

Combined authorities and the creative industries

Contents

List of figures	3
Executive summary	4
1. Context and approach	8
2. The economic contribution of the creative industries to combined authorities	10
Creative industries employment	10
Indirect economic contributions	18
3. How the combined authorities have worked with the creative industries	21
Supporting the creative industries through the COVID-19 pandemic	21
Combined authority case studies	22
Regional working outside of combined authorities	53
4. Opportunities	56
'Levelling Up' White Paper	56
5. Conclusion: The future role of combined authorities	63
Leadership	64
Understanding and evidence gathering	64
Levelling up within combined authorities	65

List of figures

Figure 1 Employment in the creative industries in the combined authorities (2020)	13
Figure 2 Percentage change in creative industries employment in the combined authorities (2015-2020)	14
Figure 3 Combined employment in the creative industries in the combined authorities compared to the national picture (2020)	15
Figure 4 Percentage change in combined creative industries employment in the combined authorities (2015-2020)	16
Figure 5 Businesses and enterprises in Creative Industries (CI) in combined authorities (2015, 2020)	17

Executive summary

The creative industries accelerate growth in local economies, both directly and indirectly. This growth can be assisted by combined authorities. New opportunities for combined authorities to do this are emerging from the Government's devolution deals, levelling up policies and creative sector vision.

The Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned this research to explore the role of combined authorities in relation to the creative industries and the potential of new opportunities for combined authorities to fulfil this role. This context and our approach are set out in [chapter 1](#).

The contribution of the creative industries to the economies of combined authorities is significant – as we illustrate in [chapter 2](#). Across the combined authorities, on average three per cent of employment is in the creative industries. In Greater Manchester, for example, this amounts to over 50,000 jobs. All combined authorities benefit from clusters of creative excellence and growth in creative employment that outpace national averages.

Supporting this employment will bring direct benefit to the economies of combined authorities and a range of indirect benefits, which we evidence in [chapter 2](#):

- developing and rebranding an area's cultural identity
- driving footfall, hospitality, and night-time / leisure / tourism industries
- improving wellbeing and productivity
- encouraging inward investment and business clustering.

Various agencies, such as Arts Council England, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and local authorities, have pursued strategies to seize these benefits. In 2020, the LGA published [Creative Places](#), a local creative economy toolkit, which focused on the role of local authorities in this context.

Having a combined authority with a focus on the creative industries is not an essential prerequisite of local growth of these industries. Local authorities can play a key role in supporting this growth and the innovation and entrepreneurship of these industries can also spur growth independent of public policy. Any support from public policy should take a form that is tailored to the local challenges and opportunities, which may or may not include a role for combined authorities.

One of our case studies in chapter 3 (Durham), for example, reviews how a creative sector has been supported outside of combined authority structures. There are, though, distinct ways in which combined authorities add value to the development of the creative industries.

In chapter 3, we explore this role for combined authorities through a series of case studies. Conclusions on the potential added value of combined authorities emerge, which we further develop in chapter 5, identifying a series of distinct features of the role of combined authorities:

- leadership at a regional level
- enhancing evidence gathering and understanding
- levelling up capacity within combined authorities
- infrastructure development, including joined up approaches across regions.

Each of these features is explored in turn, with chapter 5 providing specific details around best practice, including:

- The strategic leadership that combined authorities provide. This often draws upon the convening power of mayors, provides new direction to the creative industries, and helps to attract additional funding, for example:
 - The Tees Valley Combined Authority won new investment after launching an independent taskforce, supported by the Mayor, to review ways forward for its creative sector following the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The West Midlands Mayor has backed a new vehicle to support the region's creative content sector (Create Central), which has secured noticeable wins – including the relocation of MasterChef to Birmingham.
 - In the West of England, the Mayor has worked with the Cultural Compact for the region to develop and energise a cultural plan across this geography.
- The need for the strategic leadership of combined authorities to be grounded in robust evidence about local creative strengths and weaknesses. Combined authorities often have a greater capacity than local authorities to assemble this evidence and to provide relevant expertise.
- The capacity of combined authorities to spread cultural opportunity and creative employment more evenly within their boundaries – in other words, to achieve levelling up through enhanced local coordination and delivery. Combined authorities often bring together centres with rich cultural assets alongside areas with weaker cultural bases. Stronger connections between areas with different levels of cultural capacity and infrastructure can be mutually beneficial and facilitated by combined authorities, for example:
 - Knowsley is the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture for 2022 – seeking to extend creative opportunities across the region.

- West Yorkshire benefits from a major creative centre in Leeds and a series of culturally ambitious local authorities in other parts of the combined authority (for example Bradford, Wakefield) – with the combined authority having a role in navigating mutually beneficial futures between these different places.
- Combined authorities can break down policy silos that prevent the creative industries maximising its contribution. For example, improving wellbeing through access to culture is one of the priorities of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). This includes strategic support for cultural social prescribing.¹ Effective working between the cultural and health sectors is crucial to enduring social prescribing success – which is supported by this strategic backing from WECA.

This breaking down of silos will be important to localities making the most of the opportunities contained in the UK government’s ‘Levelling Up the United Kingdom’ White Paper. A framework for reducing health inequalities is contained in the White Paper and combined authorities can contribute to this ambition by ensuring that culture is integrated into local public health policy – as WECA are doing.

This White Paper contains specific commitments to the creative industries and, as we discuss in chapter 4, the creative industries are relevant to other parts of this White Paper:

- Research and Development (R&D): The Government see the growth of R&D across the UK as a driver of levelling up and the creative industries are research intensive, meaning that creative industries development complements the strengthening of R&D bases within combined authorities.
- Infrastructure: The White Paper contains commitments to improve transport and digital infrastructure, which can facilitate the growth of the creative industries. The rollout of these infrastructure improvements should be coordinated by combined authorities with plans for creative industries development, for example the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is supporting the regeneration around the Peterborough station quarter and an enhanced cultural offer in the city in tandem with one another.
- Skills: Skills are often a major area of focus for combined authorities. Creative workers have benefitted from general skills improvement programmes administered by combined authorities (for example Skills Bank, a business support programme run by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority) and by more specialised programmes (for example the West Yorkshire Combined Authority provided such following the relocation of Channel 4 to Leeds).

1 Social prescribing enables GPs, nurses, and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services – such as engaging with cultural and artistic activities in response to mental health challenges.

This report supports the need for combined authorities to learn what has worked elsewhere and to tailor approaches best suited to the strengths and weaknesses of their creative industries.

In addition to the Levelling Up White Paper, the Government is developing a Creative Sector Vision. This provides an opportunity for combined authorities to articulate to central government what they need to further grow their creative industries.

As evidenced in this report, combined authorities already hold significant capacity to support this growth – and with further backing from central government are well-placed to extend these capacities and unlock the potential of the creative industries.

1. Context and approach

The Local Government Association (LGA) plays a key role in supporting, promoting, and improving local government. Local government is an important facilitator, investor, and shaper of the creative economy.

In 2020, the LGA published Creative Places, a local creative economy toolkit. This resource assists councils in making the most of the £2.6 billion that they invest annually in culture, leisure, and related services, as well as the wider creative placemaking role of local government.

Building on this toolkit, this research seeks to understand the creative economy opportunities available to combined authorities, including the capacity of these industries to contribute to the levelling up agenda, and the priorities identified by the UK Government in its February 2022 Levelling Up White Paper.

Combined authorities have been chosen as a focus in recognition of the increased number of devolution deals that have been made in recent years, as well as the increased opportunities for new devolution deals created by the White Paper. Their larger size, coupled with their devolved powers allows them to work across their areas, creating a joined-up approach to key policy areas – including the creative economy - and working as a central convenor in their region, a role that exists for both the combined authority, and where appropriate, the authority's mayor².

Alongside this focus is a desire to understand more about the principle of subsidiarity: how can decisions best be taken at the most local level, and when do they need to be held more centrally if it isn't appropriate for decisions to be taken locally? As existing and potential future devolution deals become embedded, there is a question to explore around who in a given geography has the responsibility for particular policy areas, and how this can be done in a way which enhances rather than duplicates pre-existing activity in geographic regions.

2 Whilst currently all of the Combined Authorities barring the North East Combined Authority have a mayor, the White Paper does not include a necessity for new devolution deals to be driven by mayoral authorities.

This report draws on three elements:

- Desk based research, drawing together a literature review of existing plans and policies in place in each of the 10 combined authorities at the time of this study, and analysis of employment figures across the creative industries.
- Roundtable discussions with representatives from the creative industries, academic experts and policymakers with a specific remit around the economic impact of the creative industries, and cultural leads for each of the combined authorities.
- Case study interviews with nine of the 10 existing combined authorities and one emerging area that looks likely to pursue a devolution deal under the terms outlined in the 'Levelling Up' White Paper.

What are the creative industries?

For the purpose of this report, when we refer to the creative industries, we use the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) definition. This defines the creative industries as those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

There are nine sub-sectors of the creative industries, as identified by the Office for National Statistics and which are used to measure the direct economic contribution of the creative industries to the UK economy. These nine sub-sectors are: Advertising and Marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design: Product, Graphic and Fashion Design; Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography; IT, Software and Computer Services; Publishing; Museums, Galleries and Libraries; Music, Performing and Visual Arts.

2. The economic contribution of the creative industries to combined authorities

Creative industries employment

To understand the economic contribution made by the creative industries, we have looked at Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) data gathered by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Using BRES data allows us to consider the creative industries as they are defined by the Government (see chapter 1). By looking specifically at employment across each of the combined authorities, and collectively in contrast to Great Britain as a whole, we can identify areas of strength and development. We are also able to track changes over time and understand the extent to which there might be potential opportunities for individual combined authorities to capitalise on the existing clusters of activity within their region.

IT, Software and Computer Services dominate the creative industries, accounting for between two and three fifths of all employment in the creative industries depending on the combined authority (Figure 1). In contrast Crafts are the smallest employment group, with an average of less than one per cent of all employment in the creative industries occurring in this area.

Museums, galleries and libraries, are an employer in every region, and numerically are broadly the same size in most combined authorities. It is, however, a marker of their dominance in the overall cultural infrastructure that they are a significantly larger employer in the North East Combined Authority, where they account for nearly a fifth of all employment, compared to a combined authority average of seven per cent.

When looking at employment in the creative industries compared to all employment, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and West of England, have the largest proportion of creative industries employment as a proportion of all employment across the combined authorities (six per cent versus an average of three per cent).

To understand how these pictures are changing, we have compared activity in 2020 with activity in 2015 and tracked the percentage change over time of both sub-sectors and the creative industries as a whole. It is important to stress that these figures relate to a pre-COVID-19 environment and so cannot account for the impact that pandemic has had on the creative industries. Anecdotally, this has been significant, with in-person cultural and creative activities such as events, attractions, and, initially,

the screen sectors, experiencing sizable losses and curtailments on their activity, at the same time that a shift to greater online working has bolstered those areas of the creative industries that could make the transition to online delivery. There may be value in repeating this exercise at a future point to understand both the immediate and longer-term impacts that COVID-19 has made on the sector.

The West of England, Greater Manchester, and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough saw the largest overall growth in employment between 2015 and 2020, increasing by between a fifth and third of all employment (Figure 2). When looking at growth by sector, Design has generally been an area of growth with nearly all combined authorities seeing an increase, particularly West of England and North of Tyne during this period. Interestingly, although Craft employment has generally been showing a decline according to these figures, Greater Manchester is bucking the trend with a 122 per cent increase in Craft employment between 2015 and 2020.

It is also important to note that even combined authority areas with decreased total employment during this period have had high performing sectors, particularly in Design (North East, North of Tyne, Tees Valley), and IT (Sheffield City Region, West Yorkshire).

