

# What does a safe and thriving Night-Time Economy look like in 2030 and how do we get there?

Mayor of the West Midlands  
Night-Time Economy Commission Report

Mayor of the  
West Midlands



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

The Mayoral NTE Commission was established as an independent commission appointed through an open recruitment process and supported by the Office of the Mayor of the West Midlands and Midlands Combined Authority.

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The Mayor, Richard Parker, and the Commission would like to extend their thanks to the following individuals and organisations who presented to the Commission:

**Leo Pollak** - WMCA

**Clive Fletcher** - WMCA

**Nadya Wigglesworth** - WMCA

**Frances Lasok** - WMCA

**Anna Humphreys** - WMCA

**Sam Mathys** - Greater London Authority

**Chief Inspector Amanda Thompson** - West Midlands Police

**Annie Bettison** - Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

**Rob Johnston** - Trade Union Congress

**Ben Lumley** - Liminal Space

**Shamima Akhtar** - Independent Disability Consultant

**Carly Heath** - Bristol City Council

**Luke Cheadle** - UKHospitality

**Lloyd Bent** - Music Venue Trust

**Jay Taylor** - Music Venue Trust

**Claire Williams** - Transport for West Midlands

**Andrew Leo** - West Midlands Rail Executive

**Michael Sandland** - Transport for West Midlands

**Mayor of the  
West Midlands**



**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

# Chair's Foreword



Like so many people here, I've lived in the West Midlands all my life. I've seen our towns and cities adapt, innovate, and reinvent themselves. We are a region that never

has stood still and never will, and our Night-Time Economy proves that. It is as dynamic and diverse as we are, well worthy of global recognition.

From Birmingham's internationally recognised fine dining, to the desi pubs of Wolverhampton and the Black Country. From orange chips to late night coffee shops to gyms and independent cinemas. This is the region that birthed heavy metal, two-tone and bhangra, and it's time we started shouting about that. Whatever the Night-Time Economy means to you, it's happening here.

Around our region, authorities are already working hard to implement NTE policy. Wolverhampton, Solihull and Coventry have led the way, and our amazing BIDs stand on the frontline supporting our businesses. Yet we must recognise that we stand at a pivotal point for these industries. We must do so much more. We must take urgent action to support our businesses, night workers, and our residents.

For the 30% of you who work at night, our transport systems don't work for you. For the residents who have a perception of unsafety, we haven't done enough to convince you. And for our businesses, facing immense pressures, we've not yet done enough to support you.

## **We owe it to you to change this.**

When I was asked by the Mayor to chair this commission, I was honoured to take on the task yet knew it would be a challenge. For me, this isn't just about policy, it is deeply personal. I can see the opportunities that our cities, towns, and places possess, and it is up to us to help them achieve it.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Mayor for placing his trust not only in me, but in the dedicated members of this commission. Together, they represent not only a fantastic collection of local businesses and national bodies, but they represent some of the very best this region has to offer. It was a pleasure to work with such a diverse team representing so many interests. I want to thank them for their vital suggestions, and for the time that they committed to making this commission a success.

This report contains a list of recommendations, co-developed by all of the commission members. Each one has the potential to drive forward our NTE across the region. Each one is realistic, and each is ambitious.

We know that the challenges facing the Night-Time Economy are immense, and change could not come overnight. But within this document we have outlaid a direction of travel which will drive forward our region through to 2030. The Mayor has shown a real interest in delivering material change, and I am confident that he will take onboard the recommendations contained within the report and drive forward change on the ground whilst being the political representative we need on the national stage.

Dr Chris Burden-Chair of the Mayor of the West Midlands NTE Commission

# Commission members



## **Alex Nicholson-Evans - Living for the Weekend**

Alex Nicholson-Evans is Founder & Director of Living For The Weekend, the company behind festivals such as Birmingham Cocktail Weekend and Birmingham Restaurant Festival. Alex is an award-winning entrepreneur, a passionate non-executive director and an industry judge for a number of national and regional awards.

Alex is Birmingham's first 'City Curator', a post funded by Colmore BID and operating across the city centre. Since November 2023 she has been working to bring wider partners together on projects that bring the city centre to life - most recently this has included being Festival Director for Birmingham Light Festival.

She is currently a trustee for The Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust and the Jewellery Quarter Development Trust. Alex was formerly the Commercial Director at Birmingham Museums, where she was for 8 years, she remains a champion of the city's culture & hospitality offer and continues to deliver consultancy work in this space.

