

New £250 million Culture Investment Fund launched

Innovative cultural projects, libraries, museums and creative industries will benefit from £250m of new funding for the culture and creative sector, the Culture Secretary announced today.

Of this new funding over £125m will be invested in regional museums and libraries around the country. More than £90m will be provided to extend the Cultural Development Fund which uses investment in heritage, culture and creativity to drive regeneration and growth.

A further £18.5 million has been allocated to York's National Railway Museum, and an extra £7 million for Coventry and the UK City of Culture programme.

In total, over the next 5 years, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will invest an additional £50 million each year in culture and the creative industries across England to revitalise existing assets and to support new cultural development.

Culture Secretary Nicky Morgan said:

Creative and cultural institutions are at the heart of our communities. The Cultural Investment Fund is the Government's biggest ever single investment in cultural infrastructure, local museums and neighbourhood libraries and will benefit communities across the country. This will help drive growth, rejuvenate high streets and attract tourists to our world-class cultural attractions.

The CIF will provide funding for a wide range of projects, including:

- Extending the Cultural Development Fund for another 5 years with over £90m of funding, which will enable more than 20 places across the country to transform their local cultural and creative industry infrastructure.
- Kickstarting the transformation of the National Railway Museum, including new gallery and exhibition spaces, improved accessibility and the restoration of heritage buildings. The museum will become the cultural hub of York Central – the redevelopment of the largest city centre brownfield site in Europe – projected to include 6,500 high-value jobs, and up to 2,500 new homes.
- Major infrastructure and maintenance work at local and regional museums across the country, safeguarding precious collections and local landmarks and increasing opportunities for commercial and community use. This will help realise one of the key recommendations of the Mendoza review about how the government can better support the sustainability of

the sector in England.

- Upgrading buildings and technology so public libraries across England are better placed to respond to the changing ways people are using them.
- Additional support for UK City of Culture 2021 to transform Coventry, unlocking £37m of additional funding and over £107m of tourism impacts.

The £250 million investment will be delivered by DCMS, with Arts Council England (ACE) having a key role in distributing the fund. Both the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England will also play important roles, particularly in the delivery of the museums maintenance fund.

ACE has significant expertise in assessing capital projects and evaluating funding applications. It will run open competitions to ensure that investment goes to the best projects and benefits across the country.

Arts Council England Chair Nick Serota said:

This additional and very significant investment is exciting news for culture and for communities across the country. We are grateful to the Secretary of State and to the government for responding so positively, following conversations over the past few months. We know that towns and villages up and down England will benefit from investment in local libraries and museums, and in new jobs in our growing creative industries. We'll work closely with Government to develop the detail of the programme in the coming days and weeks.

Tim Davie, Industry co-Chair of the Creative Industries Council said:

Our creative industries are world renowned and vital to future economic growth. This extra funding is excellent news. It will extend the successful work developing vibrant creative industry hubs across England, a central theme of the Creative Industries Sector Deal agreed between the Creative Industries Council and Government last year.

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, said:

Coventry City of Culture is a golden opportunity for the West Midlands and a brilliant stage on which to showcase our great pool of cultural and digital talent.

Not only will residents get to enjoy and take part in the wide range of events, shows, and activities throughout the year, but City of Culture will also create both job and volunteering opportunities for local people.

The Government has played an important role in helping to make this happen, and I am delighted that they have provided further funding to help City of Culture be the best it can possibly be.

Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive Coventry City of Culture Trust said:

We are delighted to receive the news about the funding for Coventry City of Culture Trust. This new investment will ensure that we are able to deliver the most extraordinary year of events in 2021, welcoming more than 2.5 million extra visitors and laying the foundations for a meaningful legacy for one of the UK's most youthful and diverse cities and region".

Sir Ian Blatchford, Chairman of the National Museum Directors' Council and Director of the Science Museum Group, said:

This fund will make a huge difference to regional museums that are doing superb work and is a welcome recognition of the importance of investment in our cultural heritage. At a time when the eyes of the world are turned to Britain, it is encouraging to see further funding for culture, following the recent positive spending round.

Judith McNicol, Director of the National Railway Museum, said:

This is wonderful news for the National Railway Museum – and for the City of York. This £18.6m investment by the Government is an extremely significant milestone in realising our £55m Vision 2025 campaign to turn our museum into a truly world-class attraction. It is the springboard for unlocking our role as the cultural heartbeat of York Central – one of the most ambitious regeneration projects in Europe.