Comparing the picture in the combined authorities with Great Britain as a whole, combined authorities have a greater level of IT, Software, and Computer Services employment (Figure 3). There is slightly less Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography employment, however this is likely to be a result of the “London effect” nationally, with these sectors traditionally focused in the capital. Indeed, when we look at employment in these sectors in London, we can see that a fifth of all creative employment is for Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography compared to an average of 10 per cent across the combined authorities. In contrast, London has significantly less employment in IT, Software, and Computer Services, accounting for only a third of creative industries employment.

Looking at growth over time, Design, Film, and IT have all been significantly bigger growth areas for combined authorities compared to the national picture (Figure 4). In contrast, Advertising and Publishing have seen bigger drops in growth than the national picture, and, whilst still slight growth, there has been much less growth in Architecture employment in combined authorities than Great Britain as a whole. As these three industries have all traditionally had strong footholds in London, this is not necessarily surprising.

A note on BRES data

BRES data is an employer survey, conducted annually by ONS. It covers employment, broken down by industry. Each year, approximately 85,000 trading businesses are approached to complete the survey out of an estimated 2.5 million businesses nationally.

All organisations of more than 100 employees are asked to return surveys due to their size. Alongside this, ONS uses a selection of small and medium sized businesses who will respond for a set time before being replaced with another business in the same industry. This recognises the distinct trading patterns of smaller businesses relative to large businesses.

BRES data is organised by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes. These classify businesses by the type of economic activity. DCMS define the creative industries with respect to groupings of SIC codes, which we apply to this analysis.

The results of the BRES survey are made available through the ONS's NOMIS platform and provide employee and employment estimates at detailed geographical and industrial levels. ONS data is used by many public authorities in the UK and is recognised as a 'gold standard' data provider. However, a combination of the BRES sampling approach and the relatively small size of some of the creative industries (especially Crafts) means that there can appear to be very large swings in employment year-on-year. BRES also understates freelance employment and is based upon the location of the business, rather than a worker (for example a worker may live in one combined authority and travel to work at a business in another combined authority – with BRES recording their employment in the second of these combined authorities).

Finally, as BRES is based on a sample of trading businesses above the VAT threshold, this may exclude some kinds of cultural organisations, such as museums and galleries that operate as charities and have no or small trading operations. Year-to-year fluctuations in the BRES data may be driven by organisations falling below the VAT threshold and therefore, not being captured by BRES.

Figure 1 Employment in the creative industries in the combined authorities (2020)

	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Greater Manchester	Liverpool City Region	North East	North of Tyne	South Yorkshire	Tees Valley	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	West of England
Advertising and marketing	975	6,000	1,175	295	530	475	155	6,100	2,125	1,950
Architecture	1,500	3,500	1,000	300	800	1,250	175	2,500	2,000	2,250
Crafts	5	100	50	5	25	150	0	700	50	10
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	600	1,750	400	350	500	600	200	900	1,750	1,250
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	1,010	8,325	1,490	665	1,180	685	410	3,725	2,320	4,305
IT, software and computer services	15,875	24,350	6,325	2,595	5,975	7,275	1,970	16,410	19,305	17,160
Publishing	3,900	2,085	850	220	305	925	165	1,130	1,445	2,820
Museums, galleries and libraries	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,300	600	500	475	1,800	2,150	850
Music, performing and visual arts	1,490	4,400	2,000	1,115	1,240	570	255	2,475	1,820	2,325
Total - creative industries	26,555	51,910	14,890	6,845	11,155	12,430	3,805	35,740	32,965	32,920
Total - all employment	480,000	1,351,250	648,250	431,000	379,000	574,000	266,500	1,278,900	1,067,000	538,000
Creative industries as a proportion of all employment	6%	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	3%	6%

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, 2015 and 2020, Office for National Statistics, accessed via NOMIS on 4 January 2022

Figure 2 Percentage change in creative industries employment in the combined authorities (2015-2020)

	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Greater Manchester	Liverpool City Region	North East	North of Tyne	South Yorkshire	Tees Valley	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	West of England
Advertising and marketing	26%	-3%	7%	-9%	-43%	-81%	-11%	85%	-74%	-24%
Architecture	88%	40%	25%	-67%	-47%	39%	-78%	0%	14%	-10%
Crafts	-75%	122%	25%	-67%	0%	-40%	-100%	-22%	0%	-33%
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	20%	40%	33%	56%	67%	0%	60%	-28%	17%	79%
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	-22%	24%	2%	-14%	8%	5%	19%	47%	15%	118%
IT, software and computer services	44%	18%	4%	-46%	-18%	61%	-28%	5%	46%	113%
Publishing	-15%	-33%	-51%	-73%	-79%	12%	-76%	-13%	-61%	18%
Museums, galleries and libraries	9%	8%	14%	-13%	-14%	-26%	-32%	-28%	-22%	3%
Music, performing and visual arts	106%	7%	-1%	-14%	-30%	-35%	-50%	-15%	-19%	18%
Total - creative industries	20%	25%	6%	-28%	-17%	-7%	-33%	3%	-9%	31%
Total - all employment	26%	-3%	7%	-9%	-43%	-81%	-11%	85%	-74%	-24%

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, 2015 and 2020, Office for National Statistics, accessed via NOMIS on 4 January 2022

Figure 3 Combined employment in the creative industries in the combined authorities compared to the national picture (2020)

	Combined authorities average ³	Combined authorities total ⁴	London total	Great Britain total
Advertising and marketing	7%	9%	13%	10%
Architecture	7%	7%	8%	7%
Crafts ⁵	0%	0%	0%	0%
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	4%	4%	4%	4%
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	10%	11%	20%	13%
IT, software and computer services	51%	51%	34%	46%
Publishing	6%	6%	9%	7%
Museums, galleries and libraries	7%	5%	3%	4%
Music, performing and visual arts	9%	8%	10%	8%
Total - creative industries	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, 2015 and 2020, Office for National Statistics, accessed via NOMIS on 4 January 2022

3 Calculated by looking at the mean average for each industry line across the combined authorities to create a picture of the “average” combined authority

4 Calculated by looking at the proportion of all employment within each of the creative industries across all of the combined authorities together

5 * Due to the small size of crafts as an employment area compared with the whole of the creative industries, crafts appears as 0 per cent of all employment when rounding to the nearest whole figure is applied.

Figure 4 Percentage change in combined creative industries employment in the combined authorities (2015-2020)

	Combined authorities average	Combined authorities total	Great Britain total
Advertising and marketing	-13%	-24%	-16%
Architecture	0%	2%	14%
Crafts	-19%	-22%	-20%
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	34%	23%	17%
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	20%	28%	16%
IT, software and computer services	20%	25%	22%
Publishing	-37%	-33%	-26%
Museums, galleries and libraries	-10%	-12%	-10%
Music, performing and visual arts	-3%	-4%	0%
Total - creative industries	-1%	7%	0%

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, 2015 and 2020, Office for National Statistics, accessed via NOMIS on 4 January 2022

Number of creative businesses and enterprises

The BRES data on employment provides one perspective of the scale of the creative sector, reflecting the number of people employed in this area: data on the number of enterprises from the Inter Department Business Register (IDBR) provides another by reflecting the number of businesses and enterprises.

Considering both BRES and IDBR data allows for a wider picture of the creative sector to emerge, as a single large enterprise might drive significant employment in one place, while the creation of multiple new microenterprises may drive employment creation in another, but be difficult to capture as part of the BRES dataset. Between 2015 and 2020, the number of enterprises in the creative industries grew in all combined authority areas, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 5 Businesses and enterprises in Creative Industries (CI) in Combined Authorities (2015, 2020)

	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Greater Manchester	Liverpool City Region	North East	North of Tyne	Sheffield City Region	Tees Valley	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	West of England
Number of CI businesses and enterprises (2015)	3,595	7,375	2,690	1,400	1,750	2,450	885	5,950	5,675	4,580
Number of CI businesses and enterprises (2020)	3,845	9,025	3,030	1,565	2,030	2,795	960	6,795	6,700	5,220
Change in number of CI businesses and enterprises (2015-2020)	250	1,650	340	165	280	345	75	845	1,025	640
Percentage change in CI businesses and enterprises (2015-2020)	7%	22%	13%	12%	16%	14%	8%	14%	18%	14%

Source: Inter Department Business Register

Indirect economic contributions

Looking across the world, people value places at least as much for their cultural offer and creative achievements as for their economic successes: the creative industries are a golden thread that runs through great places.

The creative industries cover a wide range of activities and spaces: heritage buildings; studios and workshops for artists and designers; galleries, theatres and music venues; architects, computer games designers, filmmakers and other creative professionals.

The capacity and potential of these activities and spaces varies between places, and combined authorities find themselves with the opportunity to be at the forefront of supporting the creative industries, helping them to flourish and prosper across their regions.

Within the creative industries, creativity is first and foremost for its own sake: every society everywhere in the world has poetry or music or painting. But the creative industries also bring important indirect economic and social benefits, which we present below.

Developing and rebranding an area's cultural identity

As an area redevelops and looks to shift its image, a significant cultural institution, a cluster of creative organisations or a major event can be the instigator in shaping its new identity. This can be at the level of a whole city – Coventry now follows Glasgow, Liverpool, and Hull in anticipating improved perceptions after a year as a City of Culture - but it is often most striking at neighbourhood level: the opening of the Turner Contemporary in Margate, for example, or the transformation of Salford Quays. These image shifts manifest themselves in increased media profile and attention from sponsors who value associations with cultural and creative brands. While such changes are sometimes initially disruptive for local people, over time they can in turn contribute to increased positive sentiment towards their place for residents of these areas, creating positive associations, increased economic opportunity and raising aspirations of what might be possible for these places to achieve. As many of these case studies show, the cultural rebranding of place can most inclusive and effective when it draws on the existing cultural heritage and identities of an area and its communities.

Supporting the development of cultural identities is a significant driver for many of the combined authorities, with several giving examples of mechanisms that they have used to make sure that access to culture and creativity is distributed more evenly across their regions for greater benefit. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has taken advantage of the Towns Fund to support community spaces across the rural towns and markets in their region, whilst North of Tyne has worked to create specific zones for different sectors that can create clusters of activity stimulating both the wider creative industries and regeneration of the area.

Driving footfall, hospitality, and night time / leisure / tourism industries

“Going out” is no longer an incidental part of life, but an industry estimated to be worth £46 billion a year to the UK in 2019. The night-time economy is driven by cultural activity: music, dancing, and theatre are at its centre. Tourism is also driven in large part by culture: research prior to the pandemic shows that historically 42 per cent of inbound tourism to the UK is related to cultural activity.

New cultural destinations, driven by both attractions and opportunities for creative businesses to cluster, stimulate business growth around them, and cultural events encourage retail spending: visitors often add on a shopping trip to their cultural visit. “Frieze (Art Fair) attracts wealthy clientele that makes for an excellent fit with the store. Customers during Frieze are like the ones that come to us all the time – just more of them⁶”. Sage Gateshead stimulated hotel trade by 42 per cent in the years after its opening, like many other major cultural institutions attracting visitors from other regions, requiring overnight stays.

Within the case studies, several of the combined authorities commented on the importance of the creative industries in driving wider industries in their region. For example, Greater Manchester noted the importance of the creative industries in the region as a mechanism for attracting a range of different visitors and residents to the region, including for tourism, business relocations, and university recruitment. Meanwhile West Yorkshire Combined Authority has seen increased tourism to the region through the activities that they have funded.

Improves wellbeing and productivity across the population

People want to live in vibrant places offering multiple opportunities to engage with arts, culture, and the wider creative industries. Creativity brings communities together, providing social spaces where people of different ages and backgrounds meet, create and get inspired by enriching cultural experiences. Participation in cultural activities is linked to improved levels of well-being across a range of areas, including reducing sickness, stress, and anxiety and increasing activity levels and resilience. Over three-quarters of people (76 per cent) engage with the arts at least once a year according to the most recent participation surveys.