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## **Crissie Rushton - AEG Presents**

Crissie Rushton is the General Manager of AEG Presents venue The University of Wolverhampton at The Halls leading on all operations at the venue. Prior to this role Crissie worked with the venue for more than two decades in various capacities during her tenure at the City of Wolverhampton Council, alongside various freelance engagements for both indoor and outdoor music festivals across the UK. Crissie's

extensive history and passion for the city spans a variety of senior roles, including Head of Visitor Experience and Visitor Economy Manager. In her role as General Manager Crissie is responsible for the day-to-day management of the venue and teams.

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## **Dal Dhillon - Dhillon's Brewery**

Since arriving in Coventry in 2015, Dal Dhillon has built a respected hospitality and brewery business across the Midlands and beyond. Originally from London, he developed Dhillon's Brewery into a recognised local brand before expanding into venues including Dhillon's Spire Bar, situated inside one of Coventry's famous three spires, alongside Sky Blue Tavern, The Swansea Jack, and Elle's at

Coventry railway station. Most recently, he added The Almanack to the growing portfolio, continuing his focus on creating vibrant hospitality and entertainment destinations.

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### **Henry Poultney - Grace +James**

Henry is the founder of a number of independent hospitality businesses including Grace + James on York Road in Kings Heath, Birmingham.

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### **Jack Brabant - Digbeth Dining Club**

Jack Brabant is the founder and driving force behind Digbeth Dining Club, one of the UK's most influential street food and events platforms. What began as a small street food gathering in Birmingham has grown under Jack's leadership into a nationally recognised brand, championing independent traders, creative culture, and community-led experiences.

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### **Jim Cathcart - UK Hospitality**

Jim joined UKHospitality as Policy Director in April 2018. His role is to identify and influence public policy impacting the sector across a wide range of areas. This includes current work around licensing and planning reform.

Jim has many years' experience in representing business interests to the UK Government, Welsh and Scottish Governments, local and combined authorities and the European Parliament.

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### **John Barret - CV One**

John has more than 20 years' operational experience within the UK's hospitality and Night-Time Economy and has contributed his sector expertise to the West Midlands Night Time Economy Commission.

He began his career with Luminar, working within the national openings team and as a brand ambassador for Chicago Rock Café and Jumpin' Jaks, before managing flagship venues at the Skydome in Coventry.

Since 2006, John has worked independently across the West Midlands, developing and launching a range of leisure and hospitality concepts including Maison, Baby Buddha, Mister Shenanigans, Teezers Golf, Fomo, Club Heat and Samoan Joe's.

He has chaired Pubwatch in both Stratford-upon-Avon and Coventry and has served as a Non-Executive Director of Coventry BID for the past eight years.

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## **Lyle Bignon - Night Time Industries Association**

Lyle Bignon is a UK and Europe music and media consultant, and Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) Night-Time Economy Ambassador for Birmingham.

He has over 20 years experience writing, championing, lobbying, campaigning and broadcasting on behalf of music industries and NTE in his home city.

Driven by a strong belief in the power of music and the NTE to transform lives, effect societal change, create inspirational art, and bring communities together, Lyle has worked with major artists, national charities, leading corporate and grassroots venues, global brands, and emerging talent on hundreds of music, cultural, and night-time economy projects since 2005.

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## **Rukhsana Bentley (Roxy) - Nationwide Caterers Association'**

Roxy has worked in the events, festival and creative industries for over 16 years, supporting businesses and individuals with business development, marketing, communications and project management. She is currently a senior leader at NCASS, the UK's leading trade association for independent food and drink businesses. With extensive

experience supporting hospitality entrepreneurs, Roxy works closely with members, partners and policymakers to champion the needs of small and independent operators. Passionate about sustainable growth, fair regulation and practical business support, she plays a key role in helping hospitality businesses start, survive and thrive in a challenging operating environment.

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## **Sophie Asquith – Music Venue Trust**

Sophie is the Venue Support Manager for Music Venue Trust, the charity established in 2014 that acts to protect improve and secure grassroots music venues (GMVs) around the UK. She manages the charity's team of coordinators, in the delivery of support, advice and guidance to the charity's membership network of GMVs, the Music Venue Alliance. The charity provides advice to the government, the

cultural sector and the music industry on issues impacting the Music Venue Alliance, and Sophie and the Venue Support Team work to develop strategic relationships within the music industry and local, devolved and national government to help further MVT's charitable aims through policy advances and advocacy.