[UK aid to provide education and jobs to thousands of Syrian refugees](#)

The UK will help thousands of Syrian children access quality education and create jobs for Syrian refugees forced to flee their homes to neighbouring Lebanon, Minister for the Middle East Dr Andrew Murrison announced today (11

October 2019).

During a visit to Lebanon, Dr Murrison met some of the 7,000 Syrian and Lebanese children set to benefit from this UK aid allocation of £2 million.

Nearly half of the children who have fled conflict in Syria risk being denied an education because they have missed too many days of school or there are not enough school places for them. Today's announcement takes the total number of child refugees being supported by UK aid in Lebanon to over 300,000.

Today's UK support will also help to improve the conditions needed to create new businesses and jobs in areas hosting large numbers of refugees. This includes improving vital infrastructure, such as the redevelopment of market spaces, which is central to businesses successfully trading in local communities and boosting incomes. Over one million people will be helped to support themselves and their families.

Dr Murrison was also able to discuss the situation in Northeast Syria with key international agencies working in Syria and Lebanon. He expressed the UK's serious concerns about Turkey's military incursion and the potential humanitarian consequences of the situation, and reaffirmed that the UK is ready to respond.

The UK continues to be a leading donor to the humanitarian response inside Syria, including the Northeast region, to which we have allocated £40 million this year. This will go to those who need it most, and will provide vital medicine and shelter, including helping those caught up in the current ongoing conflict. But we will not support plans for returns until the conditions are in place for a safe and voluntary return home.

Speaking during his visit to Lebanon, Minister for the Middle East, Dr Andrew Murrison, said:

I have seen first-hand that UK aid is providing a vital education lifeline for the hundreds of thousands of Syrian children that have been forced to flee the brutal conflict in Syria. Too many children have had their childhoods stolen away from them by the war and we will not allow their future to be lost.

That is why UK aid is helping vulnerable Syrian refugees to get access to education and jobs that they deserve to give them hope for the future.

The only way of ending this misery, including for those still trapped in Syria, is through a negotiated political settlement which ensures the safety of those who wish to return home voluntarily. The Syrian regime must engage seriously and constructively in the new Constitutional Committee as a first step in this direction.

Whilst on the visit, Dr Murrison spoke directly to Syrian families living in extremely challenging conditions, who are receiving UK aid to meet their most urgent survival needs. He also visited a trading area in Tripoli where UK aid has helped restore the roof of a souk, and refurbish shops so they can open for business.

Across Lebanon, UK aid is boosting the local economy. In Mount Lebanon, where there are high numbers of Syrian refugees, UK support has helped to transform the fishing port of Jiyeh. UK aid has redesigned the port, creating space for more boats, establishing a market space and providing fishing equipment, like fishnets and fish finding technology for fishermen, benefiting over 300,000 people.

UK aid support in Lebanon has also already helped to provide:

- access to clean water and sanitation for 471,000 people;
- a decent education for around 322,000 children;
- and nutrition for 9,000 children under 5, women and adolescent girls.

To date, the UK has committed £2.81 billion in response to the Syria Crisis, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis. Since 2012, across Syria and the region, we have provided over 28 million food rations, over 17 million medical consultations, and over 12 million vaccines. Our aid provides life-saving support to millions of Syrians.

Dr Murrison met with President Michel Aoun, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, MPs and senior business leaders to discuss the important relationship between the two countries. He thanked Lebanon for the essential role it has played throughout the conflict, ensuring that Syria's instability does not spread through the wider region.

Notes to editors

- Today's announcements of UK aid for Lebanon are allocations from funds that the UK pledged at the Syria Conference 2019 in Brussels. The UK's Department for International Development will provide:
- £31 million to the Lebanon Municipal Services Programme 3 (LHSP3) to support communities hosting refugees – this will run for three years from 2019 to 2020.
- £2 million to the No Lost Generation Initiative to provide education to Syrian children, taking total UK support to the Initiative in Lebanon to £67 million.
- Free-to-use photographs from Dr Murrison's visit are available [here](#). Any usage must be credited to: 'HM Government'

ENDS

Threatened species receive game-changing funding boost

[unable to retrieve full-text content]International biodiversity receives funding boost one year on from the largest ever Illegal Wildlife Conference held in London

Government seeks views on cat microchipping

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers has today [launched a call for evidence on cat microchipping](#) as part of plans which could help reunite lost cats with their owners, tackle pet theft and identify cats injured or killed on roads.

The government is seeking to find out what the effect of mandatory cat microchipping would be on owners, rescue and rehoming centres and cats themselves. The call for evidence will last for 12 weeks and respondents are being encouraged to respond as soon as possible.