Encourages inward investment and business clustering

Productivity is higher in the arts and culture sector (with gross value added per job around 30 per cent higher) than for the economy overall in the UK. But arts and culture also help other sectors and the presence of arts and cultural organisations are associated with higher levels of productivity with neighbouring businesses. Themes of previous research undertaken by BOP Consulting are often that businesses look for locations close to cultural infrastructure and activities help companies to attract and retain highly skilled staff – for example, research for Warwick District Council identified a furniture manufacturer that relocated to Leamington Spa because of the “creative and digital community”.

6 Major London retailer

This was echoed in our case studies, with both Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire articulating the inward investment benefits of having strong cultural and creative environments.

Businesses are attracted to culturally rich locations. By making an area lively, safe, and attractive, they create a hospitable environment for businesses, thus supporting economic growth:

- Business locations close to cultural infrastructure and activities help companies to attract and retain highly skilled staff as the offer supports the quality of life of their employees.
- The presence of the creative industries acts as a differentiator, helping areas stand out so that they are more likely to be initially considered as a location by businesses.
- The creative industries help businesses to establish their brand and positioning.
- Creativity plays a role in how businesses work and learn. Being located in a creative cluster encourages cross-pollination, collaboration and innovation.

These synergies between creativity and commerce were recently celebrated by the economist David McWilliams in an article for the Financial Times:⁷

“The artist and the entrepreneur, so often pitted against each other, are in fact on the same side. Historically, societies that welcome these dissenters are rewarded with the most dynamic economies.”

7 10 June 2022, Financial Times

3. How combined authorities have worked with the creative industries

This section provides an overview of how combined authorities have most successfully worked with the creative industries to date – drawn predominantly from insights from case studies.

Supporting creative industries through the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic created a huge negative impact on the UK economy, including the creative industries, with almost all activity ceasing overnight and huge swathes of activity put on hold indefinitely.

Combined authorities had the opportunity to submit requests for emergency funding to central government in the form of Covid Recovery Plans. These varied in size and scope, with requests ranging from £770 million to £3.2 billion, and provided a mechanism for combined authorities to provide direct support to their local economies.

The extent to which the creative industries were reflected in these recovery plans varied across each of the 10 combined authorities, reflecting in turn the different approaches that each authority has taken to working with the sector in their regions.

For some, such as the Liverpool City Region and West Yorkshire combined authorities, culture and the creative industries were a foundation of the recovery plan. In West Yorkshire, this meant that culture was one of five propositions for local recovery whilst in Liverpool, Principle One in the plan focused on creating a truly inclusive creative economy.

Several combined authorities focused in their plans on providing direct funding in some format to the creative industries. For example, the West Midlands Combined Authority earmarked £80 million for cultural recovery in their bid, and West Yorkshire allocated £5 million for local recovery projects with a focus on culture in their bid for funds.

There were also mechanisms of support developed for cultural infrastructure. In the West of England Combined Authority this led to plans being set out for a cultural, creative and digital development programme that could support capital projects. It was expected this would help organisations to adapt and innovate in response to changed consumer and visitor demand, helping reinvigorate and renew places across the region.

Combined authority case studies

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Key learning

Taking a strategic refresh and learning from others to reposition the creative industries within wider policy and ready to take full advantage of available levelling up funding

The challenge

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has been going through a transformation period in recent years, refreshing the governance and organisational structure of the combined authority, and, linked with this, refreshing the strategies for the region. This includes plans to develop a strategy around culture and creative arts, something for which the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough mayor Dr Nik Johnson has been actively advocating.

Recently the combined authority has set up a growth company, which can help deliver the three main strands of support that are available for the creative industries to engage with – inward investment, business coaching, and a skills development portal.

Over the last 18 months, there has been an initiative across the market towns and more rural areas of the region to improve community spaces. This has been particularly highlighted as a growing number of the local population work from home, and, as part of supporting local communities, projects have received funding to support creative offers in their areas.

In the medium to long term, the ambitions of the combined authority will be dictated by its strategy. As part of this process CPCA recognises the need to involve voices from outside the combined authority, and will look to understand what the sector needs for the creative industries and how this can be integrated into the strategy where appropriate.

There is an ambition to develop links with the local creative industries and clusters across the region, and as part of the second phase of the Market Towns project there are plans to explore how to tailor financial support to grow social enterprises, which will include the creative industries. This will also help to build on the creative clusters that already exist within the region's core cities and provide more opportunities for the creative industries across the region; something that has been seen through phase one of the Market Towns Programme, for example in Ely.

There has been a mixture of barriers faced by CPCA to date, including a lack of resource, uncertain funding allocations – in part driven by changes in the office of elected mayor – and the added complications of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to a lot of focus on economic recovery. All of these factors together have been a catalyst for the refresh in strategic direction that CPCA is currently undertaking.

The solution

Getting the cultural strategy in place will be a vital building block for CPCA moving forward. Alongside the Economic Growth Strategy, this will provide a strategic framework that can be used to shape the local response to the levelling up agenda. This will help to identify what core interventions can support the sector and help CPCA to make the best case to government and funders for support.

Looking forwards, the levelling up agenda could be instrumental for the region, particularly in providing funding support for the regeneration around the Peterborough station quarter, which will impact upon the cultural offer in the city, and in Fenland, by providing a focus that can ensure the area has the right skills to support job and productivity growth.

The impact

CPCA anticipates that the strategic refresh happening at the moment provides an opportunity for a wholesale reconsideration of how best to work with the creative industries in the region, effectively starting from a blank page. The team have been actively engaged in learning from the Mayoral 10 (the working group for the 10 combined authorities) and particularly the West of England Combined Authority. This has included been exploring best practice across the different combined authorities, and exploring how better to develop opportunities and tailor activity from other areas to reflect CPCA's own strengths. The next stage of work will be about identifying these strengths, and the key clusters and strategic players in the region to develop these opportunities further.

Lessons learnt

With all of the ongoing changes and activity around redeveloping and refreshing the strategy in CPCA, it is too soon for lessons to have been realised and embedded. CPCA expects to have a greater understanding of potential lessons once the new strategy is approved and in action.

Greater Manchester

Key learning

Collaborative working between the sector and combined authority, including through the Growth Hub, to maintain growth of the creative industries.

The challenge

The creative industries were identified as a key sector for Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), underpinning much of the economic policy in the region as well as being a focus for other policy areas including place making, digital and wellbeing. GMCA has an ambition to make the sector world class, building on existing strong reputations and recognition of the creative sectors in the area in order to strengthen, showcase and highlight work across the combined authority.

GMCA has a budget of around £4.3 million per year that it invests in culture across the city region, supporting the creative ecosystem of the area. This supports strategic interventions, such as StreamGM, a live streaming platform for the city region that was established during the pandemic.

The current GMCA culture strategy runs until 2024, and GMCA is currently planning to consult on its replacement in 2023. There is an aim for clearer alignment between the creative industries and the combined authority's approach to culture in the new strategy, in recognition of how interlinked the industries are, both in terms of their outputs, their talent, and their skills needs. As well as including the creative industries in cross-portfolio activity and strategies, GMCA also has several sector specific interventions, such as the Greater Manchester Music Commission.

Within GMCA there is a team specifically dedicated to working with the creative industries, which allows the combined authority to realise larger impacts through its activity. This includes a creative scale up programme, specialist support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic around resourcing and access to funding, and providing networking and linkages between businesses locally. Collaboration is a key thread running through the approach taken by GMCA, whether that is at a local or national government level, or with organisations and businesses based in the region.

As a region, GMCA has a wide breadth of different creative industries subsectors actively working within the region, including fashion and clothing, production, filmmaking, games design and innovation, and performing arts organisations.

Each of these subsectors can support and inform other areas, as well as supporting the skills and education agenda within the region. This ‘melting pot’ approach to the creative industries in the region is seen as a strength for GMCA, providing opportunities for cross-sector nurturing and innovation at a scale not commonly found.

Whilst historically there has been a geographic clustering of the creative industries in Manchester City Centre and around Salford Quays, the experience of GMCA is that in recent years is that a greater number of creative businesses are seeing the potential of working in town centres across the region. Alongside this, there have been funded schemes in towns, including Stockport and Rochdale, that aim to distribute the creative industries more equitably across the city region.

The key barriers that GMCA is seeing when engaging with the creative industries are around entry to the sector and retention of talent once people enter the sector. The experience in the region is that certain communities have greater levels of concern about the validity of a career in the creative industries, and, even if there is interest in entering the sector, there is a lack of knowledge about where and how to get into the creative industries. To combat this, GMCA has been doing more work with colleges in target areas to showcase opportunities, and is also looking to provide more support for early careers professionals to provide them with the fundamental business skills they need to make a career in the creative industries a lifelong choice.

Additionally, GMCA has found that the ambitions of individuals and business owners in the creative industries are different from those in other sectors, with less of a focus on economic growth and scaling, and more emphasis on holistic goals and safeguarding creativity. This can then create a barrier when existing economic support packages are applied without consideration of what might or might not work for the creative industries specifically. This also creates potential application barriers for those trying to access support. For example, during the pandemic a lot of support mechanisms were tied to evidence of cashflow, which can look very different in a creative industries organisation than in an accounting firm.

Similar barriers and tensions have been found in wider funding schemes, particularly where the need for support, especially capital support, is predicated on sustainable revenue income. GMCA has been working with the sector to mitigate this, by supporting creative businesses to set up as conventional looking budget profiles as possible so that they can find a middle ground which doesn’t preclude them from support. The Business Growth Hub has been key to this, providing access to finance support that businesses might not otherwise have the chance to engage with.

The solution

Recognising the creative industries have a different working mechanism from other industries, and that this needs to be taken into consideration when decision making, is a key lesson that GMCA have tried to embed over recent years.

This has had varying levels of success and often businesses need to conform to a 'cookie cutter' approach that is used across all businesses and industries. GMCA acknowledges that this makes for a bit of a 'back to front' approach as longer term there is a need to find a way to support and increase awareness of the various different models that the creative industries operate under. Fully embedding this understanding will take time and, in the short term, the approach taken to date has at least helped to make sure more businesses can access the support offered by GMCA.

The Growth Hub is also able to provide a connecting role between the combined authority and local businesses, providing insight to GMCA on a regular basis and creating activities and opportunities for businesses to be recognised. This has led to a series of successes, including the Creative Leaders Festival which brought together 1,400 participants from across the creative industries in Greater Manchester, culminating in the creation of a white paper that is now helping to form the basis of policy making for the creative industries in GMCA. Similarly, the Greater Connected programme, which has run for the last six years, has provided support to over 500 digital, creative and tech businesses, and has been able to adapt to the changing needs of the creative sector to support innovation, revenue, and diversification.

The impact

Working with the creative industries has supported GMCA to make a shift towards recognising the different business models used across the sector, including the importance of freelancers to the sector. It has also provided a mechanism for recognising the clusters across the different areas of the combined authority, enabling GMCA to release support funds where they can make the biggest impact.

Lessons learnt

- Recognising the different needs of the creative industries compared with other industries can enable the combined authority to increase take up of programmes by being responsive to these needs.
- Business Growth Hubs can provide an important connection between the combined authority and the creative industries, helping both to understand the other and increasing opportunities for engagement.
- The value of the creative industries, both economically and socially, can be a significant attractor for inward investment if communicated clearly, which in turn supports the wider economy of the region across a broad range of business sectors.
- The creative sector is a draw for other businesses, both in terms of inward investment and attracting new talent. Neglecting the sector leads to knock-on effects that cause ripples across hospitality, leisure, universities and more traditional business sectors, creating negative economic impacts across the piece.