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## **Toni Grehan - Toni Grehan Arts**

Toni Grehan is a DJ, promoter (She Creates & Variations) and distinguished music outreach and community engagement leader. Her career spans roles as a promoter project manager, fundraiser, professional DJ and tutor, consultant and an event producer, for arts-based initiatives that support and champion our communities. With over two decades of experience, she is committed to harnessing music, the creative arts and the power of the night for social impact, delivering transformative projects that enrich and empower marginalised groups throughout Birmingham and the West Midlands. Clients have included B:Music (Birmingham Symphony Hall) , Midlands Arts Centre, Selextorhood, Girl Grind UK, and Gospel Revisited.



# The Vision

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What does a safe and thriving  
NTE look like in 2030?

Image credit needed: Robin Bateman

# Vision

## **A city's soul is unleashed at night.**

From Berlin to Madrid, Melbourne to Cape Town, Osaka, Amsterdam and Buenos Aires, nightlife unshackles creativity, innovation and builds reputation. All the aforementioned city regions are known worldwide for their nightlife, 'from clubs and grassroots music venues to restaurants, music scenes to theatre, sports to festivals. This reputation drives quality of life for residents, attracts businesses and visitors, forges identity and pride in place.

This Commission is convinced that the West Midlands holds all the ingredients to be mentioned in the same breath as the above world leading city regions. This is our attempt to start driving us towards this outcome.

## **The West Midlands at Night**

The Mayoral NTE Commission is an initiative by the Mayor of the West Midlands, Richard Parker, and the WMCA to accelerate the region towards world class status.

In one of our sessions the sentence 'What I do is despite being based in the region, not because of it' was uttered. We are determined to reverse this. In doing so, the first step is highlighting what we think a safe and thriving Night-Time Economy should look like.



We believe, that despite the challenges we currently face, our nightlife is the light in the darkness. Our music heritage and scenes are the envy of city regions worldwide. From Metal to Bhangra, two-tone to techno we have one of the greatest number of genre and sub-genre births of anywhere in the world. Our food scene is arguably the greatest outside of the capital, covering everything from Desi pubs and Baltis to fine dining (the largest number of Michelin starred restaurants in the country outside of London), street food to orange chips, not to mention our wonderful collection of pubs and bars, theatres and cinemas, gyms and sports clubs.

The following report paints a picture of the state of the region at night, followed by a list of recommendations we believe would make a substantial difference. We want to see our nightlife nurtured, supported and thrive because we believe it is at the core of what makes our region great. From food to music, sport to cinema, it is what excites people to live in, relocate to and visit our great region.

### **What should a safe and thriving NTE look like in the West Midlands in 2030?**

The West Midlands will be one of the safest city regions in the country in which to live, work, socialise, play and travel.

Workers, residents and visitors will be confident that they can safely experience the night without harm. There will be strategic co-ordination between stakeholders operating in the night safety field, with consistent safety policy and training for workers across the region. Place specific behavioural change campaigns such as Bristol Rules will exist across the region and each local authority will have at least one night safe haven, as well as safe spaces schemes which are integrated across the region. This will be reinforced with safety driven urban design and strong private sector engagement with safety accreditation schemes.

One of the largest barriers to people accessing the region at night is travelling home safely and affordably. By 2030 the region will be one of the best-connected regions of the country at night, with multi-modal transport connecting key nighttime employment and leisure locations.

photo credit: Digbeth Dining Club





No longer will people have to leave gigs early to ensure they don't miss a train, turn down jobs due to struggles getting home or not go out as the cost of getting home will be prohibitive. Regional night-time travel and visitor location passes will further encourage use of public transport.

Once people reach their destination, they will be met by suitably lit streets with soft light removing threatening shadows, and mixed-use streets where pedestrians have priority. Independently owned businesses will predominate with a commercial mix reflective of neighbourhoods. Public spaces and squares in nightlife clusters will be busy, activated through night friendly design, cultural programming, art, meanwhile use and spaces for sport and play.

The region will create space for the underground whatever its flavour, allowing experimentation and innovation, whether the format be music, food or other cultural or sporting forms. This will see a combination of public, private and community owned venues covering all

scales, and an operating environment where the costs NTE businesses face are more in-line with those of the rest of Europe, with VAT no longer at 20%, and other business barriers such as business rates having been reformed to support, not hinder, business growth. There will also be a Minister for NTE to help ensure that central government policy supports and grows the NTE. Locally, fora will exist for NTE businesses, workers and residents to easily engage with policymakers and institutions.

