

West Midlands
CULTURE+ECONOMY

OUR SIDE OF THE STORY



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West Midlands
Combined Authority



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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

CULTURAL + CREATIVE INDUSTRIES DRIVING WEST MIDLANDS ECONOMY

Forget 'nice to have' – cultural and creative industries are big business. And they are crucial for our future economy too.

Prior to Covid, creative industries contributed £111+ billion to the UK economy. That's £13 million every hour – and **more than automotive, aerospace, life sciences and oil and gas industries combined.**¹

In the West Midlands, cultural & creative sectors combined are bigger than construction, life sciences, healthcare, logistics & transport technologies, and low carbon & environmental technology sectors in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA)².

Cultural & creative industries are **industries of the future** – resilient to

robots and artificial intelligence taking over people's jobs.³ West Midlands already once nearly lost its fortunes by the decline of traditional industries.

We need to futureproof our workforce and business sectors by ensuring we invest into our cultural and creative industries.

1 - Local Government Association. (2020). Creative places. Supporting your local creative economy.
2 - <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/cityredi/what-is-gross-value-added-gva/>
3 - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-the-growth-potential-of-creative-clusters?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=391a9dcd-31f5-47d5-ad1b-94989334a40c&utm_content=daily
4 - <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/65m1d0dj/economic-report-web.pdf>
5 - Local Government Association. (2022). Combined authorities and the creative industries.



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WEST MIDLANDS HAS THE THIRD BIGGEST CULTURAL SECTOR IN THE UK AFTER LONDON & GREATER MANCHESTER.⁴

- Over 40,000 people employed by creative industries
- Over 10,000 creative enterprises
- 16,000+ people directly employed by cultural sector + at least 16,000 freelancers
- +22,700 other jobs supported by cultural sector
- A cultural sector that supports over 54,000 high quality jobs
- Creative industries generating £4 billion GVA
- £1.1 billion = our cultural sector's economic footprint

(CI employment ref⁵ - cultural sector employment & economic footprint ref WM research, enterprise data and CI GVA from LIS plan)



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

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



6 - <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/o5mfd0dj/economic-report-web.pdf>
7 - <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/o5mfd0dj/economic-report-web.pdf>
8 - Historic England (2019) Regional Profile Infographics. <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-economy/>



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company



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

Every job in the West Midlands cultural sector supports 0.78 of a job in the wider economy – a **higher multiplier than in retail, law and accounting**.⁶

In the five years prior to Covid, West Midlands cultural sector had a 20% employment growth – making it the **second fastest growing sector in the region** after business support services.⁷

Our heritage sector:⁸

- ◆ Employs over 46,000 people
- ◆ Creates £1.2 billion direct GVA and £559m indirect GVA
- ◆ Generates an additional £1.26 GVA for every £1m by our heritage sector
- ◆ Heritage tourism spend is worth £780m for West Midlands



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

PLACES + PEOPLE

But it is not just about jobs.

It is about our places and our people, how we generate new ideas and secure our futures.

The bad news is our **high streets are dying**. The good news is that cultural & creative industries can help to revive them.

Culture is the new marketing cost. It can support meanwhile uses, create events & festivals, make our high streets more pleasant, bring people together – and most importantly, attract other businesses.

9 - Arts Council England. (2021). A high street renaissance

DID YOU KNOW

50% of adults would like to see more cultural experiences on their high streets.⁹

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CAZs



Photo supplied by GBSLEP



Photo supplied by David Furnage

CULTURAL ACTION ZONES (CAZs) ARE COMMUNITY-LED CULTURAL & ARTS PROGRAMMES INCENTIVISING LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS TO COME TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THEIR LOCALITIES. THIS HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY VALUABLE POST-PANDEMIC WHERE RETAIL ALONE HAS PROVEN INSUFFICIENT TO RESTORE FOOTFALL NUMBERS. CAZ'S CAN COVER ANY TYPE OF AREA FROM PART OF A HIGH STREET TO A TOWN CENTRE.

Since 2021, GBSLEP has been supporting nine Cultural Action Zones supported nine Cultural Action Zones in Birmingham, Kidderminster and Solihull. Examples of the activities supported include recurring festivals, pop-up markets, street art tours, multi-language poetry readings and co-created art installations. To date, there have been:

Over 200 organisations helped to facilitate events

Over 11,500 people engaged through activities

142 local artists commissioned

Key to the success of CAZs has been the **inclusion of local businesses and local stakeholders** from the start to ensure that activities are relevant to the communities. This has allowed activities to flourish in areas which traditionally have struggled to engage with such programmes.

The economic case for Cultural Action Zones is also very strong, with **over 80% of businesses surveyed reporting an increase in revenue** as a direct cause of CAZ activity. Culture is a cost-effective way to deliver cost-effective interventions for high streets.

Similarly, our **night-time economy is driven by culture**. But it can only work effectively if supported through other policy areas – like transport, licencing, and local planning. Prior to Covid the UK night-time cultural economy was **worth £112 billion (5.1% of GDP), supporting 1.94 million jobs**.

The impacts of the pandemic have however been severe, with estimated 86,000 jobs lost to date. We must work together to ensure West Midlands night-time economy can truly thrive.

Finally, cultural & creative industries are **essential to innovation**. They act as research & development labs, encouraging experimentation and in turn driving innovation and commercial activity. Public funding enables arts & cultural organisations to carry risk and test concepts that would otherwise be too costly to bring to market.

Firms that integrate arts and design skill and thinking into research processes are more productive, more likely to grow in the future, and more likely to produce radical innovations.¹⁰

This is why **we need STEAM – not STEM**.

10 - Local Government Association. (2020). Creative places. Supporting your local creative economy.

Cultural Action Zones

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.

OKAY, SO WHAT NEXT?

West Midlands has a unique opportunity to build on the legacy of major cultural events such as Coventry City of Culture and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games cultural programme.

We must ensure that we use this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to futureproof our region and to ensure our young creative talent and businesses can flourish.

Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

Photo supplied by Flexus Youth Dance

To do this we need to:



Truly recognise the value our cultural & creative sectors deliver



Embed them into our thinking across policy areas – from transport to innovation and public health to regeneration & planning



Ensure we move away from programme funding and single projects towards a long-term strategic vision and investment plan for the region



Secure more investment for West Midlands to level up culture



Stop seeing heritage assets as problems – but rather create new ways to ensure we maximise their role in regeneration, high streets, creative cluster development, repurposing, net zero and inclusive growth



Support our cultural ecology and development of creative clusters by:

- Ensuring access to local talent across creative & non-creative roles
- Create more equitable and accessible talent development opportunities for everyone
- Addressing the severe skills gaps we are currently seeing
- Creating specific support for creative sector freelancers – which make up to 50% of the workforce
- Ensuring arts, culture & creative industries are at the heart of our work on innovation and technology
- Supporting business to access finance & investment
- Ensuring our cultural & creative sectors have the facilities & infrastructure they need
- Fiscal innovation to reduce red tape and barriers to growth
- Creating opportunities for international working & exports

Creativity is part of our region's fabric, but we need to unleash its full potential, give opportunities to generations to come and continue to celebrate our successes and share them with the world. We need to work together to achieve this.



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**