Liverpool City Region

Key learning

Focusing on the strengths of the sector to leverage funding and promote culture as a golden thread throughout the combined authority

The challenge

Within their devolution deal, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR) has a specific reference to culture, fulfilled through the one per cent for culture pledge. Whilst this is a comparatively small amount of funding in the context of LCR's overall budget allocation (equivalent to £300,000), it supports initiatives like the Borough of Culture and the Culture and Creativity Awards, and ensures that culture and creativity remain high on the agenda for the combined authority. Additionally, further support for culture has been evidenced through the LCR Strategic Investment Fund (SIF), including capital projects such as Shakespeare North Playhouse, Eureka! Wirral, the LCR Film Production Fund, LCR Music Industry Development Fund, and support for both the International Slavery Museum and the waterfront area around National Museums Liverpool and TATE Liverpool.

The majority of the activity in the region around the creative industries sits within the LEP and the Growth Platform – although this may change following the conclusion of the Government's LEP review – but there are a number of key areas where LCR is working to support and grow the sector, including exploring opportunities for crossover between digital and creative technologies.

For example, during the pandemic LCR ran a Future Innovation Fund with several rounds that had a high number of applications from the cultural and creative sectors. Future Yard, in Birkenhead, was a particular exemplar of a project funded through this programme, which also received support from the SIF Music Industry Development Fund, NESTA's Arts and Culture Impact Fund, Wirral Council (including Town Deal funding), and the DCMS Cultural Recovery Fund amongst others. A brand new 300-capacity space, it provides a platform in the Wirral for national and international artists whilst also giving early performance opportunities to emerging local musicians. SIF funding was used to refurbish the building and establish its venue, studio and training spaces, whilst the Future Innovation Fund supports the artists development programme.

Alongside funding support, LCR provides a range of business support programmes for the creative industries including sector specific training and digital creative summits.

All of these activities are underpinned by an ambitious cultural and creativity strategy, which takes a long-term vision of LCR, and considers how the sector can develop over the next 30 years. This builds on previous approaches in the city region, which have focused on a major events strategy programme coming out of the recognition of the pull of tourism to the city through programmes like the European Capital of Culture in 2008 and the Liverpool Biennale, and, more recently, Borough of Culture. The next stage sees a greater focus on hyper local activity, with more investment in activity and engagement in the town centres and villages across LCR, creating opportunities for creatives in those spaces. Borough of Culture has provided a catalyst for this, and the experience within LCR is that providing opportunities for smaller organisations to engage with events can support them to develop localised creative hubs that provide more strategic joined up opportunities for more creative businesses in the region.

The solution

As a region, LCR has a strong history as a base for film and high-end television. It is the most filmed city and region outside of London. Evidence of this can be seen in the successes of 'Time and Help' at the 2022 BAFTA TV awards. Each won two awards, marking the first prizes for projects supported by the Liverpool City Region Production Fund, managed by Liverpool City Council's Film Office. Looking ahead LCR is developing a strategy to continue to grow and diversify the sector, particularly around early careers opportunities. This includes working with the BBC to create a learning and skills hub, and creating a training and developing programme that can work with existing screen schools in the region to develop local talent. LCR is also exploring how to develop a cluster approach similar to the work done in the West Midlands between West Midlands Combined Authority and Create Central.

Similarly, the music ecosystem in LCR is well established (Liverpool is a UNESCO City of Music), and LCR has created a music development fund that can again support opportunities for career development. This goes beyond working with performing artists, recognising that for sustainable growth there is a need for the wider support skills that the sector needs, such as production.

Alongside funds, there is a specific LCR Music Board, established by the combined authority mayor as a way to develop the strategy around music in the city region. This ensures that music stays on the agenda and also provides an active and committed cluster of people living and working in the region who can address the issues affecting the sector in the here and now. This has in turn also helped communicate the importance of the music sector internally within the combined authority, particularly with the investment team, which should lead to greater opportunities for demonstrating the inward investment value of the sector to the region. COVID-19 demonstrated that the sector was generally

misunderstood in comparison to other industries, so the work of the music board has helped to dispel common myths and raise awareness at a city region level.

The benefits of increased awareness of and understanding of the creative industries as a whole, both in terms of the economic value and social value has helped demonstrate why LCR is a good place to live, work, and do business in. This has seen LCR invest in a number of high-profile capital projects, such as Future Yard, the Shakespeare North Playhouse, and a new Enterprise Arcade in Southport which will deliver a new creative, digital and tech district as part of wider regeneration plans for the town. For LCR, there is also a role to play in attracting funds from elsewhere and amplifying the attractions that the city region has, both in terms of built and natural assets, to strengthen this sense of place further and create longer term opportunities for the region.

The impact

There is increased awareness that culture can be a golden thread that spans across the work of the combined authority, with LCR taking a convenor role for the sector. It has become woven through the creative and digital strategy, has relevance to LCR's international strategy, and has an impact on other policy areas, particularly planning and transport, both of which have an impact on the live music sector. This can then make sure that the combined authority has a joined-up approach in the decisions it is making and can collectively contribute to wider priorities, such as the place agenda.

Whilst the one per cent for culture goes a long way, there are still difficulties. Funding is ringfenced for existing capital programmes which can present challenges when areas of the creative industries require revenue support. There is more that could be done to support the ecosystem of the creative industries and LCR are actively discussing how to adapt the current model to increase the opportunities for access to revenue fundings. However, this will take time, so in the interim LCR have been exploring where there are opportunities for supporting businesses to apply for elsewhere funds that might have policy crossover.

There do remain challenges around siloed working in different parts of the region, both internally to the combined authority and externally across different agencies and aspects of the sector. For LCR, making more of the opportunities that exist between the cultural and creative industries will help to address this, however there is still work to do in developing this to be as joined up as has been observed by LCR in some of the other combined authority areas.

Lessons learnt

- There is significant added value created by having sector specific boards that can advocate for their sector with the combined authority and guide the agenda to support the needs of that sector.
- The importance of combined authorities acting as a lever for attracting other funds from elsewhere by amplifying the opportunities offered within the region.
- Culture provides a golden thread running through all areas of activity, and when this is recognised and embedded, the combined authority is able to achieve greater successes.
- Breaking down the silos between departments can help to mitigate potential access challenges, and ensure that more businesses are able to access support.

North of Tyne

Key learning

Exploring longer-term sustainability for the sector and its relationship with the combined authority through revenue funding and advocacy

The challenge

North of Tyne Combined Authority (North of Tyne) has been working with stakeholders from the industry and academia to define the sector in the region, working to build on the assets that already exist and progress to build the sector further. This has involved evidence gathering and developing programmes to create an agreed vision for the sector that can recognise both the potential of the creative industries economically and across several priorities for the combined authority, including place, people and wellbeing.

There have been a variety of different ways that North of Tyne has worked with the creative industries, both as a funder and as a convenor that can support the sector and bring the different actors across the region together. North of Tyne recognises that it wants to do things differently, planning for the longer term and having a more strategic commissioning approach. It also recognises the need to balance that with the existing funding streams that are available, which are all short term. For the combined authority it is about recognising and using the levers that are available in the short term and working towards developing a more strategic framework in the longer term.

Clusters of creative industries activity are developing across the region, with the combined authority establishing three Cultural and Creativity Zones to support activity: Newcastle, linked with publishing; North Shields, linked with regeneration and an existing cluster of performing arts organisations; and Berwick linked with film. In selecting the Zones, North of Tyne has sought to provide stability and continuity for sub-sectors, focusing on building commercial confidence and resilience in a post COVID-19 environment. Additionally, they have aimed to position areas as a key location of growth for specific sub-sectors, encouraging increased inward investment and models of sector clustering which may include co-location, digital networks or a combination of both. North of Tyne has aimed to frame the zones as access points rather than red-line boundaries, creating ways into the sector for those who might not have a prior awareness of the strengths in the region. The creation of the zones has

also helped to dispel some of the tensions that are created in the area through the presence of Newcastle as a large city, as they help to balance sector wide support across the region whilst also taking a place-based approach that can allow for pilots to test new ideas and approaches.

When considering the challenges for the area, awareness of the combined authority and a complex funding landscape both provide barriers for North of Tyne in engaging with the creative industries. The authority recognises it is not alone in this and has been looking for opportunities where there can be greater levels of flexibility to respond to local needs, although there are complications in this when working with national agencies.

The solution

There has been growth in the creative industries in North of Tyne in recent years, especially for IT and computing. The combined authority has recognised that there is an opportunity for continued growth and disruptive innovation, particularly in exploring how the creative industries can work alongside other sectors to create wider opportunities. This has both an economic growth opportunity and a wider health and wellbeing opportunity for the region. For North of Tyne, it is recognising this ability of the sector to grow both in its own right and to enable growth of other sectors that provides the most opportunities moving forward.

In contrast to most other combined authorities, the investment funds that are available in North of Tyne are revenue based (although there are opportunities for North of Tyne to fully capitalise the revenue funding where there is an obvious need, creating greater flexibility). Out of this there has been a substantial allocation for the sector which includes, Culture and Creative Zones, a Culture and Creative Investment Programme (CCIP), Skills for Growth, the North East Screen Partnership, and a tourism and events programme.

Both the Culture and Creative Zones and CCIP allows the combined authority to provide confirmed revenue to businesses for a set period that can support them whilst they generate their own longer term sustainable model. Additionally, CCIP provides access to finance and wraparound business support and is delivered with Creative UK who manage the programme on behalf of the combined authority. This includes recoverable components, as the majority of the access to finance is for loans and equity, allowing for their programmes to become self-sustaining in the longer term.

For North of Tyne, the emphasis is on looking at where the combined authority can add value to the conversation locally, so rather than duplicating activity that might be happening at a local authority level they seek to work with sector representatives.

They work very closely with all of their local authorities, all of whom sit on a North of Tyne Culture and Creative Steering Group. This provides opportunities to share best practice and also steer the overall programme of activity.

Whilst there isn't a strategy for culture within North of Tyne, the culture and the creative industries are one of the six themes running through the combined authority's corporate plan. This gives a prominence to the sector, as well as ensuring that there is a portfolio holder for the creative industries within the combined authority, which helps to set the tone for the way that the combined authority seeks to engage with the sector.

The impact

The sector vision was only agreed in early 2020 and the combined authority itself is a relatively new organisation. There are outputs that have been delivered against, and the biggest value has been the ability to articulate what the sector is and get wider buy-in. This has led to wider confidence across the combined authority in the work of the creative industries team, as well as projects within North of Tyne being presented as case studies of best practice by the NP11 group.

A challenge for North of Tyne has been around working within and towards the levelling up agenda when the funding programmes associated with the agenda are in a state of flux and are decided at a national level. Where there have been changes that support the agenda, these have been because of programmes enabled by the combined authority's own planning, although there are hopes that the Shared Prosperity Fund may provide opportunities for placemaking in the region.

Continuous learning has been built into the North of Tyne approach from the outset. For example, the work around the cultural zones has given insight into how to approach local commissioning and the importance of giving local authorities a sense of ownership in programming. There are opportunities to do more, particularly around engagement, however where possible the combined authority has aimed to be as adaptive as possible so that the area is future proofed for potential changes.

Lessons learnt

- Creating programmes with recoverable components provides opportunities for longer term sustainability of grant programmes and allows for greater adaptation of programmes as the needs of the sector change.
- Articulating the value of the creative industries is key to securing wider buy-in, both within the combined authority and more widely with other agencies and businesses
- Building continuous learning opportunities into policies can create additional insight and ensure that the benefits realised in one area can be replicated in other areas.

South Yorkshire

Key learning

Developing targeted approaches as strategies for the creative industries are developed

The challenge

Within the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), activity around culture and the creative industries is still in a very early, emergent stage. The combined authority has commissioned some research on culture and the creative industries, including looking at the economic impact of COVID-19 on the region, how culture, arts and heritage can be unlocked within the region, and cultural and creative infrastructure mapping to inform the role of the combined authority and its next steps. Whilst there is not yet a specific focus on culture and the creative industries, either in terms of a culture board or through a specific policy or plan for the sector, this research will help inform the next steps.

In part, this is due to the political situation within SYMCA, with a change of Mayor in May 2022. Whilst the incoming Mayor has now taken office, the focus and engagement of the Mayor with culture and the creative industries is at the beginning of its process, and a set of priorities has not yet been developed.

