

The holistic case for the arts and public broadcasting

Abstract of a speech given by Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chairman, Arts Council England

At the Arts Council we constantly review the scope of our work, asking ourselves if we are meeting contemporary challenges – and looking at how we communicate what we do.

To help people understand the contribution the arts make to all our lives, we are developing what we call *The holistic case for public support of arts and culture*.

By this we mean that the arts make vital contributions to our lives in ways that should be considered individually – and collectively.

The holistic case has four key elements: the intrinsic value of *culture*, the broader advantages to *society*, the symbiotic relationship with *education* and the *economic* benefits.

Through *culture*, we come to understand and articulate ourselves; the arts illuminate our inner lives, enrich our emotional world and teach us compassion. They give us insight. They engage us in a dialogue about values; they define our national identity and our concept of citizenship. They hand down the tradition, the ideas and the language that make us confident innovators.

The arts are essential at all levels of *education*, bringing imagination and self-expression into the primary school and the university lecture hall. From first contact to life-long learning, the arts have an important relationship with other subjects. We need to make sure that the arts are integral to the teaching of science, technology, engineering and maths.

Our arts sector is also a major contributor to the health and wellbeing of *society*, in our engagement with children and young people, with older people, with the sick and the marginalised, in hospitals and in prisons. We support the individuality of local communities and through our commitment to diversity we strive to bring out the positive, creative potential of the whole of society.

And then there is the *economy*. We are beginning to understand the wide contribution the creative and cultural sectors make to economic strength. Our arts generate revenue from tourism, attract income to other areas of the economy, shape the environment for economic regeneration, drive our exports and fly the flag abroad.

These beneficial relationships are complex and interrelated; together they form a lens through which we can look at other areas of public investment and consider how they have an impact on our lives.

In 2016, the Royal Charter under which the BBC operates will come up for renewal. The charter is the BBC's constitution. It sets out the BBC's purpose and guarantees its independence from government. Charter renewal provokes a vigorous debate about the value of public broadcasting.

Using the holistic case we can take a fresh perspective on the BBC's cultural mission, and the role of public broadcasting generally. We can see that there are many similarities to the wider arts.

The BBC has made a huge contribution to the *culture, education and economy* of our country, and has played a crucial role in preserving and promoting a democratic *society*.

Its cultural values are part of our lives, and its impartiality provides a powerful defence of our democratic society. The BBC has a formal and informal education mission and it has also been a vital contributor to our cultural economy, providing talent and content throughout our creative industries.

But how should the role of public broadcasting evolve? Can it form new kinds of partnerships, so that its money is shared and its value to the public is perceptibly increased through its wider involvement with society?

In this era where finances are tight, we will all need to work together to multiply the value we can get from public investment – and we must make sure that the public understand where this money is spent, and the benefits they get back from it, both for their communities, and for their country. That's what the holistic case is about.

Sir Peter Bazalgette is Chair of Arts Council England. He is also a non-executive director of ITV. Previously he served on the Board of Channel 4 and was an independent producer for 20 years.