The nightlife offer of the region will be even more diverse, inclusive and reflective of the demographics of our great region. It will be a region with areas with the clubbing culture of Berlin whilst having the family focused offers and neighborhoods of a city such as Madrid. We will further build upon our world-class music heritage and food offer. What was once the City of 1000 Trades will be the City of 1000 Scenes, with diverse programming, covering everything from sport to film, food to art, music to theatre. We are one of the most diverse city regions in Europe and both our offer and ability to access this must be maximised.

This growth will be inclusive and not one based on pricing out residents, but be accessible to people across the region, driving a strong narrative and pride in place. A centralised what's on listing will help visitors and residents alike to gain an increased understanding of our offer and further drive engagement.

There will be consistent policy and licensing across all regions of the West Midlands, with alignment between WMCA, Local Authorities, and West Midlands Police. Amongst many NTE related policies, this will include Agents of Change being recognised and enforced by all authorities through both planning and licensing departments, supported by the WMCA through NTE supportive policies in the likes of the Spatial Development Strategy. By 2030, the region will have improved hotel stock, ensuring more visitors can stay overnight, attracting further food and music tourism and expanding the region's capability to host festivals.

As well as the economic and cultural importance of the NTE, the health benefits will be recognised, especially the positive impact on mental health nightlife can have through the creation of communities, impact of music and safe space for LGBTQ and other underrepresented demographics. Simultaneously, night workers will be supported to reduce negative health impacts which people face from working at night. Linked to this, there will be a political recognition that working in nightlife industries is not just a great sector to start employment in, but a sustained rewarding career path.

We believe the following recommendations will be a large step forward towards achieving this vision.

photo credit: Digbeth Dining Club





# Recommendations

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Garry Jones Photography

# Recommendations Summary

## 1) Governance and Strategy

- 1.1 Creation of a permanent West Midlands NTE Steering Group
- 1.2 Encourage and support all WMCA constituent Local Authorities to develop NTE strategies
- 1.3 Lobby for national fiscal reform.
- 1.4 Development of a West Midlands NTE data dashboard
- 1.5 Support and lobby for regional participation in the national Grassroots Levy
- 1.6 Call on Government to appoint a minister for NTE
- 1.7 NTE Innovation Fund

## 2) Marketing & Business Support

- 2.1 Develop a new public/private approach to marketing the region as a key NTE destination.
- 2.2 Have a specialist NTE/hospitality offer within Business Growth West Midlands
- 2.3 Support the development of co-operatively run/community owned venues

## 3) Night Safety

- 3.1 Launch a West Midlands Night Safety Programme

## 4) Transport

- 4.1 Expand public transport provision at night.
- 4.2 Develop an on-demand minibus pilot scheme to get Night Workers Home Safely

## 5) Licensing

- 5.1 Work with WMP to ensure consistency in Police Licensing across the West Midlands
- 5.2 West Midlands Mayoral Licensing Powers
- 5.3 Support Licensing Data collection and analysis across the West Midlands
- 5.4 Street Trading Licensing

## 6) Planning and Placemaking

- 6.1 Ensure NTE policies are included in the West Midlands Spatial Development strategy and associated policies.
- 6.2 Lobby for strengthening the Agents of Change principle in legislation
- 6.3 Guide to the planning and licensing system

## 7) Health and Harm Reduction

- 7.1 Health Portal for Night workers
- 7.2 Establish a Drugs Harm Reduction programme for the region

## 8) Workforce and Diversity

- 8.1 Pilot Rider Hubs for delivery riders
- 8.2 Expand the WMGC Accessible Tourism Hub
- 8.3 Expand the WMCA Cultural Compact with Unions to include NTE
- 8.4 Childcare for night workers

# Recommendations

## 1) Governance and Strategy

### 1.1 Creation of a permanent West Midlands NTE Steering Group

Building upon the success of the West Midlands Mayoral NTE Commission, the Commission recommends the establishment of a permanent West Midlands NTE Steering Group.

Secretariat support would be provided by WMCA. The Group would act as industry representatives and provide steer to WMCA policy direction but wouldn't have direct power over budget + policy.

The Steering Group will represent the demographics and geography of our NTE.