As a region with two cities (Doncaster having been created a city as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations) and two districts, it is sometimes thought that the creative industries only benefit the historic city (Sheffield) and support for the creative industries is not, therefore, beneficial to all South Yorkshire. Whilst the evidence held by SYMCA shows that this is not necessarily the case, changing this perspective and the broader narrative around culture and the creative industries in the region presents a challenge.

However, SYMCA recognises that there is a role for it to play as a leader for culture and the creative industries in the region, in the same way that currently it works as a leader in other key areas such as skills and regeneration where it can work in partnership with its constituent councils. It has a unique position to play as a convenor across the region, acting as a leader amongst peers and providing regional intelligence, investment, and intervention. This can help to create a narrative coherence and build the reputation for the whole of South Yorkshire.

This is linked with an ambition for culture and the creative industries to be seen as embedded across the full suite of SYMCA's activity, recognising that they have an impact on business, innovation, skills, and the built environment, as well as contributing towards a much broader set of agendas including, but not limited to, localism, communities, empowerment, skills, education, wellbeing, and the economy.

There are moves to create a plan for culture and the creative industries in SYMCA under the new Mayor, and so currently the combined authority is focusing on creating a robust evidence base that can inform the decisions that might be made. Alongside this, they are looking to create alliances across their peer network so as to build credibility in a space that they have not previously operated within.

Beyond planning, challenges exist around knowledge and perceptions of culture, as well as the scale and make-up of the sector, and historic scarcity of funding for the sector across South Yorkshire. Businesses within the cultural and creative industries don't necessarily conform to the same business types or growth patterns seen in other industries, which can lead to them being considered "too difficult" by stakeholders across the combined authority. This can then create a barrier for engagement from creative industries businesses. So, whilst there are funds that the creative industries can apply for, these are not being fully taken advantage of. In part, this is potentially due to different language across the different structures and sectors, leading to missed opportunities and a perception that solutions are not fit for purpose.

Timescales can also present a barrier, with the creative industries and combined authorities working to different timeframes and levels of flexibility when releasing funding; whilst the sector needs time to be able to build and consider applications in a strategic way, the mechanisms behind the combined authority can require near immediate distribution. This can make it more difficult to get funding out when and where it is most needed, however SYMCA have found that working with local interventions, such as funnelling money through the constituent councils, can make a difference.

The solution

There have been pockets of activity across the combined authority that have helped to demonstrate the potential role that SYMCA could play in the region, however these are sparse. By creating a strategic and specific role for the combined authority across the cultural and creative industries, there are hopes that SYMCA can develop its role and ambitions for the sector, driving these forwards.

Longer term there may be opportunities for bigger investment pieces, and the expectation is that this will be something that can flow out of the groundwork currently being done to prepare the combined authority under the new Mayor.

Alongside this, the four districts have always had culture and the creative industries in their local plans, and the combined authority has always supported them to deliver these plans. The coming year provides an opportunity for SYMCA to redefine its own position in relation to the creative industries, and take a lead regionally for the creative industries, delivering a joined-up proposition across the region.

The impact

Anecdotally, even at this early stage for SYMCA, there is a breath of direct economic activity in the region that is created from engaging with the creative industries, including jobs, spend, visitor economy, products, Intellectual Property (IP) and investment impacts. There is also recognition of the wider societal benefits gained from the creative industries around education, skills, health and wellbeing, talent retention, inclusion, diversity, innovation, and participatory culture. The combined authority is keen to see more of these tangible and intangible impacts as its own approach progresses.

SYMCA is also keen to realise the potential impacts that the creative industries can have around place, both in terms of the infrastructure of places, and the contribution that can be made to pride of place, including confidence, ambition, and reputation. This is particularly pertinent for the combined authority considering the current activity around levelling up, and there is a need within the combined authority to acknowledge the breadth of impacts that the creative industries can make beyond the economic impact.

Lessons learnt

- Capacity has an important role to play in helping the combined authority realise its ambitions. There has not been, and still is not specific capacity for culture and the creative industries. Until this is resolved it is likely to inhibit the activities and ambitions of the combined authority.
- Both the combined authority and the Mayor have a role to play as a convenor across the region, bringing together the creative industries and working with them to enable activity and leverage the opportunities within the region.
- Each of the component parts of the combined authority has a different approach and different strengths, and the historic structures in the region can make region-wide buy-in more difficult. Recognising this, whilst also working to find the cohesion across the local authorities, helps to give credibility to the overarching picture.
- There are opportunities for more streamlined, strategic approaches for working with the sector. Working proactively – on the part of both the combined authority and the creative industries – can help to leverage these opportunities and create more joined up working within the sector.

- Without long term planning from the outset, it can be difficult to secure buy-in and work together. SYMCA has an opportunity to do things different with culture, especially as it's an emerging area of opportunity for the combined authority.
- The voices that are heard in discussions about culture are often the same voices, and these usually come from positions of privilege and power. Increasing the diversity of those represented – drawing people with varied protected characteristics from across the region, working in different parts of the creative industries and with different sizes of organisations – can help to collectively make a difference and change things, addressing systemic issues around power and leadership.

Tees Valley

Key learning

Creating opportunities through the creative industries to support recovery post-COVID-19 and improve perceptions of the region

The challenge

Since the inception of the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), culture has been a pillar of the Strategic Economic Plan, with a recognition that investment in culture and creativity is key to economic regeneration. This reflects the longstanding commitment to cultural investment derived from the local authorities that created the combined authority. The region has a history of investment, engagement, and prioritisation of culture and, whilst the sector is relatively small compared with some areas, those companies and organisations based in the region have national reach and impact.

The recent reframing of the 'Culture & Tourism' theme to 'Creative Place' within TVCA's strategic and operational activity is reflective of the highly subjective nature of the original terms used. Strengthening the emphasis on creativity and place has reinforced the economic imperative for investment – recognising the distinct characteristics of the cultural and creative industries sector and the ambitions that it can bring to stimulating growth. This process has also enabled stronger lines of distinction to be drawn between the role and area of focus for TVCA and those of other investors / funders / changemakers such as local authorities and arm's-length bodies such as Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

TVCA has recently finalised a business case for its Growth Programme for the Creative & Visitor Economies which will run until 2026, investing £20 million in sector development and growth over the period. There are four interconnected programme pillars: Sustainable Cultural Industries Growth; Festivals & Events; Destination Product Development; Profile Raising. The programme has a particular focus on the development of a creative cluster in the region and aims to create the conditions in which critical mass can build and the sector can thrive. Due to the pre-formation stage of the cluster, its specific focus is yet to be determined, although there are strengths around TV, music, visual arts and festivals within the region, all of which have seen growth over the past few years and, with the right support, could emerge as cluster leaders in the future.

These different strengths are representative of different areas of practice across the region. Whilst these aren't constricted to the geographic boundaries of the local authority areas, the combined authority has found that different towns and cities have particular emergent strengths, such as visual arts in Middlesbrough and the screen industries around Hartlepool, which then create a ripple affect across the authority.

A key long-term ambition for the combined authority is to transform external perceptions of the Tees Valley. There is a strong recognition of the role creativity and culture play in transforming expectations about the region and delivering on the pride of place mission within the 'Levelling Up' White Paper. By enhancing opportunities for creative businesses to create work and opportunities for residents, there is a hope that this can be enhanced and accelerated – and, in turn, support inward investment, as businesses will be more prepared to invest in a place that workers are keen to live in.

The solution

As with other combined authorities, COVID-19 had an impact on the approach that TVCA is taking with the creative industries. In June 2020, the Tees Valley Mayor installed an independent sector Task Force, chaired by the Tees Valley LEP portfolio holder for Creative Place, to provide dynamic and astute advice to TVCA as it developed and delivered a £1 million sector-specific recovery programme. This included support for businesses to make step changes in their business models in response to challenges exacerbated by the pandemic; a new networking and professional development programme for early career creatives emerging from formal education, and support for festival businesses.

The Task Force has since evolved into the Creative Place Advisory Group – bringing together independent sector representatives alongside local authority officers and observers from key arm's-length bodies, including Arts Council England. The Group is a core feature of the governance framework through which the Growth Programme for the Creative & Visitor Economies operates, ensuring stakeholder advice and advocacy (working through established relationships of trust) throughout development and delivery.

Growth of the Creative Place team and connectivity across TVCA policy areas has enabled the development of an integrated, useful and ambitious approach to sector investment. The difficulties facing cultural industries organisations in planning for the future in the context of funding cycles is being addressed through multi-year strategic investments, network development and the introduction of platforms for knowledge exchange and collective learning. There is recognition of the added value that can be achieved beyond investment with TVCA acting as a proactive partner for stakeholders and programme beneficiaries – making connections with other complementary programmes, facilitating introductions between businesses, acting as a critical friends / sounding board and providing advocacy.

An example of this approach is TVCA's new Festivals Scale-up programme, which aims to help high-growth potential festivals become more sustainable through multi-year investment in business model development and capacity. Over a four-year period, festivals will receive cash investment along with a bespoke programme of business development support, including mentoring and skills development. The expectation for participating festivals is that the level of investment from TVCA will taper across the four years as their business models develop and they become better able to diversify income streams and attract new partnerships.

As an area that has historically had significantly less investment than other areas of the country, there is an aspiration to create an environment where Tees Valley can be more competitive nationally, inward investment opportunities are created, and there are more opportunities for sustained investment locally. The Tees Valley has been recognised as a priority place by Arts Council England – the only combined authority area to have this designation – and the expectation is that this recognition will provide greater opportunities to realise these aspirations. TVCA and its partners are hopeful that the designation will provide increased opportunities for strategic working with Arts Council England as well as creating further opportunity for the combined authority to play a brokerage and advocacy role alongside the delivery role outlined above.

The impact

360-degree evaluation of the Growth Programme for the Creative & Visitor Economies will be conducted throughout the programme lifetime but the impact of investment to-date, particularly through the COVID-19 recovery response, is very encouraging:

- Tees Valley New Creatives – a new free network and professional development vehicle for early career creatives, designed in response to heightened risk of talent drain posed by the pandemic – either as a result of people leaving the region or leaving the sector. The programme provides education leavers from 2020 onwards with free-to-access workshops, seminars, socials and guidance. The network has grown to over 90 members with a third securing paid employment as a direct result of their involvement.
- Festivals 2021 Recovery Programme – recognising the unique role of regional festivals in supporting wider social and economic recovery, the programme invested in festival businesses to remount their festival products, re-engage supply chains and bring communities back together. Fifteen festivals received a combined investment of £308,000 from TVCA and, as a result, reached 148,207 visitors, generated £2.8 million GVA to the Tees Valley economy, supported 56.6 FTE jobs. A return-on-investment figure of 9:1 was achieved.

- Cultural Development & Innovation Fund – responding to the time taken by cultural businesses to plan and re-strategise in the pandemic by providing investment to make step-changes in business activity. 93 per cent of businesses reported that the intervention enabled them to protect jobs and 46 per cent were able to create jobs as a result. 100 per cent felt better prepared as they emerged from lockdown.

Lessons learnt

- It is important to be specific about what can and should be done by the combined authority, and, equally importantly, where the responsibility of the combined authority stops.
- Establishing an ongoing dialogue with the sector is critical to ensuring effective, impactful intervention as already seen with the opportunities created through the Creative Place Advisory Group.
- TVCA's approach is to invest in rather than 'fund' the cultural industries and it works to consolidate its investment by adding value through the resource of its teams.
- New and established networks and partnership working within the region provide the key to longer term success and cluster development.
- Tapered investment programmes over longer periods can support organisations to diversify their income streams, becoming more resilient in the longer term whilst providing short term security that allows for testing and experimentation.

