

West Midlands
ARTS+CULTURE

OUR SIDE OF THE STORY



Photo supplied by Getty Images for Birmingham 2022



West Midlands
Combined Authority



Photo supplied by Getty Images for Birmingham 2022

OUR SIDE OF

ARTS + CULTURE

West Midlands has more parks than Paris, more canals than Venice and the most Michelin stars outside of London.

We're not just the birthplace of Peaky Blinders but home to world class museums, galleries, theatres, exhibition centres and cinemas. We gave you Shakespeare, heavy metal, Cluedo, Lord of the Rings, bhangra, Lenny Henry, the Doctor Who theme tune and so much more. The West Midlands is a creative powerhouse with a melting pot of diverse culture. There are many sides to the West Midlands, and we have our own story to tell.

Now is the time for West Midlands to shine.

16,230 people employed in the cultural sector across within the wider WMCA area

+50% added on when taking freelancers into consideration

+20% employment growth in the last 5 years

60% employment growth in Greater Birmingham and Solihull in last 10 years

1.1^{BN} total economic footprint of cultural sector

1 in 47 jobs in the West Midlands are supported by cultural tourism

+8% higher growth rate of the creative sector than the national rate

240% growth in design jobs making it a key regional strength



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

The West Midlands has one of the largest cultural sectors in the country, and arts & culture are instrumental in driving our economy as well as making our places better for our residents.

There are over 10,000 cultural and heritage assets in the region ranging from concert halls to community spaces and creative industries workspaces.

The region has successfully hosted two major events: Coventry City of Culture and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games – thus demonstrating that it has the competency and capability to deliver on major investment opportunities.



DIGBETH has one of the largest creative clusters in the UK and is home to 350+ businesses



Photo supplied by Getty Images for Birmingham 2022

LEAMINGTON SPA has a nationally significant games cluster, providing more than 10% of UK gaming jobs



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

WHAT THE WEST MIDLANDS NEEDS

Creativity is part of our region's fabric, but we want to use these major events to generate more, give opportunities to generations to come, continue to celebrate our successes and share them with the world, but be able to look to the future.

While the West Midlands has world-class cultural assets, these are currently not effectively utilised, and we need a regionally agreed long-term strategy to spread the positive benefits of cultural participation to all parts of our region.

Despite the major events, the West Midlands has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country with very limited opportunities to engage with publicly funded cultural activities. This is due to both a lack of infrastructure and disparity of investment.

Our data shows that nearly 2 million people in the West Midlands have limited access to publicly funded cultural facilities and activities.

This means they are also missing out on the positive benefits of culture, including increased pride of place, health & wellbeing benefits, increased social cohesion, and improved confidence to pursue skills & job opportunities.



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The People's



Orchestra

THE PEOPLE'S ORCHESTRA (TPO), IS A COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA BASED IN THE BLACK COUNTRY. DURING THEIR 10-YEAR HISTORY, TPO HAS HELPED OVER 1,000 PEOPLE INTO JOBS ACROSS DIFFERENT SECTORS. THEY HAVE DONE THIS THROUGH A COMBINATION OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND GENERATING WORK EXPERIENCE.

TPO doesn't just focus on generating employment opportunities in the music industry, but it delivers community-based projects to develop confidence and transferable, practical business skills such as writing CVs, interview techniques, social media, copywriting, and events management.

TPO also runs an arts leadership programme offering individuals from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds a package of training, mentoring, performance, and employment opportunities, with the aim of increasing diversity within orchestral and choral groups.



T P O

TPO doesn't just focus on generating employment opportunities in the music industry it also delivers community based project work to develop the confidence and practical skills such as writing CVs, interview techniques, social media, copywriting, and events management.

TPO gives its members the chance to develop transferable skills and exposure to running a business covering everything from project management and marketing to social media and graphic design.

The People's Orchestra received 'The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service' in 2021.



Photos supplied by Chris Bentley & The People's Orchestra



Photo supplied by Nikki Riggon: Freddie McGregor



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

BOM



House of Bab performing at BOM's 5th Birthday, 2019

Birmingham Open Media

BOM IS A BIRMINGHAM-BASED CENTRE FOR ART, TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE DEDICATED TO CREATIVE INNOVATION AND RUNNING DIGITAL SKILLS PROGRAMMES FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS.

ACCESS

BOM's Schools Education Programme engages 400 school children each year, providing hands-on creative activities blending art, technology, science, and inspirational workshops from organisations like NASA, Public Health England and the Crick Institute.



Robin Price, This Is Not A Table, 2015



DNA Sequencing Schools Workshop, 2021

SKILLS

The programme is aimed at children with special educational needs or disabilities and young people excluded from mainstream education. 100% of learners gain increased creative and critical thinking skills and improved wellbeing. BOM's Propeller programme supports more than 36 neurodivergent adults each year to enter the creative industries, providing pathways into employment through digital skills training, autism-led mentoring, tailored professional development and mental health support.