It is also recommended that the Steering Group assist in attracting private sector match funding for public sector funding allocated to NTE policy interventions.

#### Case Study: GLA NTE Taskforce

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor, WMCA	2026	High

## Case Study

### Greater London Authority Nightlife Commission

#### 1.1. Creation of a permanent West Midlands NTE Steering Group

Following on from the launch of the Greater London Authority's Nightlife Taskforce Report, a new Nightlife Commission for the capital was launched in February 2026. This is independent of the Greater London Authority and comprises industry representatives from national industry bodies and business based in the city and will act as a voice of the sector and work to carry forward the recommendations of the report.

## 1.2 Encourage and support all WMCA constituent Local Authorities to develop NTE strategies

The Commission applauds the works of City of Wolverhampton Council, Coventry City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council all of whom have either developed their own NTE strategy or have one in progress.

The commission recommends that the Mayor encourages all constituent Local Authorities (LAs), supported by the WMCA, to develop NTE strategies. NTE is an incredibly multi-disciplinary policy area which crosses multiple LA departments and teams. LA NTE Strategies are key to maintain consistency of policy, increase LA efficiencies, support economic growth, pride in place and regeneration schemes.

As part of this the Commission encourages the development of local NTE industry fora to provide a clear route for industry to engage with LAs and other strategic organisations..

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor, WMCA and LAs	2028	High

## 1.3 Lobby for national fiscal reform.

NTE and hospitality businesses in England face some of the highest operating costs in Europe. Whilst some of these are due to global factors, the likes of VAT, business rates and NICs are government implemented.

The Commission recognise that neither the Mayor nor the WMCA have fiscal powers, but call on the Mayor to lobby for fiscal reform for the sector.

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor	2026	High

## 1.4 Development of a West Midlands NTE data dashboard

Reflecting the relative infancy of NTE as an area of public policy, NTE data is poor. There is a particular need for robust economic impact data and increased understanding of our NTE workforce.

The Commission thus recommends that the WMCA establish an NTE data dashboard to co-ordinate and develop analysis of the regional NTE to inform policy and strengthen conversations with government and other stakeholders.

Building on existing close NTE collaboration with Greater Manchester Combined Authority and increasing interest on NTE from other Mayoral Strategic Authorities, a co-ordinated approach through the Mayoral Data Council would enable comparisons with other regions.

### Case Study: Gov. of NSW Data after Dark, GLA/UCL Data After Dark

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, ONS, TfWM, Mayoral Data Council	2026	High

## Case Study

### Government of New South Wales – Data After Dark

#### 1.4 Development of a West Midlands NTE data dashboard

The Government of New South Wales' Office of the 24 Hour Economy run their Data after Dark function which tracks a wide range of metrics, produces a quarterly report and analyses trends across the region.

## 1.5 Support and lobby for regional participation in the national Grassroots Levy scheme

Following the DCMS Select Committee report into Grassroots Music Venues (GMV), a coalition of industry bodies, with support from sections of the private sector, launched a voluntary Grassroots Music Venue Levy. In areas of the country this has been greatly adopted by private sector. Whilst we have had some adoption in the WM (AEG Presents), we have less than other areas of the country.

The Commission encourages the Mayor to support the Levy and work with relevant private sector partners and industry bodies to ensure the Levy comes into full force in the West Midlands at all arenas and stadia over 5,000 capacity and work with the recipient representative industry bodies so that we can effectively support our rich, but threatend, grassroots music infrastructure.

### Case Study: GMV Levy

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor, WMCA, Private sector partners	2026/27	High

## Case Study

### LIVE Trust Arena Levy

## 1.5 Support and lobby for regional participation in the national Grassroots Levy

The LIVE Trust & the Grassroots Levy is a voluntary industry levy where £1 from every ticket sold, for events above 5,000 capacity, at participating venues is used to provide a fund to support the Grassroots Music ecosystem across the country. Launched in 2025, the first tranche of £500,000 has already been distributed to support grassroots live music across the UK.

## 1.6 Call on Government to appoint a minister for NTE

Aligning with calls from some industry bodies, the commission encourages the Mayor to call on Government to appoint a minister for NTE sitting in either the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) or the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), to bring the country in-line with good practice in much of continental Europe and Australia.

