision in rural areas needs to be increased.

■ **TUC YH urges the reversal of the catastrophic 50% funding cut to arts subjects at higher education level.**

■ **Climate emergency:** TUC YH calls on arts organisations to declare a Climate Emergency. The arts' positive role in facing up to climate change needs to be supported; the negative environmental impact of cultural activities must be minimised. (<https://www.culturedeclares.org>)

■ **#FixStreaming:** Royalties for performers and creators from streaming are woefully inadequate. The government must work with the industry and trades unions to agree an equitable, sustainable and transparent model for royalty distribution from streaming. The practice of buyouts must cease. (<https://tinyurl.com/MU-fixstreaming>)

■ **Regeneration:** TUC YH values culture's role in sustaining shopping areas, supports USDAW's Retail Recovery Plan and endorses bringing closed buildings into creative use. Rehabilitation of existing buildings should be preferred over redevelopment. (<https://tinyurl.com/usdaw-retail-recovery-plan>)

■ **Government support for the arts** should include sectoral tax relief, the Independent Film Tax Credit (IFTTC), theatre, orchestral and museum tax relief and business rates relief. Companies receiving tax relief must provide decent pay and working conditions.

■ **All funding opportunities must be promoted to and accessible to grassroots organisations.**

## ***Local and regional government***

We seek endorsement of these policies by local authorities, elected mayors and combined authorities, and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). We also call on all candidates standing for election to public office to support these policies.

■ **Defend and when possible increase local authority (LA) spending on libraries, arts, art display spaces, heritage and culture:** While LA funding has been drastically reduced, public investment in the creative and leisure industries attracts at least twice as much private sector expenditure. In this region, levels of LA investment in arts, museums and heritage vary hugely. TUC YH supports Campaign for the Arts' 2014 call for all LAs to work towards investing at least 50p per resident per week in the sector. LAs and LEPs should seek new and creative ways to support arts and culture such as collaborative working, shared funding, innovation, experimentation, and specialised business and project support.

■ **Maintain and regularly update a comprehensive arts, heritage and culture strategy for each authority:** This should actively support live performance including the night time economy, live venues, festivals and street performers. Arts and culture must also be at the heart of regeneration. Evidence shows that Arts Council and LEP funding is more readily available where there is LA investment and a clear strategy for the sector. A comprehensive

strategy is crucial to securing additional funding. In the context of devolution, regional co-operation between LAs in developing arts, heritage and culture strategies is essential.

■ **Encourage good employment and engagement practices in arts, heritage and cultural organisations that receive public funding:** LAs should use their powers to help eradicate low pay, poor working conditions and discrimination from the sector, for employees and freelancers alike. Public funding must be contingent upon all client organisations becoming accredited Living Wage employers and formally recognising the appropriate trades unions, entering into collective bargaining in good faith, adhering to applicable trade union agreements, and fully complying with health and safety legislation. Funded arts and cultural projects should differentiate between amateur, community and professional roles and ensure professionals are always properly remunerated.

■ **Ensure that wherever possible local public investment in the arts is spent locally, benefits local workers and local communities, and meets local needs and wants:** We call on LAs to include grant conditions that promote regional casting and local rehearsals in live performance and recorded media. Local workers should be employed in the construction, development and maintenance of the cultural infrastructure and local artists

should be employed in publicly funded theatres and concert halls.

■ **Equality and education:** We call on LAs to support the creative industries' efforts to improve the diversity of the sector's workforce. Every child and young person should have access to a strong cultural education. We welcome the government's review of the school curriculum and assessment and its pledge to put arts, sports and music back at the heart of our schools. We call on LAs to support the education of the cultural workers of the future, and to recognise the importance of school students being able to study creative,

artistic and technical subjects at GCSE when they have an aptitude or a passion for those subjects. Curricula need to be decolonialised.

■ **Lobby central government:** Public investment in the arts has been threatened by cuts to LA funding and the current schools assessment regime. We call on LAs to lobby central government for increased public investment in a thriving regional creative and leisure industries sector, and to protect and enhance arts education. Lobbying should focus on investment and support for the creative and digital sectors across government departments.

## ***Employment in the creative and leisure industries***

Far too often, the creative and leisure industries are blighted by poor working conditions, pay levels less than government minima, harassment and bullying, and even an expectation that professional arts practitioners should work without pay. Such practices must be eradicated.