West of England

Key learning

Utilising sector specialists to guide the combined authority and increase funding opportunities

The challenge

The West of England is a region that identifies as creative. Amplifying the role of culture and creative industries in the region, as a driver for economic success, is a priority for the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). The combined authority's West of England Cultural Plan has long-term, high-level ambitions, and seeks to test four key areas. The West of England Cultural Compact, a board distinct from, but managed by, the combined authority, oversees the delivery of the cultural plan and is responsible for understanding and supporting the region's cultural ecosystem. This includes putting culture at the heart of local and regional government, community and business groups; attracting funding for cultural activities in the region; promoting the value of culture and the value of investment in culture; and linking cultural ambitions with wider regional priorities.

The combined authority recognises the creative industries as key for jobs and graduate retention. To date programmes delivered by the combined authority have focused on increasing value for money, supporting businesses to increase their turnover and their employment, and there have been significant successes so far.

The West of England delivered the pilot DCMS funded Creative Scale Up programme. This programme supported businesses in the West of England to grow and access finance, alongside working with investors to increase private investment in this booming sector. The programme has been extremely successful, businesses receiving support have seen high growth in both employees and turnover.

In response to the pandemic, the authority is prioritising supporting creative freelancers, to date nearly 700 freelancers in the region have been directly supported by the combined authority through grant and business support programmes.

The West of England Combined Authority is one of the newest combined authorities, having only been operational since 2017, the creative sector has been a priority from the outset and the authority have worked closely with the sector and key stakeholders to develop a strong partnership approach to drive this work forward.

The West of England has a strong creative sector which is dispersed across the cities, towns and rural areas of the region. The cities of Bristol and Bath have established and well networked creative sectors. The biggest challenge the authority has faced in delivering support programmes for the sector has been finding ways to reach the diverse sectors of businesses working across the creative industries, particularly those based outside the two cities.

The solution

To mitigate this, the combined authority has set up a creative advisory board (separate from the Cultural Compact) that brings together sector specialists and creative business leaders from across the region to support the delivery of the creative industry business support programmes.

This group has been vital for the success of the business support programmes, providing expert guidance and referring businesses. This informal advisory board has given the combined authority better understanding of what has already happened so programmes build on previous activity delivered in the region to support the sector.

Within the West of England, the delivery of the creative scale-up programme has been focussed on sector specific training and advice for organisations, through mentoring from creative sector experts, peer support sessions with other creative businesses and training devised especially for creative businesses. A particularly successful strand of the programme has been the mentoring element, with businesses given a grant to spend on mentoring and the freedom to choose their own mentors. This has meant that participants are selecting people with relevance to them. The success of the Creative Scale Up programme was so great that the combined authority has subsequently introduced the Creative Sector Growth Programme, which provides the same structure with a focus on recovery from the pandemic. 177 businesses have been supported across the two programmes.

Through the pandemic the combined authority was able to offer recovery funding that could be responsive to the needs of the region, supporting businesses to do things that could make them more resilient and providing a diversity of opportunities, through the support programmes mentioned above and two strand of grants funding from creative businesses and creative freelancers.

The impact

The work the combined authority has done to date supporting the creative and cultural sector has helped shape the new Cultural Plan which sets out the long-term plan for the sector. The combined authority is early in its journey but the plans in place will enable the West of England's world class creative sector to thrive, to build back better, progress further and continue to embed culture at the centre of everything the region does.

Lessons learnt

- Having a culture board of sector specialists, even if only operating in an informal context, can provide improved understanding of the needs of the sector and make sure that activity responds to and is grounded in the needs and context of the region.
- Providing mentoring opportunities as part of support programmes can provide businesses with access to aspirational organisations and help them to develop additional learning and capacity beyond the original reach of the programme.
- Supporting the creative industries also means supporting potential investors in the creative industries, providing guidance about the way that the sector works and the best ways and areas to invest money to see returns.
- Capitalising on the successes of the creative industries can help to galvanise wider interest and public support in the combined authority, as they provide recognisable entry points into the work that the combined authority may be doing.
- Collaborating with the local culture compact can create increased opportunities for cross-sector working and develop a joined-up approach for the region.

West Midlands

Key learning

New model of collaborative leadership between public and private sectors generates results

The challenge

The creative industries have importance to the West Midlands being both a key driver of growth within the West Midlands Plan for Growth and a key pillar of the Local Industrial Strategy, from which a creative industries Sector Plan was created. Coordination of creative industries support has not been historically led by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

Instead, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) has been the lead regionally on most aspects. GBSLEP is one of three LEPs that have served the WMCA geography – the others being Coventry and Warwickshire LEP (CWLEP) and the Black Country LEP, although WMCA does not cover the full geography of these LEPs. In this role, achievements for the creative industries from GBSLEP include:

- Piloted the first creative flexi-apprenticeships in this region that now inform national policy.
- Shaping of Pivot & Prosper business support and creative resilience programmes for sector SMEs.
- Piloting data portal to improve access to key information for sector intermediaries and creatives.
- Developing low carbon cross-regional initiative, leading to design and delivery (in progress) of low carbon adoption and net zero business and freelancer support programmes.

Meanwhile the regional creative content sector industry trade body, Create Central, has been leading on activity around the creative content sector in the last two years, which has also included similar sub-sector focused mapping exercises, the development of a Production and Inward Investment strategy, and brokering partnerships with major broadcasters.

The extent of activity by Create Central and the three LEPs serving the West Midlands puts the region in a different place from many combined authority geographies: there is a long-established track record of policy to support the development of the creative industries across the WMCA geography.

The challenge is how to make the most of the diverse creative strengths across this geography, which combines three cities, numerous towns, and more rural places. The transition of LEP functions into local democratic functions was announced in March 2022 and will impact how this challenge is met over coming years. Here we focus on the approaches and achievements of recent years.

The solution

There are ambitions for the creative industries to be supported across the region, including those areas outside of the constituent member geography of WMCA but within the remit of the Local Industrial Strategy (most notably the gaming sector in Leamington Spa).

In relation to the creative content sector, strategic support and leadership in the West Midlands sits with Create Central, working in formal partnership with WMCA, the West Midlands Growth Company, the three LEPs, local authorities and other stakeholders. Create Central was established by the Strategic Economic Board as creative content body for the region, with an industry-led focus on delivering tangible and focused outputs, including skills, increased inward investment, and partnerships and projects with the creative content and cultural sectors.

Additionally, WMCA, in partnership with the GBSLEP and Create Central, has delivered the Creative Scale Up Programme, which has helped to develop relationships between WMCA and the creative industries locally. WMCA was one of the pilot programmes, and this has helped the combined authority to develop a better understanding of the business support needs that exist within the region. It also provided an opportunity for connecting people and networking across the region.

There are significant opportunities for the region, particularly with key infrastructure interventions like the delivery of HS2. This provides a huge opportunity for improving the region's connectivity, and for WMCA there is an opportunity to make the region more attractive to creative businesses to capitalise on this development. Innovation is also key within this. Regionally there is a lot of activity around innovation, particularly with a focus on science and low carbon, and there are ongoing discussions about how best to connect the creative industries into this activity for cross-sector benefit.

These opportunities to differentiate the West Midlands as a region from others have the potential to breathe new life into areas across the region, particularly in the Black Country, which is already seeing some organic growth of small creative clusters.

The impact

Significant impact within WMCA has been generated in recent years through the work of GBSLEP, the work of Create Central and the development of creative content sub-sectors. This includes the BBC relocating some of its services to the Midlands, as part of the long-term partnership agreement between Create Central, WMCA and the BBC and the commitment for MasterChef to move its filming to the region from 2024.

The successes of Create Central have demonstrated the need to have a strategic plan that can attract strategic partners. The combined authority has played a facilitating role in the establishment of Create Central, as well as continued political backing. This influencing and enabling role provides practical opportunities for supporting the sector at arms-length.

The outcomes achieved by both Create Central and the Creative Scale-Up Programme support continued focus by WMCA on the creative industries. This focus will build on the creative industries sector plan developed by WMCA. More broadly, the West Midlands has developed a stronger regional strategy for the creative industries and a better networked and cohesive sector, with the Creative Scale Up Programme contributing to this. The West Midlands is, therefore, better placed to win inward investment than it was five years ago and continues to be on a journey towards more compelling inward investment offer to the creative sector.

Lessons learnt

- Capitalising on transport infrastructure opportunities (HS2) provide opportunities to connect the creative industries into wider policy areas and generate cross-sector benefit.
- Strengthening regional networks and cohesion provides a compelling narrative to inward investors – an improvement illustrated by the success of Create Central's long-term partnership agreement with the BBC.

West Yorkshire

Key learning

Demonstrating impact and working collaboratively with the sector following large scale cultural investment

The Challenge

Channel 4 moved to Leeds in 2019. As part of the move, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (West Yorkshire) was able to secure £1.5 million from the government for the Growing Places Fund, which is allocated for growing the creative industries and wider creative ecosystem in West Yorkshire.

West Yorkshire developed a series of four programmes to help support the creative industries to grow in the short term, with a particular emphasis on organisations with opportunities to benefit from Channel 4 in the region. This included:

- Accelerator, which works with 26 film, TV production and gaming companies to help them increase their turnover, company size, and distribution deals into broadcasters.
- An export support programme for across the creative screen industries that looks to support cultural and creative organisations showcase their work overseas
- A mentoring programme working with the screen industries to develop mid-level talent within the region for longer term retention
- Creative Collectives, which curates and sponsors events across the region that can draw together the sector and boost awareness of the benefits of the sector.

Additionally, West Yorkshire has commissioned a consultant to look at the mid-term impact of Channel 4 moving to the region. This consists of an annual economic impact report built from ONS and BRES data each year and then compared to a baseline of 2018. Whilst COVID-19 has made it more difficult to measure how much impact has currently been made, anecdotally the sector is booming, and the expectation is that the findings of the research will provide a basis for how West Yorkshire works in future.

The solution

West Yorkshire's mayor – Tracy Brabin – was elected on a platform that included a Creative New Deal featuring 10 different pledges related to the creative industries, including boosting the sector, funding culture in towns in the area, and growing festivals.

A culture strategy is in development and a culture committee – another of the 10 pledges – meets bi-monthly to steer and develop a cultural framework. It is a marker of the importance of the creative industries within West Yorkshire that this group is chaired by the Mayor.

Knowledge sharing is the main mechanism for engagement with the creative industries in West Yorkshire at the moment, and the New Monday group (a networking group of key stakeholders across the region) is integral to developing this further. There has been a lot of activity, however there is a perceived need for wider work across the creative industries, and there is an expectation that the longer-term strategy will help with that. Additionally, looking to the future there is a question around how best to galvanise the New Monday group. West Yorkshire are keen to work with the group to explore what actions it be tackling, what the future for the group looks like, and the extent to which there might be capacity for the group to support with employment and placements.

Currently activity is concentrated in Leeds, in part due to the historic pull of the city for inward investment and connectivity, in part due to the particularly strong relationships the combined authority has with Leeds City Council as part of the Channel 4 Partnership Board, and in part due to changes of geography in the combined authority (formerly York and Harrogate, large areas for gaming, are no longer part of the combined authority's geographic remit, however it should be noted that Bradford – which has just been awarded City of Culture status in 2025 which should drive activity to the city – remains part of the remit). To combat the potential tensions from this, delivery organisations taking part in the programmes outlined above have a remit to recruit from across the wider geography.

As a means of attracting inward investment, West Yorkshire established the “#Welcome” grant, a purely capital grant for companies moving into the region to support capital expenditure. This had a good level of take-up, however West Yorkshire found a large number of recipients also needed some form of revenue funding. This has increased awareness for the combined authority that, particularly when it comes to the creative industries, there is a need to move away from purely capital funding and recognise the multiplicity of business structures within the creative industries.

The impact

Working with the creative industries provides the combined authority with the opportunity to demonstrate how successful the industries are, how much output that has economically, and the economic impact this creates through inward investment and companies relocating to the area. There are also tourism benefits to the region which attract inward investment – companies move to the region as they see the potential for their business to grow and the opportunities offered for wider work life benefit from the ecosystem already in place.