As the fifth largest area of the economy by workforce with a multidisciplinary policy coverage, the Commission believes a Minister level appointment is required to provide a central government policy focus and reduce likelihood of policy errors. From licensing and regulations to health impacts on workers/productivity, unusual tax regimes to agents of change issues, market trends to transport, all separate it from other key sectors.

### Case Study: Gov of NSW, Australian Gov

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor, WMCA, Government	2028	Medium

## 1.7 NTE Innovation Fund

NTE sectors are driven by constant adaptation and innovation. From ever emerging music scenes to active embrace of new technologies, changing business focuses to meet emerging consumer trends to adopting underutilised and meanwhile spaces, the sector is driven by innovation.

This is noticeably the case in the West Midlands, from an emerging Safety-Tech cluster to accessibility-tech and the widespread adoption of AI-driven booking systems along with innovative uses of space, emerging music scenes and more. The Commission thus recommends the establishment of an NTE Innovation Fund to help drive regional emerging tech clusters and sectoral innovation

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, BGWM, WMGC	2028	Low

## 2) Marketing & Business Support

### 2.1 Develop a new public/private approach to marketing the region as a key NTE destination.

The Commission is convinced that the region has world-class NTE assets, from music to food, sport to pubs. However, there is a collective feeling that we do not yet fully articulate or effectively amplify the breadth and depth of this offer. Whilst recognising the polycentric nature of the region, the Commission encourages the development of a new public/private approach to marketing the region as a world class location for nightlife - for residents and visitors alike.

This approach should present the region as a connected yet diverse offer, celebrating the distinct character and sector strengths of its cities and towns, and enabling different places to lead where they have established credibility and audience appeal.

- A joint public/private sector approach to strategic communications planning and delivery based around shared messaging and hero stories building on the work of the West Midlands Growth Company.
- Build upon the private sector driven Birmingham Food Tourism Strategy
- Develop a regional Music tourism strategy that aligns and elevates existing place-based activity
- Create a Region wide music listing site
- Gain UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy status for the city region.
- As part of a broader communication plan - more actively engage with NTE influencers and businesses, with a focus on authentic storytelling across locations

In the long run the Commission would like to see the establishment of a specific NTE comms resource for the region, supporting and delivering both regional positioning and city-led promotion.

#### Case Study: Birmingham Food Tourism Strategy, Bristol Food Tourism Strategy

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, WMGC, Private Sector	2027	Medium

## 2.2 Have a specialist NTE/hospitality offer within Business Growth West Midlands

NTE & Hospitality businesses operate in a unique business environment. From licensing and regulations to health impacts on workers/productivity, unusual tax regimes to agents of change issues, market trends to transport, all separate it from other key sectors.

The Commission recommends the appointment of a specialist business growth officer within BGWM for the sector with a focus on those businesses with the highest growth potential.

This would be supported with a programme of business networking, procurement and mentoring events.

The Commission recommends specific pilot programmes on

- access to finance for NTE SMEs
- NTE insurance pilot
- NTE Business Incubator Programme, building upon the success of the WMCA Street Food Incubator programme.

### Case Study: GMCA Business Growth Hub

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMGC, British Business Bank and finance institutions, DCMS, DBT	2026-2028	High

## Case Study

### GMCA Business Growth Hub

## 2.2 Have a specialist NTE/hospitality offer within Business Growth West Midlands

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) employ a specialist advisor within their Business Growth Hub to help NTE/Hospitality businesses, with growth potential, to develop and expand.

## 2.3 Support the development of co-operatively run/community owned venues

There is a rich history of co-operatively & community owned venues acting as key incubator spaces for music and other night-time cultural scenes, as well as a more recent pioneering of cultural leases under permanent community ownership by MVT with the creation of Music Venue Properties (MVP). This model helps reduce risk for promoters and offers affordable spaces for emerging artists. Community ownership also offers a potential operating model for at risk pubs. Co-operatively run businesses also provide a succession route for owner-operated businesses.

Whilst we have some strong clusters of co-operatively owned or community owned businesses with a NTE focus, such as Stirchley, we lag behind comparator city regions when it comes to community owned pubs and venues.

Aligned with other work the WMCA is engaged in around the impact economy, the Commission recommends a support programme for the establishment of co-op/ community owned NTE businesses.