Environment Secretary, Theresa Villiers, said:

Today's call for evidence on cat microchipping will help the government understand how we can better protect this country's much-loved cats and kittens.

This government is committed to animal welfare and improving the lives of our companion animals.

Today's announcement builds on a series of positive actions we have taken to improve welfare standards in this country, including a ban on the third-party sale of puppies and kittens and a commitment to increase maximum sentencing for animal cruelty from six months to five years.

The process of microchipping involves the insertion of a chip, generally around the size of a grain of rice, painlessly under the skin of a pet. The microchip has a unique serial number which can be read by a scanner. When an animal strays or is lost, scanning the microchip means the registered owner can be identified and the pet can be reunited with them.

Although microchipping is a legal requirement for dogs, it is not currently required for cats unless they are travelling under the Pet Travel Scheme.

Compulsory dog microchipping was introduced in April 2016 and statistics show that 92% of dogs are now microchipped. As a result of compulsory microchipping, displaced dogs have been reunited with their owners much quicker, reducing the time they spend in rehoming kennels and reducing owner and animal distress.

Cats Protection's Chief Executive, James Yeates, said:

Cats Protection, the UK's leading cat welfare charity, welcomes this call for evidence on cat microchipping. Microchipping is an essential part of responsible pet ownership, yet each year we still take in thousands of cats which have not been microchipped. The majority of strays we take in are unchipped and so we are usually unable to trace an owner and the cats have to be rehomed.

Microchipping is a safe and permanent way to give a lost cat the best chance of being returned to their home. People tell us how knowing their cat is microchipped gives them reassurance, and it also ensures owners can be informed in the sad event of their cat being injured or killed on the road.

Compulsory dog microchipping was introduced in England through the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 (the 2015 Regulations). The aim was to improve the welfare of dogs and help reduce issues related to stray dogs.

[She Plays Safe: a #LeaveNoGirlBehind project in Venezuela](#)

Being a girl or teenager in Venezuela these days is rather difficult. Most Venezuelans can barely cover their most basic needs like food, sanitation, education and healthcare. Imagine being a girl or a teenager, stuck in these family dynamics. The humanitarian crisis is affecting women and girls more heavily, as per the latest [Women at the Edge](#) report, issued by local NGOs.

Women and girls' sexual and reproductive rights are at risk too. Teenage pregnancy rates have gone up due to the lack of availability of contraceptives, making Venezuela the country with the third highest rate in Latin America, only comparable to that of Sub-Saharan countries, as per a WHO/UNFPA 2018 report. Children are also dropping out of school massively. Local NGOs have calculated a 30% drop in school attendance, related to the lack of food, transport and money to pay for school supplies and uniforms. We know how this affects girls, preventing them from having a better chance in life and better opportunities to fulfil their potential and achieve their

dreams. Hoping to help tackle some of these issues, the UK is funding the project She Plays Safe (SPS), through the British Embassy in Caracas, as part of the #LeaveNoGirlBehind campaign, which advocates for 12 years of quality education for girls.

Through football and rugby clinics, more than 160 young female Venezuelan athletes from low-income communities from across the country, are being trained on effective communication skills, self-esteem and wellbeing, early-pregnancy prevention, career planning, gender equality and female leadership and empowerment. The ultimate goal is to give these girls a real chance to fulfil their life project, despite the harsh conditions in which they are growing, helping them explore the job or study opportunities for women and girls in sports available to them, while reducing the chance of dropping out of school.

About 160 young female Venezuelan athletes from low-income communities are participating in the project

A study of the US Women's Sport Foundation showed that "athletic participation functions as a developmental resource for many adolescent females in ways that positively influence sexual behaviours while reducing girls' risk for pregnancy."

We are proud to work with the Venezuelan NGO Deporte para el Desarrollo (Sports for Development) on this transcendental initiative, and their multidisciplinary team comprised of athletes, psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists, along with other key partners such as UNFPA and local women's organisations. We hope that our SPS Ambassadors, will develop a greater sense of belonging to their sports academies, and that through advocacy, they become role models for future female athletes' generations and the wider sports community in Venezuela, helping battle traditional gender stereotypes.

This year's theme for the International Day of the Girl, which is marked every 11 October, is "Girls Force: Unscripted and Unstoppable". We would like to think these girls will be just that: unscripted and unstoppable.

Guest blog by Irene Coello, Programmes Manager & Human Rights Adviser, British Embassy Caracas.