

To: The Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport,

Cc:

Baroness Shriti Vadera, Chair, Creative Industries Council

Sir Peter Bazalgette, Co-Chair, Creative Industries Council

Caroline Norbury OBE, Chief Executive, Creative UK

Chair and Members of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State - Wajid Khan, Baron Khan of Burnley

A Call to Recognise English Sacred Choral Music as Living Heritage

We, the undersigned musicians, educators, cultural organisations, and advocates, are adding our voice to the growing campaign for UK to recognise and safeguard English Sacred Choral Music as UNESCO Living Heritage. Internationally acclaimed, the choral tradition continues as a vibrant, evolving practice that nurtures young talent, and strengthens communities. For hundreds of years, it has contributed significantly to the UK's cultural, creative and educational ecosystem. We want to ensure that it does so for hundreds more to come.

Without formal recognition and protection, the benefits derived culturally, socially, educationally and economically will be negatively impacted across the UK.

Despite its 500-year-old heritage, English Sacred Choral Music has lacked formal recognition as a key component in the cultural ecosystem and a living, skills-based practice.

The stewardship of sacred choral music in the UK involves meeting the daily costs of sustaining world-class music while navigating significant financial pressures. Its continuation relies on dedicated practitioners, music educators, and choirs, yet policy frameworks provide little targeted support to sustain and safeguard it, with no access to National Lottery or other statutory funding available to the wider cultural heritage sector.

Recognising this art form would help to safeguard the many professional musicians employed in choral foundations and strengthen the communities that sustain and evolve its music. Recognition on the UK's Living Heritage inventory would amplify its contribution to the strategic outcomes outlined in the [Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan](#): cultivating growth of the UK's creative economy, sustaining skills development, and reinforcing our global cultural influence.

Woven into the very fabric of the nation, English Sacred Choral Music encompasses far more than performance: it represents a body of shared knowledge, skill, language, and artistry that now extends across the globe. From the training of choristers to the compositional craft of sacred music, and through rituals such as Evensong and Mass, this canon fosters community, identity, and artistic excellence.

The English sacred choral tradition generates value both as a foundational component to the UK music industry and through its current contribution of professional and amateur performers. Long-established standards of excellence sustain skills, professional networks, and performance infrastructure that feed into the wider music workforce and its economic output. The UK music industry contributed a record £8 billion to the national economy in 2024 and supported around 220,000 jobs ([UK Music, This Is Music 2025](#); [Musicians' Union](#)).

Within this context, the role of churches and cathedrals is significant: attracting over 10 million visitors annually, thousands of professional and voluntary musicians perform world-class music every day within them, functioning not only as places of worship and heritage tourism, but as active performance venues embedded within the UK's musical economy. There is a clear correlation beyond immediate economic measure, that the vitality of this living tradition sustains repertoire and artists of international standing, delivering cultural and artistic value that reinforces the UK's global musical reputation while contributing to its economic success.

We urge the Government to:

1. Safeguard English Sacred Choral Music as UNESCO Living Heritage in the UK to ensure policy frameworks reflect its living, evolving nature and its integral role in the cultural, educational, and economic ecosystem of the UK whilst supporting the ambitions of the Creative Industries Sector Plan.
2. Actively support programmes that sustain children and young people's engagement in music education through this tradition, recognising the current and potential role of choral foundations within a holistic cultural curriculum.

English Sacred Choral Music is a dynamic, evolving cultural treasure.

Your support for formal recognition will ensure that this living tradition can continue to flourish, nurturing generations of musicians, and enriching communities. It will strengthen the UK's creative economy and reinforce its position as a global leader in musical excellence. We stand ready to ensure that this living heritage endures and thrives for centuries to come and would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with you in this process.

Yours sincerely,

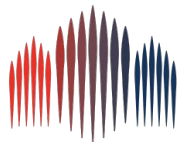
Cathedral Music Trust

This letter is supported by a further **1,796** signatories and the undersigned:

Association of Leading Visitor Attractions
Association of English Cathedrals
Royal School of Church Music
Conference of Catholic Directors of Music
Choir Schools Association
Royal Philharmonic Society
Royal Northern College of Music
Clergy Support Trust
Church Commissioners
National Schools Singing Programme
Making Music
Three Choirs Festival
Voces8 Foundation

Rodolfus Choral Foundation
National Youth Choir
The King's Singers
Ex Cathedra
The Sixteen
Stile Antico
Earth Choir Academy
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Harry Christophers CBE
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The Very Reverend Sarah E Murray
Professor Louise Gullifer KC (Hon) FBA