

West Midlands
CULTURE+PLACE

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

ADDING VALUE TO OUR PLACES + ATTRACTING VISITORS



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Perception of a place is an important factor when businesses or people are thinking about relocating. This is particularly important for creative industries and other businesses where creativity & innovation are essential.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 in 4 businesses consider local heritage an important factor when deciding where to locate. £216 per patient ²

1 - Wavehill, (2020). Arts and Placeshaping: Evidence Review. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/arts-and-placeshaping-evidence-review>
2 - Historic England, (2020). Heritage and Economy 2020. <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2020/heritage-and-the-economy-2020/>

We now have enough evidence to show that hard infrastructure alone will not make much of a difference in a place. Something else is needed beyond just bricks & mortar.

Culture and heritage can play a key role in enhancing the attractiveness of a place. **Investment in cultural assets can rejuvenate places**, leading to positive economic and social outcomes at a local level. They can help to retain and grow a highly skilled workforce, as well as attract visitors.

DID YOU KNOW?

Arts & culture are an equal priority to schools in people's decision to move to and/or remain in an area. ¹





Photo supplied by Trevelyn Wright: A Certain Ratio

Our region is home to some extraordinary cultural & heritage visitor attractions. Visitors can step back in time at Shakespeare's birthplace or 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 – generating money that enables the sector to thrive and grow.

- ◆ **£2.8 billion of West Midlands visitor spend is attributable to culture** ⁴
- ◆ **28 million visits to the region attributable to culture**
- ◆ **1 in 47 jobs in the region supported by cultural tourism**
- ◆ **1 in 5 visitors say culture is primary reason for their visit to the region**

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2020 over 40 geologically significant sites were brought together to form the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark. ³



Photo supplied by Black Country Living Museum



Photo supplied by West Midlands Growth Company

³ - <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/>
⁴ - Hatch et al (2021). West Midlands Cultural Sector Analysis. <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/culture-and-digital/culture/west-midlands-cultural-sector-research-project/>

PRIDE OF PLACE

Here in the West Midlands, our cultural infrastructure plays a crucial role in generating pride of place, attracting creative talent and providing opportunities for people & businesses.

Recent data shows that when historic buildings are allowed to fall into disrepair – and many have – this is **synonymous with dented civic pride.**⁵

Heritage assets can sometimes be seen as problems and barriers for economic growth. They can however be **powerful tools for regenerating left behind areas.** Heritage assets include those landmark buildings in our high streets, valued by the local community and often a huge source of civic pride.

DID YOU KNOW?

67% of Midlands residents agree that cultural experiences near them give a sense of pride about their local area – a higher percentage than UK average (62%)⁶

5 - Historic England. (2021). Heritage and Civic Pride: Voices From Levelling Up Country <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/social-and-economic-research/heritage-civic-pride/>
6 - Arts Council England. (2021). A high street renaissance.



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HAZ



Coventry High Street Heritage Action Zone

HIGHT STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONES ARE PART OF A PROGRAMME DELIVERED BY HISTORIC ENGLAND TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF HIGH STREETS THROUGH HERITAGE.

Coventry was one of the national demonstrator projects, with the programme focusing on The Burges and Hales Street. This involved refurbishment of shops, bringing back residential accommodation, diversifying the range of retail outlets and improving public realm. The project has fostered a strong civic pride in historic buildings.

More widely, the programme has boosted Coventry's image and prosperity by celebrating the city's outstanding heritage while promoting new investment and development in support of sustainable growth.



LOCAL GROWTH

There is an opportunity for the cultural & creative sectors to be involved in bringing new uses and restoring historic high street buildings, as well helping to amplify the region's diverse places and identities.

More people want to work flexibly and spend time in less conventional environments such as flexible workspaces. This could provide an **opportunity for high streets to reinvent their role**, with cultural & creative sectors leading the way. We can create culturally enriched and productive high streets with flexible workspaces and an environment

that supports creation, innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurship.

However, there are still barriers to overcome. Culture & heritage are still often put in the box of 'nice to have' rather than being recognised as the driving forces for regeneration, creating better places for people & businesses.

If we want to ensure the future competitiveness of our region, **we need to become better at taking a more holistic approach & increase our ambition.**

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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.

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To do this we need to:



Better understand the value our cultural & creative sectors bring to our places



Embed culture & heritage into regeneration practices and bring together all stakeholders to ensure a joined-up approach



Create new, collaborative ways to develop our heritage assets



Build on our cultural tourism offer



Provide the flexibility to test new approaches including new types of spaces, fiscal innovation and land use



Test zonal approaches and link cultural activities with other sectors & policy areas such as wellbeing, transport, physical activity, economy, tourism, public realm, environment, social economy, skills development and net zero



Ensure culture & heritage are considered when building new residential areas



Ensure our region can get the necessary long-term investment to improve our cultural & heritage infrastructure as part of levelling up



Create a long-term strategic vision and plan at regional level

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