NURTURE

BOM's Residents creative tech incubator supports over 15 diverse artists each year through tailored creative professional development. 90% of practitioners secure

new work and paid opportunities as a direct result of engagement. 100% of practitioners gain new digital skills and knowledge of emerging technologies.

CULTURAL TOURISM + ITS ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION



IN 2019, VISITORS SPENT £2.3BN ON EXPERIENCING ARTS AND CULTURE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

In 2019, the region welcomed 28 million tourists, who came to see our incredible cultural offering, a fifth of which made the trip solely to visit our renowned locations and attractions, such as the Midlands Art Centre, which was the 14th most visited, free attraction in the UK.

In 2020 the BLACK COUNTRY was named as a UNESCO global heritage site due to it boasting over 40 geosites.



DID YOU KNOW?

The West Midlands is the youngest region in Europe - 40% of Birmingham's population is under 25 and 46% of Coventry's is under 30 – but we have some of the oldest natural landmarks.

Nestled in the heart of the country, our region is home to some of the best heritage sites, attractions, and outdoor event spaces.

Tourists can step back in time at Shakespeare's birthplace and the Black Country Living Museum, discover the wonders of the world at Thinktank and Ikon Gallery or do some al fresco dancing at Godiva, Made, or Birmingham International Dance festivals.

All of this and more makes the West Midlands a popular tourist destination locally, nationally, and internationally – people travel from far and wide to take in our cultural offer and in turn, generate money to keep the sector going.

Photo supplied by Black Country Living Museum
Photo supplied by Getty Images for Birmingham 2022



SOCIAL VALUE

Participation in arts and culture makes our lives better whether it's through skills development, encouraging volunteering or generating community engagement.

Here in the West Midlands, our cultural infrastructure plays a crucial role in generating pride of place, attracting and retaining creative talent, and providing opportunities for the people that make our region what it is today.

More importantly, our creativity does wonders for our mental and physical wellbeing – projects happening in our region have had a direct, positive impact on the health and welfare of our communities.

Volunteering opportunities not only help keep culture alive but can make individuals feel more involved with their community.

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games has enlisted 14,000 volunteers to support with the delivery of the sporting events and cultural programme, one of the biggest events our region has hosted to date.

Similarly, Coventry City of Culture has a hugely successful City Hosts programme, which really engaged local people.

DID YOU KNOW?

Arts prescription projects have reduced UK GP visits by 37% and hospital admissions by 27%

Photo supplied by Getty Images for Birmingham 2022

Photo supplied by Coventry City of Culture

Photo supplied by Getty Images for Birmingham 2022



2021



Coventry City of Culture Policing Project

AS PART OF COVENTRY'S CITY OF CULTURE PROGRAMME, KAY RUFAL WAS COMMISSIONED BY WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AS AN ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE, TASKED WITH EXPLORING THE BARRIERS BETWEEN POLICING AND YOUNG PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY STEREOTYPING.

The Barriers to Bridges project has been a unique opportunity to focus on personal stories over statistics, sharing the lived experiences of both police officers and young people.

The project was created to help police officers understand what Black and Asian people really think of the police, their experiences with the police and why police safety messages are not getting through.

The project resulted in an art exhibition displayed in Coventry during February 2022, giving communities the opportunity to challenge their own prejudices.

The project was very successful and there are plans to see how this creative approach could be embedded into other forces in England.



Artwork supplied by Kay Rufai



Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands

"Creativity is the driving force of our region. It is reflected in our rich heritage, our diverse cultures, and our entrepreneurial spirit. Our world-class arts & cultural sector is at the core of this, moving us forward, shaping our identity and nurturing the next generation of creative talent. Art & culture help to strengthen our society, bringing communities together, inspiring our young people, and making places more attractive for residents, visitors, and investors."



Anita Bhalla, OBE Chair, GBSLEP & Chair, B:Music

"Our cultural and creative sectors are an amazing resource for the West Midlands. They are a key driver of our economy, innovation and competitiveness, but also provide other value through benefits to our people and our places. There aren't enough pages to explain the value, benefits and proven impact of our cultural and creative sectors – there are so many sides of the story that deserve to be shared."



Carol King, WMCA Cultural Leadership Board

"With sufficient investment and support we can create employment & talent opportunities especially for your young population, boost our economy, and encourage tourism from within our own boundaries to right across the globe. More importantly, we can bring our communities together, uncover hidden talents and continue to put West Midlands on the global map as a leading creative region."

To learn more or to discuss ways
**you can support the West Midlands
cultural sector**, please email
culture@wmca.org.uk