Working with the creative industries also supports the placemaking efforts in the region, particularly in relation to Leeds City of Culture 2023, Kirklees Year of Music 2023, Wakefield's Festival of Culture 2024, Calderdale's 2024 Vision events and Bradford City of Culture 2025. These placemaking opportunities form a significant part of the investment proposition of the region, drawing together and demonstrating the benefits that the creative industries can have on areas like tourism, cost of living, and connectivity across regions. Whilst there are lots of informal things happening to bring this together, the combined authority are also looking at ways to draw the different festivals together to support the placemaking agenda.

Reflecting on the activity of recent years, whilst lots has been achieved there is still a need to do more. West Yorkshire need to get their strategies and policies created and in place, provide funding that can support the creative industries, and build on existing levels of understanding and recognition of the importance of the creative industries to the area. Whilst currently there is nothing solid that has been created to underpin this, there are steps in place to develop frameworks and policies, and the ambition and aspiration to support the creative industries is there.

Alongside this, there is a recognition in West Yorkshire of the need for more delivery support; more staff in the combined authority, more programmes that can deliver against the policy plans, and more clarity of where within the combined authority the creative industries should sit. Longer term there is also a need to develop programmes and opportunities around employment and skills for the creative industries, including awareness at a schools level. Skills is regularly highlighted as an issue by creative industries in West Yorkshire, and for the combined authority to continue to attract investment there is a need to look at how to fill – and importantly then retain – that skills gap in the region.

Lessons learnt

- Including geographic recruitment quotas in support programmes can help to mitigate some of the historic geographic tensions that might exist in an area and create increased opportunities for establishing new clusters of creative businesses across the full reach of the combined authority.
- There is a multiplicity of business structures within the creative industries, and one-size-fits-all approaches to funding are not always going to be successful. Providing scope for flexibility in funding programmes can help to better meet the needs of the sector.
- Demonstrating the economic contribution that the creative industries make to the region includes recognising the knock-on impact of the sector in attracting inward investment from other sectors who are attracted by the creativity of the region. This in turn helps to make the area a more enticing place to live and work for businesses.

North East Combined Authority

The North East Combined Authority (NECA) is not a mayoral combined authority and does not have associated devolved funding from government. Each local authority within NECA is very committed to economic development in their communities, including the creative industries. This is also done in conjunction with regional partners through local enterprise partnerships where appropriate.

Alongside this, where appropriate, the local and combined authorities look at joint opportunities. The most significant of these is the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed with the BBC in September 2021. This was signed by NECA, the North of Tyne and Tees Valley Combined Authorities, and all 12 of the constituent councils. This sets out a collective commitment to the development of the screen industries as a key growth sector in the region, and joint working across all three combined authorities and 12 constituent councils is being taken forward in that area.

Regional working outside of combined authorities

Durham County Council

Key learning

Full commitment from partners can lead to coordinated approaches across the creative industries

The challenge

Durham has been invited by the Government to start negotiations to agree a County Deal, which may take the form of a county combined authority. In coming years, the county will seek to build on the creative and cultural foundations that it has established in recent years, irrespective of what deal is agreed with government.

The county of Durham spends less, employs fewer people, has a smaller freelance workforce in the creative industries than many other parts of the country, according to [Culture Durham](#). It also confronts with high rates of poverty and social deprivation. These challenges play out within a disparate county: a world heritage site with a global university amid post-industrial towns; rich industrial and medieval heritage; rural and urban landscapes and possibilities.

Durham's challenge is to utilise these contrasting assets and grow its creative industries in inclusive ways that reduce poverty and social deprivation.

The solution

Bidding to become the UK City of Culture 2025 has accelerating and galvanised the coordination of efforts to grow the creative industries across the county.

Durham has benefitted from the legacy of its bid to become UK City of Culture 2013. The 2013 bid initiated both Lumiere - now the UK's leading light art festival - and Culture Durham, the collaborative cultural partnership who are central to the 2025 bid.

When Durham was deciding whether to launch its 2025 bid, there was new leadership in both the local authority and the university, and an acceleration of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and devolution opportunities. The bid has helped to focus collaboration between these agencies, while growing engagement with creative industries strategy among property developers and the broader business community.

This engagement is driven by a shared pride in Durham's past and determination to create the brightest possible future for the county. This spirit is captured in the motto that the bid shares with Durham Miners Hall: the past we inherit, the future we build.

The impact

A major achievement was Durham being selected as one of the final four applicants for UK City of Culture 2025.

The bid drew upon collaborative working and consultation. Contributions have been made by a wide range of organisations, and by individual practitioners and artists. While Durham was, ultimately, not successful in becoming UK City of Culture 2025, the process of bidding unlocked ambition, energy, and potential.

The key partners in the bid - Durham County Council, Durham University and Culture Durham – are committed to working together to build on this dynamism, attract visitors from around the world and create local jobs. In 2025 the global bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway is set to be celebrated and the county will host the National Astronomy Meeting.

The partners are committed to working together to secure financing for Place Labs. This will see creative hubs introduced in major settlements across the county, providing a space for communities to share ideas and deliver their own cultural activities.

Lessons learnt

The lesson learnt is that with the full commitment of key partners - Durham County Council, Durham University and Culture Durham – the county is of an appropriate scale to work rapidly in a coordinated way towards the growth of its creative industries. This scale draws upon the rich diversity and civic pride of the county, while being a smaller geography than that typically involved with a combined authority. No matter what the future for devolution is in Durham, these characteristics will continue to be utilised by the county.

4. Opportunities

Levelling Up White Paper

The February 2022 Levelling Up White Paper intended to underpin a series of 12 missions which will underpin the Government's levelling up agenda over the coming decade. These were supported by the publication of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill in May 2022. Each of the 12 missions provides an opportunity for the creative industries, and, relatedly, an opportunity for combined authorities to work with the creative industries to realise these opportunities in their regions.

This is most explicit for the Pride in Place mission, which outlines the role that culture and creativity can play in instilling pride of place in the people who live in that place. This includes:

- An expansion of the Creative Scale Up Programme will be launched, generating more than £18 million of new funding that can be used to support high-growth businesses in regions outside London.
- There is a specific focus on developing the video games sector, with more than £8 million of funding allocated to help support start-up businesses and young entrepreneurial talent. This is being delivered through the Dundee-based UK Games Fund.

As can be seen in the following sections, most of these missions has some relevance to the creative industries to a greater or lesser extent. By acting now, combined authorities have the chance to seize these opportunities, working more closely with the creative industries in their areas, and maximising the potential of their relationships.

To complement the levelling up agenda, the Government is also currently working on a Creative Industries Sector Vision. This aims to ensure that the UK's creative industries can be globally competitive, and will formalise arrangements for distributing £50 million across the creative industries (as announced in February 2022) across a range of different initiatives, including a screen fund, games fund, and an extension to the Creative Scale Up programme.

Pride in Place

“By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas of the UK closing.”

Pride of Place is the mission that has the most direct reference to the creative industries, focusing on the role that culture can play in placemaking and improving places across the UK.

The creative industries should look to take advantage of the opportunities that this mission is likely to create, including funding opportunities, and it may be beneficial for them to seek to align activities to this agenda where possible.

For combined authorities, there is a question around how they can best leverage and work with these opportunities, and there will also need to be a wider consideration about how any new funds and policy instruments can be used to enable culture to build pride in place. It is likely that closer working between the combined authorities and the creative industries can help to address this, including closer working between the combined authorities and those sector bodies representing the creative industries.

A key long-term ambition for the Tees Valley Combined Authority is to transform external perceptions of the area. There is a strong recognition of the role creativity and culture can play in transforming expectations about the region and building pride in place. This role features in other combined authorities:

- The West Yorkshire Combined Authority putting focus upon a series of large-scale events to build pride in place, ie: Leeds City of Culture 2023, Kirklees Year of Music 2023, Wakefield's Festival of Culture 2024, Calderdale's 2024 Vision events and Bradford City of Culture 2025.
- The North of Tyne Combined Authority seeking to build clusters of excellence to build pride and support economic development, ie: publishing in Newcastle, performing arts in North Shields, film in Berwick.

Building on place-based policy

Both well-established combined authorities (such as the Cultural Action Zones that have advanced in the West Midlands) and newer combined authorities (such as the Culture and Creative Zones being developed by the North Tyneside Combined Authority) have developed place-based interventions.

Placemaking by combined authorities can both coordinate capital investment in the creative industries and ensure that this capital investment is combined with adequate revenue support, something that participants in the roundtables observed is less frequently made available to the creative industries by central government funds.

Arts Council England's Cultural Compacts – place-based partnerships between public, private and third sector organisations based at either a local authority or combined authority level – are one means of unlocking this revenue support that the roundtables suggested. At the same time, it was also suggested at one of the roundtables that combined authorities should use their advocacy capacities to encourage central government to provide more funding that combines capital and revenue support.

Skills

“By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.”

To support continued growth and development, there will be a need for the creative industries to support skills development. This provides opportunities both in terms of the direct skills development needed for careers in the sector, and for the creative industries to be a soft-skills training provider for other sectors, wherein development of skills can have wider holistic impacts.

This will require the creative industries to work closely with the Further and Higher Education sectors to develop provisions, as well as engaging with existing providers outside of formal education settings to understand what support is needed for up-skilling both the sector and wider related sectors.

Skills are often a major area of focus for combined authorities. Creative workers have benefitted from general skills improvement programmes administered by combined authorities and by more specialised programmes.

- In terms of the former, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has financed a Skills Bank, a business support programme with good take up from the creative industries.
- More specialised skills support has, for example, been provided by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority following the relocation of Channel 4 to Leeds. This has included a mentoring programme working with the screen industries to develop mid-level talent within the region for longer term retention.

Greater Manchester’s ambition to “ensure our residents have the skills required to drive and contribute to the growth of culture, heritage and the CIs” is not untypical within creative industries strategies. devolution deals that provide greater local control over adult skills provision enhance local capacity to fulfil such commitments.

Meanwhile, some universities have been successful in building skills that have sustained local creative clusters (eg Staffordshire University and the emerging screen industries cluster in and around Stoke-on-Trent). The £120 million AHRC creative industries Clusters Programme, launched in 2018, is a major intervention that has sought to deepen this kind of Higher Education activity.

There is an opportunity for combined authorities to provide greater coordination between the skills and research output of local universities and colleges and the needs and ambitions of local creative industries.

The roundtables recognised this opportunity, while noting the challenges that can be created by the relatively large presence of microbusinesses and freelancers in

the creative industries. These require tailored support for them to access skills and business support services – a theme that we further explore in our case studies.

Research and development (R&D)

“By 2030, domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40 per cent, and over the Spending Review period by one third. This additional government funding will seek to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.”

The generation of new ideas is fundamental to the creative industries. However, prior to the ‘Levelling Up’ White Paper, public policy intended to support R&D and the commercialisation of new ideas gave little (if any) weight to geography. For example, an applicant to Innovate UK from outside London would be no more likely, to receive funding than an applicant with an equally strong proposition from London.

The Levelling Up White Paper changes this and, therefore, gives a stimulus to the deepening of creative clusters outside of the South East. This is particularly the case:

- For creative sectors that are grown through R&D expenditure, for example: digital and immersive content.
- In places that can broker relationships between local universities and creative sectors such that R&D and its business applications can be fused most productively.

The West Midlands Combined Authority has successfully brokered this kind of relationship in numerous other sectors, for example: science and low carbon. There is potential to extend a similar approach to innovation to the creative industries.

