

West Midlands
CULTURE+PEOPLE

OUR SIDE OF THE STORY



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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

DELIVERING VALUE TO PEOPLE THROUGH ARTS + CULTURE



SOCIAL VALUE HAS BEEN RECOGNISED BY THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH INTRODUCTION TO GREEN BOOK AND FEATURES ACROSS LEVELLING UP POLICIES.²

In terms of skills, studies show that children from low-income families taking part in arts activities are **three times more likely to get a Higher Education degree³**, promoting higher skilled employment opportunities in later life.

And involvement with arts does not just develop skills in creative subjects – but can help people at any stage of their life to **develop the confidence to take on new opportunities**. For many, it's the lack of self-confidence that is holding them back.

Arts, culture and heritage generate a number of benefits to society that go well beyond their economic impact.

They do this by creating **social value** through:

- **Health & wellbeing**
- **Skills development**
- **Civic participation and community cohesion**
- **Volunteering**
- **Enhancing attractiveness or distinctiveness of a place**
- **Driving behaviour changes towards sustainability and net zero**

DID YOU KNOW?

Arts prescription projects have reduced UK GP visits by 37% and hospital admissions by 27% with a net saving of £216 per patient¹

Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

Photo supplied by Ace Dance and Music



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

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

ARTS & CULTURE CAN PLAY KEY ROLE IN CONNECTING COMMUNITIES, CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AND IMPROVING COHESION BETWEEN COMMUNITIES & SOCIETAL SYSTEMS.

The cultural sector has a higher reliance on volunteering relative to other sectors. Volunteering can support the skills and employability of individuals, as well as improving wellbeing and health outcomes.

- **Coventry City of Culture Volunteering programme trained 1,515 volunteers who undertook 37,901 hours of volunteering**
- **Birmingham 2022 Festival had 1,315 volunteers contributing to activities**
- **Pre-Covid 88,000 people volunteered annually within the West Midlands heritage sector**

DID YOU KNOW?

The Birmingham 2022 Festival engaged with 41,894 residents in arts or cultural activities, with 8 out of 10 saying they had either gained new skills or improved skills.

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Photo supplied by The Space

For heritage, it is estimated that the value of heritage volunteering nationally prior to Covid was £520 million per year ⁴. Data shows that for heritage volunteers:

- **75% said it provided a significant increase to their wellbeing after 12 months**
- **60% reported sustained wellbeing benefits over 2-3 years**
- **30% found employment as a result of their volunteering experience**

But we also have challenges. Our data shows that nearly 2 million people in the region have limited opportunities to access publicly funded cultural activities and facilities.

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

People are missing out for many reasons; from transport to lack of cultural facilities and from cost of participation to disparity of cultural investment. We therefore need a long-term strategy to spread the positive benefits of cultural participation across our region.

In addition, the pandemic and the challenging economic conditions have had a significant impact on parts of our cultural & creative sectors, especially live events, and those with costly venues.

⁴ - Historic England. (2020). <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

OKAY, SO WHAT NEXT?

West Midlands has a unique opportunity to build on the major cultural events the region hosted in 2021 - 2022.

The legacies of Coventry City of Culture and Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games cultural programme give us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build on the events that brought our region together.

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Galleries →

To do this we need to:



Truly recognise the social value our cultural & creative sectors can deliver



Ensure every person in the West Midlands can access cultural activities



Embed culture & creative sectors into relevant policy areas such as health, wellbeing, regeneration, and skills development



Design activities together with our communities



Ensure cultural and heritage activities are a key part of our regional social prescribing offer



Build on the successful volunteering programmes of the major events



Fully maximise the role the cultural sector can play in helping people to develop skills and access new opportunities such as jobs or education



Secure more investment for West Midlands to level up culture



Support our cultural sector to work with our residents to create behaviour changes towards a more environmentally sustainable future

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 & 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**