Many workers in the sector are freelance or self-employed, with fewer legal rights than employees. Like employees however, such workers deserve decent pay and conditions and dignity and respect at work. Creative individuals should be free to choose and pursue freelance or staff career paths sure of equitable remuneration and employment rights.

Organisations and individuals employing or engaging creative individuals must:

■ **implement trade union agreements to provide adequate remuneration.** While government minima need to be rigorously enforced, Living Wage Foundation pay levels for all workers should be regarded as the minimum (<https://www.livingwage.org.uk>). Freelances should be paid equivalent fees.

TUC YH supports Artists Union England's (AUE) Good Practice Charter. (<https://tinyurl.com/aue-gpc>)

■ **recognise trades unions and encourage employees and workers to join unions.**

■ **maintain high health and safety at work standards** including clear policies opposing harassment, discrimination and bullying at work with effective procedures for reporting, investigating and resolving complaints in line with ILO Convention 190.

■ **uphold all employment legislation**, extend it to cover freelance and self-employed workers and strive to improve terms and conditions.

■ **support regional casting and rehearsals** to increase opportunities for local performers to be considered for and participate in work in Yorkshire and the Humber. For casting or rehearsals outside the region, travel and subsistence expenses must be paid.

TUC YH expresses solidarity with the efforts of all union campaigns to end low pay and no pay.

## ***Culture belongs to everyone***

Barriers to participation in culture on grounds of class, low income, age, disability, gender, race, ethnic or national origin, sexuality, caring responsibilities or other personal characteristics must be removed:

■ **Equality of access:** For audiences and performers/creators, including

- public investment to make ticket prices to live performances affordable;
- continued 'free' access to libraries and museums;

- affordable, convenient and reliable public transport to encourage participation.

■ **Equality of opportunity:** The growing economic exclusion of poor and middle-income earners from the cultural industries and from participatory arts projects must be reversed.

■ **Discrimination = injustice** as has been powerfully highlighted by the Black Lives Matter and Me Too movements. Creators and the media should reflect a society where

people do not face discrimination under any of the protected characteristics stated in the Equality Act 2010. More must be done to encourage the broadest possible range of creative voices, venues and forms. TUC YH supports union initiatives such as BECTU's Theatre Diversity Action Plan and the Stage Sight campaign. (<https://tinyurl.com/bectu-tdap> <https://www.stagesight.org> <https://tinyurl.com/equity-dignity>)

## ***The creative and leisure industries are IMPORTANT***

■ TV, film, reading, music, cabaret, comedy, circus, digital arts and technology, journalism, creative writing, theatre, dance, visual arts, modelling, creative use of materials and more provide millions of livelihoods.

■ Arts and cultural education enhance job prospects in a fast-changing digital world.

■ Arts and culture entertain, educate, challenge and encourage creativity.

■ Arts and culture improve well-being, mental health and bring joy.

■ Arts participation enhances community cohesion and reduces social exclusion.

■ Arts and culture generate wealth.

■ Culture is a catalyst for regeneration.

■ Arts and culture bring positive change.

## ***The sector is VIABLE and must be nurtured***

■ The creative industries have been the fastest growing sector of the UK economy. For 2022, the DCMS estimated the sector's value (excluding tourism) to be £169.4bn, making up 7.7% of Gross Value Added (GVA). From 2019 to 2022, DCMS sectors' excluding tourism GVA grew by 12.7%, despite falling between 2019 and 2020 during the pandemic.

■ According to UK Music's *This is Music* 2024 report, music exports contributed £4.6bn to the UK economy in 2023. In Yorkshire and the Humber, music tourism sustained 3,890 jobs, attracted 1.1m tourists and generated £434m spending by tourists in 2023. ([www.ukmusic.org](http://www.ukmusic.org))

## ***About the TUC YH Creative and Leisure Industries Committee***

The TUC YH CLIC encourages participation by all trades unions. Those involved so far include Artists' Union England, the BECTU sector of Prospect, Equity, the Musicians' Union (MU), NASUWT, National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and UNISON.

The CLIC welcomes comments on this manifesto and may be contacted by e-mail at [NorthEastYorkshireHumber@tuc.org.uk](mailto:NorthEastYorkshireHumber@tuc.org.uk). To join the CLIC's mailing list, please opt in at <https://eepurl.com/dvPQs9>.



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