# Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy highlights fashion's role in national identity



Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy has taken a notable stance on the fashion industry, declaring it integral to the “soul of the nation” and asserting that the sector holds a central position in the Government's industrial strategy. In an interview with Elle UK, Ms Nandy, who is also Member of Parliament for Wigan, highlighted the urgent need for the government to recognise the significance of fashion, not only for the economy but as a crucial facet of national identity.

Ms Nandy acknowledged receiving “very loud and clear” calls from the fashion sector for the reintroduction of tax-free shopping, a system that previously allowed tourists to claim VAT refunds on purchases made at UK airports and high street shops. However, she conveyed that discussions on reinstating this scheme are not currently on the agenda, as it was scrapped by the previous administration on the grounds of limited economic benefits. “If it is a benefit, it’s something that we’ll explore, but at the moment, that’s not something we’re proposing to do,” she stated.

Reflecting on the broader national sentiment, Ms Nandy suggested that the UK has suffered a decline in self-confidence over the past decade, attributing this to the lengthy period of Conservative governance prior to the upcoming 2024 general election. She asserted, “When I reflect on the last decade, I feel the country has lost its self-confidence,” but expressed optimism about the potential of the creative industries, including film, music, and arts, to thrive with government support that matches their ambition.

The Culture Secretary praised the fashion industry for its ability to “interpret and shape the country,” contrasting it with politics, which she described as “bad” at the same task. Ms Nandy shared her personal reflections on fashion, recalling her own style influences from 1990s American R&B and Hip Hop stars Aaliyah and Mary J Blige. She expressed a degree of relief at the absence of photographic evidence from that era, commenting, “There’s not much you can say about what I wear nowadays that isn’t water off a duck’s back.”

Speaking of her current fashion choices, Ms Nandy noted the significance of showcasing British talent, highlighting a silk shirt and blazer by designer Laura Pitharas as an example of the artistry present in the UK’s fashion scene.

The British Fashion Council has echoed Ms Nandy’s sentiments, outlining its priorities for the incoming government and joining over 400 businesses across various sectors in a call for the restoration of the tax-free shopping scheme. They contend that the lack of such incentives places UK designers, retailers, and manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage to overseas markets.

As the government navigates its industrial strategy, the fashion industry remains a focal point for discussions about national identity and economic viability, as illustrated by the remarks made by the Culture Secretary in her interview. For further details, readers can refer to the full article available at elle.com/uk/lisa-nandy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/lisa-nandy-government-culture-secretary-british-fashion-council-vat-b2734011.html> - This article reports on Lisa Nandy's assertion that fashion is integral to the 'soul of the nation' and discusses her commitment to placing the fashion industry at the heart of the Government's industrial strategy.
* <https://www.elle.com/uk/life-and-culture/a64439250/lisa-nandy/> - The piece delves into Nandy's remarks about the creative industries' importance to the UK economy and her acknowledgment of the fashion sector's substantial economic contribution.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/culture-secretary-declares-culture-media-and-sport-sectors-crucial-to-national-growth-mission> - This announcement by the Government highlights Nandy's vision for the culture, media, and sport sectors to drive national growth, supporting her claims about the fashion industry's role in economic viability.
* <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wiener/programs/economy/podcast/episode-6-lisa-nandy-UK-leveling-up-progressive-politics-localism> - In this podcast episode, Nandy discusses economic reforms and the importance of local empowerment, reinforcing her views on restoring confidence in the UK and the significance of creative industries.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2025/04/16/nandy-opens-door-to-scrapping-tourist-tax/> - This article covers Nandy's acknowledgment of calls from the fashion sector to reinstate tax-free shopping, supporting her comments about its previous elimination and the government's stance on reviewing this policy.