The importance of growing R&D expenditure and activity outside of London and the South East is a growing theme of government innovation policy. For example, in July 2021, [UKRI announced funding for CoSTAR](#), a new distributed national infrastructure for the creative industries that will provide R&D to the screen and performance sectors. Through a network of regional hubs, this R&D funding will serve all parts of the UK with cutting-edge, real-time digital technologies. The final criteria for the awarding of CoSTAR funding are yet to be announced but they are likely to seek to serve levelling up ambitions, ie strengthening R&D in parts of the UK that have traditionally been underserved. This is likely to be a theme of other R&D funds too.

Innovation has also been a focus for the Liverpool City Region – with the creative industries successfully bidding to a future innovation fund run by Liverpool. Future Yard, in Birkenhead, was a particular exemplar of a project funded through this programme. A brand new 300-capacity space, it provides a platform in the Wirral for national and international artists whilst also giving early performance opportunities to emerging local musicians.

Future Yard also has a detailed sustainability plan, seeking to become the first carbon neutral venue in the North of England, developed in partnership with academics at the University of Liverpool. This shows the potential for innovation that straddles the creative industries and low carbon – with input from a university and support from a combined authority.

Transport infrastructure

“By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.”

Transport infrastructure improvements can provide a range of opportunities to the creative industries. There are significant opportunities around public engagement through improved infrastructure, ranging from the basic level of more people being able to access cultural events, through to more complex approaches such as combined ticketing incentives, the latter of which could be supported by combined authorities given their remit for transport.

Less immediately direct, from an employment perspective, improved infrastructure can enable organisations to improve and reduce their carbon footprint by encouraging more of their employees to take advantage of public transport. Greater connectivity also provides opportunities for increasing employment and improving talent retention, with convenience of access helping to make the creative industries employers of choice.

Investment in public transport can also be combined with cultural development as combined authorities are seeking to encourage, for example:

- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority are supporting the regeneration around the Peterborough station quarter and enhanced cultural offer in the city in tandem with one another.
- HS2 is transforming the West Midlands and drawing significant investment into Digbeth, Birmingham – an area near the coming HS2 station with many growing creative businesses. Another example of transport investment and cultural development being complementary.

Digital connectivity

“By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.”

Improved connectivity across the UK has benefits for the creative industries as a whole, providing better connectivity irrespective of region. This, in turn, can provide greater opportunities for diversification and innovation, as the creative industries find themselves able to take advantage of the higher capacity provided by the 5G network.

As the lessons from the 5G testbed areas continue to be shared, there are opportunities for the creative industries to learn from these and identify key areas of development. This is most likely to be the case for the West Midlands testbed, the 5G Create programme and the 5G Festival.

The coming Enterprise Arcade in Southport, a town in Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, is an example of creative business development benefitting from improved digital connectivity. It will deliver a new Creative, Digital and Tech led district in Southport town centre. It is the town's first purpose-built workspace for start-up businesses and sits within Liverpool's creative strategy.

Education

“By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90 per cent of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.”

The role of the creative industries in inspiring and improving learning is well established, particularly in relation to the impact of arts education on wider learning. There are opportunities for the creative industries, and particularly the cultural sector, to continue to develop and improve on their cultural education provision to take advantage of this mission. This could include working with schools to develop resources that respond to the specific curriculum expectations, as well as looking at how cultural education can more widely improve standards.

There are also opportunities for the wider creative industries to play a role in improving educational standards, both through learning opportunities for young people and through innovation and development of products that can support learning more widely.

Equally, young people and their families can lack understanding about how to develop careers in the creative industries – with the risk that this hampers the UK's creative pipeline.

To combat this, Greater Manchester Combined Authority has been working with colleges in target areas to showcase opportunities and are also looking to provide more support for early careers professionals to provide them with the fundamental business skills they need to make a career in the creative industries a lifelong choice.

Health and wellbeing

“By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will be narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by five years.”

“By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.”

Whilst health and wellbeing are two distinct missions, there is a collective opportunity for the creative industries, namely around the role of arts and culture in improving health and wellbeing, particularly through social prescribing.

There are questions to be answered around how social prescribing can be expanded to include access to culture to improve health and wellbeing. In some instances, there may be opportunities through the recent introduction of the new Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) across the NHS in April 2022 where these have alignment with existing combined authorities. However, this will not be practical for all of the combined authorities, and, in those cases where there is not geographic alignment, there will be a need to explore whether there are other possible mechanisms for leveraging the creative industries for health and wellbeing benefits. It may be that some of these benefits are secondary benefits rising out of the Pride in Place mission explored above.

The West of England Combined Authority has put significant focus upon the health and wellbeing role of the creative industries. The combined authority has recently released a cultural plan that has long-term, high-level ambitions, led by the West of England Cultural Compact (a body distinct from, but working with, the combined authority). This plan commits the combined authority to strategic support for social prescribing.

Local leadership

“By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.”

It is vital that the creative industries continue to be considered as integral to the continued growth of a place as new devolution deals are created, and longer-term local strategies are established. There is a role here for the creative industries to work with existing combined authorities to demonstrate the value and impact that they can bring to an area, and the growth potential that they provide. Additionally, there is an opportunity for aspiring devolved areas to look to the work of existing combined authorities so that they can learn from best practice and work with the established creative industries in their area to create plans that can create the most benefit from the settlements agreed with central government.

5. Conclusion: The future role of combined authorities

Combined authorities operate within diverse economic contexts and serve a wide range of geographies, with different mixes of urban and rural populations. Combined authorities also differ in terms of the length of time that they have been established (for example the North of Tyne Combined Authority is much more newly established combined authority than others) and the local institutional mix (for example some combined authorities have a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) that maps on to the same geography, while others work with a range of LEPs within the same geography as the combined authority).

These differences between combined authorities contribute towards a recognition that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for combined authorities that are seeking to grow creative industries. What will work for one combined authority may not work for another.

Alongside this, some places are now considering devolution deals that would involve the creation of new combined authorities – potentially with or without elected mayors. However, given the diversity of economic contexts across the country, this institutional evolution is unlikely to arrive at a one-size-fits-all solution for the role of combined authorities in supporting the creative industries.

Clear demarcation in the mix of responsibilities between combined authorities and local authorities was recognised by the roundtables as being important. Some distinct features of the role of combined authorities tend to be:

- Leadership at a regional level.
- Enhancing evidence gathering and understanding.
- Levelling up capacity within combined authorities.
- Infrastructure development, including joined up approaches across regions.

Additionally, roundtable attendees noted the importance of clear lines of responsibility for planning and policy making, financial support, and business support across geographic areas, as well as identifying where combined authorities were able to bring added value to support the remit of local authorities. Representatives from the creative industries reported challenges in effectively engaging local agencies when these responsibilities are not clearly communicated.

Leadership

In places where mayors are elected, these leaders are likely to be important enablers of identity and place, utilising their convening powers to try to attract new investment into local creative industries and to make the most of existing assets.

Equally, mayors can effectively create new forms of leadership for the creative industries at a regional level, supporting and building upon the leadership of places provided by local authorities. For example:

- In July 2020, the Tees Valley Combined Authority launched a taskforce, with independent leadership, to review ways in which its creative sector could recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This independent leadership has helped to win new investment for Tees Valley.
- The Create Central partnership is a success story from the West Midlands Combined Authority. The public-private partnership, with creative sector leadership, was launched to win new investment for the region and to effectively develop its creative content sector. Major investment from the BBC has followed, including the relocation of MasterChef to the West Midlands in 2024.
- The Mayor of Merseyside supported a strategy for the music industries in the city region soon after he was elected in 2017, with the strategy entailing the creation of an independent music board. The depth of engagement by this board has expanded and is now focused on growing representation of ethnic minorities at all levels of the local music industries.
- Strategic cultural partnerships such as Arts Council England's Cultural Compacts are another means by which credible and independent leadership can be brought to a local creative sector at either a local or regional level. In the West of England, for example, the Cultural Compact, whilst independent of the combined authority, has worked in combination with the political leadership of the elected Mayor to create a cultural plan for the authority as a whole that can promote the region more widely.

Understanding and evidence gathering

Combined authorities hold a strong remit for economic development. But a consistent view emerging from our roundtables is that a robust understanding of local creative industries is necessary to best fulfil this remit in relation to this sector. Without this, the strategic potential of the creative industries is likely to remain underutilised.

Combined authorities, including Tees Valley Combined Authority and South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, have begun their work with the creative industries by building a more detailed picture of the local sector in terms of its economic footprint and its opportunities and challenges. This can help to create the understanding needed to best support the creative industries.

Likewise, building on evidence gathering exercises, several combined authorities have developed strategic plans for the development of their creative sectors. The West of England Combined Authority has recently published such a plan, building upon evidence gathered by the Cultural Compact for the West of England.

Moving forwards, combined authorities provide an opportunity for these mapping exercises to be properly resourced and for expertise to be in place to best act upon these insights.

Levelling up within combined authorities

We discuss above the various ways in which more resources may be attracted to places outside London and the South East as a result of the Government's commitment to levelling up. A striking feature of our roundtables, however, was the importance placed on levelling up within combined authorities, for example, ensuring access to cultural opportunities and creative careers exists in the towns of combined authorities as well as in their metropolitan centres.

Oldham, for example, has recently launched a new culture and creative strategy that commits to, "strengthening and extending partnerships with education and training providers and the creative industries across the region". Greater Manchester can benefit from levelling up (by winning more resources for the city region) and the combined authority has a role to play in levelling up (by helping to build the partnerships that will sustain the creative industries of Oldham).

Similar relationships to that between Oldham and central Manchester abound across the combined authorities:

- Knowsley is the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture for 2022 – seeking to extend creative opportunities from Liverpool city centre to other parts of the region.
- West Yorkshire benefits from a major creative centre in Leeds and a series of culturally ambitious local authorities across the combined authority (such as Bradford, Wakefield) – with the combined authority having a role in navigating mutually beneficial futures between these different places.

Breaking down policy silos

As illustrated by our discussion above on the potential opportunities emerging for the creative industries from the 'Levelling Up' White Paper, this is a sector with many interfaces with others, such as health, tourism, education.

These interfaces mean that the sector will be most effectively served by approaches that move beyond traditional policy silos and find effective solutions for localities. This breaking down is typically an ambition for combined authorities and, therefore, these institutions hold greater potential for supporting the creative industries.

The integration of capital investment into broader economic development strategies is another way in which mayors and combined authorities can effectively break down policy silos and bring improved local coordination.

Following MediaCity (Manchester), Pacific Quay (Glasgow) and Central Square (Cardiff), Channel 4's National HQ in Leeds continues the association between investment in media facilities and wider place-based creative industries development. Academic research has stressed the importance of these facilities being joined-up with related local policies:

“From a regeneration perspective, policymakers should consider how these facilities fit into a broader strategy, and they should not be relied upon alone for job-creation.”

Elected mayors can be effective advocates for these kinds of investments, while combined authorities are well-placed to provide the kind of local coordination needed to make the most of them. Some examples of mayors providing leadership to the development of the creative industries include:

- West Yorkshire's Mayor – Tracy Brabin – being elected on a platform that included a Creative New Deal featuring 10 different pledges related to the creative industries, including boosting the sector, funding culture in towns in the area, and growing festivals. A culture strategy is in development and a culture committee – another of the 10 pledges – meets bi-monthly to steer and develop a cultural framework. This committee is chaired by the Mayor, which helps to give it impetus and direction.
- The Mayor of the West Midlands – Andy Street – has provided consistent backing to Create Central. This is an industry-led partnership that has supported the development of the screen sector over recent years in the West Midlands. This has led to key successes, including the BBC relocating some of its services to the Midlands and the commitment for MasterChef to move its filming to the region from 2024.

In addition to these large-scale investments, the roundtables discussed the role of combined authorities in improving the number, quality, and coordination of funding bids across their geographies. These bids require expertise and oversight, which combined authorities have greater capacity to provide than local authorities working in isolation.



Local Government Association

18 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Email info@local.gov.uk

www.local.gov.uk

© Local Government Association, October 2022

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio,
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.
We consider requests on an individual basis.

REF 27.6