

Charity Is Part of Britain's Cultural Landscape

I've seen the life-changing difference philanthropy makes. Now it's time to transform how charitable giving operates.

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By [John Studzinski](#)



Reflect upon your present blessings.

Photographer: *Betty Laura Zapata/Bloomberg*

This is the season of goodwill and giving, when the UK's charitable sector comes to the fore. As someone who has been active as a philanthropist in the UK for more than 40 years, I know what a difference philanthropy can make, particularly to the arts and cultural sector. It's a lot more than just giving money or one's treasures. It's also about the other "T's" of time and talent. Inspired by the *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, I have identified 12 bold

measures we can take to strengthen and expand philanthropy in the UK.

- 1. Establish a government-backed match fund for philanthropy:** People are [84%](#) more likely to give to a charitable cause if match funding is offered. The UK should build on successful models like the Big Give to create a dedicated match fund for targeted sectors like culture. By doubling individual and corporate contributions, this government backing could foster local and national cultural growth. Match funding is a proven catalyst for philanthropic giving and would provide a significant boost to underfunded cultural initiatives.
- 2. Create a strong presence for philanthropy in government:** A permanent, dedicated government policy unit for philanthropy would embed giving at the heart of policy decisions. Led by a philanthropy champion, this unit could collaborate across departments to promote localized giving initiatives and ensure cultural philanthropy is a key focus of public policy.
- 3. Amplify national giving initiatives and a philanthropy ambassadors program:** The UK doesn't have the same celebratory culture of giving as other countries (particularly the US). We need to encourage people to celebrate their generosity and inspire others, so raising awareness of national initiatives like Giving Tuesday and Volunteers' Week is essential. Appointing high-profile cultural philanthropists as ambassadors to inspire public and private donations would help to amplify the impact of these campaigns.

4. **Incentivize corporate match funding for employee “give as you earn” initiatives:** Workplace giving programs are a powerful yet underutilized tool. Encouraging employees to make tax-efficient donations directly from their salaries, coupled with employers matching contributions, could significantly boost charitable funding. The government could offer incentives to businesses to participate in these programs.
5. **Simplify and promote Gift Aid and other tax incentives for giving:** Gift Aid has immense potential but around £560 million (\$702 million) of tax relief goes unclaimed each year, because of complexities in the claiming process. Simplifying Gift Aid, particularly for small and medium-sized charities, is an obvious way to unlock millions annually. Public campaigns to raise awareness about Gift Aid and other tax incentives, such as credits for donations to underfunded cultural causes, would further encourage giving.
6. **Work with local leaders to stimulate regional philanthropy:** Regional initiatives like Leeds’ One For the City, where businesses commit a percentage of their profit to local charities, provide a blueprint for place-based philanthropy. Convening roundtables with regional business leaders and philanthropists can replicate and scale such efforts across the UK.
7. **Establish “Charitable Action Zones” to localize philanthropy:** This initiative could target areas with high need and low levels of giving. By providing targeted matched funding, these zones would attract private investment and drive regional social impact. Similar to the US Community

Development Financial Institutions Fund, this approach leverages public backing to deliver greater social impact.

8. **Introduce “everyday philanthropy” campaigns to promote a positive national narrative:** Philanthropy isn’t just for ultra-high net worth individuals. Government-led campaigns could champion accessible ways for people to support arts and culture, from volunteering to monthly micro-donations. By celebrating everyday acts of generosity, these initiatives would foster a more inclusive culture of giving.
9. **Collaborate with trusts and foundations to expand support:** Trusts and foundations are vital to the UK’s cultural landscape. By identifying funding gaps and co-funding opportunities, the government can align public and private resources for maximum impact. Long-standing collaborations, such as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund, are a testament to the power of partnership.
10. **Standardize and encourage philanthropy training for wealth advisers:** Wealth advisers are gatekeepers to significant potential giving. Yet, philanthropy advice remains fragmented. By working with the Financial Conduct Authority to make philanthropy a standard part of adviser training, the government can unlock new funding streams for cultural organizations.
11. **Share and use local data:** Data is playing an increasingly important role in philanthropy. Government-supported platforms that integrate local needs with charity services could revolutionize how resources are allocated. By

combining information from charities, funders and local authorities, we can direct funding to where it's needed most.

12. **Introduce an optional donation from lottery winners:** Providing a choice to donate a portion of their winnings to cultural organizations could unlock a significant new funding stream, allowing them to contribute while celebrating their good fortune.

Together, these measures form a road map to transform philanthropy in the UK. Philanthropy has the power to drive change, unite communities and address social challenges in ways that public and private sectors alone can't. By embracing bold initiatives and fostering a culture of generosity in this coming year, the UK can unleash the full potential of philanthropy to enrich lives and build a better future for all.

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