### **Case Study: 1in12 Club, Music Venue Properties (MVP), Cowley Club, The Joiners Arms**

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, WMGC, Co-operatives UK, MVP, industry bodies	2027-2028	Low

## Case Study

### **The 1 in 12 Club, Bradford.**

## 2.3 Support the development of co-operatively run/community owned venues

The 1 in 12 Club is a co-operatively owned music venue and social centre which has been running in Bradford since 1981. It has operated as a key venue for both regional and touring underground music scenes and has played a key role on putting Bradford on the touring map as well as providing an incubation space for many bands in the West Yorkshire region.

### 3) Night Safety

#### 3.1 Launch a West Midlands Night Safety Programme

Safety at night (both perception and reality) are inseparable from growth of the NTE. If people feel unsafe they are less likely to work, travel and play after dark. WMCA launched a Women Night Safety Charter in 2023 which, whilst a positive start, has been limited in its impact due to resource limitations.

The Commission views Night Safety interventions as a vital requirement for strengthening our regional NTE, and is a policy area for which there is currently little strategic co-ordination or funding for night safety initiatives in the region.

The Commission recommends a re-launch of the WM Night Safety Charter, but with a wider Night Safety focus. It should then have sections with specific night safety guidance on safety for the following demographics.

- Women
- LGBTQ+
- Disabled
- Global majority demographics

It is vital that any such charter and toolkits are supported with a strong training infrastructure for businesses, employees. This should include training on

- Active Bystander training
- Spiking Awareness
- NTE relevant First Aid
- Domestic Violence and coercive behaviour recognition
- Drug awareness

Combined with this

- Creation of a West Midlands Night Safety Forum to bring together key NTE strategic safety organisations.
- Work to ensure a Night Safety Haven exists in each LA by 2030. The Commission praises the work of the Wolverhampton and Arcadian Night Safety Haven. These play a vital role in supporting nightlife users, reducing strain on the NHS and police and increasing perceptions of safety.
- Develop and run a NTE safety communications campaign. This should be visual place-based campaigns, along the lines of Bristol Rules, to both influence behaviour change and re-enforce perceptions of safety in place, as well as work highlighting safe walking routes.
- Develop a BIDs Night Safety Fund, to support BIDs with the vital work they do round Night Safety.

#### **Case Studies: Bristol Rules, Wolverhampton Night Safe Haven, GLA Night Safety Charter**

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, BGWM	2026 -2030	High

# Case Study

## Bristol Rules

### 3.1 Launch a West Midlands Night Safety Programme

Bristol Nights, the NTE function of Bristol City Council, launched the Bristol Rules campaign in conjunction with nightlife businesses across the city to encourage positive behavioural change and increase safety in the city.

# Case Study

## Wolverhampton Night Safe Haven

### 3.1 Launch a West Midlands Night Safety Programme

Wolverhampton Night Safe Haven is a collaboration between the City of Wolverhampton Council and Enjoy Wolverhampton BID to improve night safety in Wolverhampton city centre. Operating every Friday and Saturday between 22:30 and 03:30 the Safe Haven provides a visible and warm location for people to charge their phones, get water, access free WiFi, get flip flops to relieve aching feet, report any concerns they may have, and receive support to arrange transport home. A Night Guardians scheme provides a uniformed team to deter anti-social behaviour and support those in need. Taxi marshals work to manage taxi ranks and get people home safely.



## 4. Transport

### 4.1 Expand public transport provision at night.

The Commission views night-time transport as one of the most substantial policy issues the NTE faces. It remains a barrier to people working at night, reduces private sector profitability and resident and visitor engagement with nightlife.

- Establish a Night Transport Working Group - Bring together representatives from WMCA, TfWM, WMRE, NTE Steering Group and BIDs to discuss night-time transport issues and strategic approaches to expanding night-time public transport provision across the region
- Expand Night Bus provision in the West Midlands. The Commission is keen to stress that consideration also needs to be given to ensuring passengers and workers can be kept safe with the establishment of a Night Bus mobile response team.
- Work to increase train provision at peak NTE times, especially between 23:00-01:00

#### Case Study: GLA/TfL Night Transport Working Group, Transport for Greater Manchester Bee Network

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, TfWM, WMRE, NTE	2026	Medium

## Case Study

### Transport for Greater Manchester Bee Network

#### 4.1 Expand public transport provision at night

Since Transport for Greater Manchester bought buses in the region into public ownership as the Bee Network, they have established a series of night bus routes across the region. At the time of writing there are a total of sixteen routes operating at peak NTE footfall times and with a 2026 commitment to ensuring each local authority area within Greater Manchester will be served by at least one night bus.

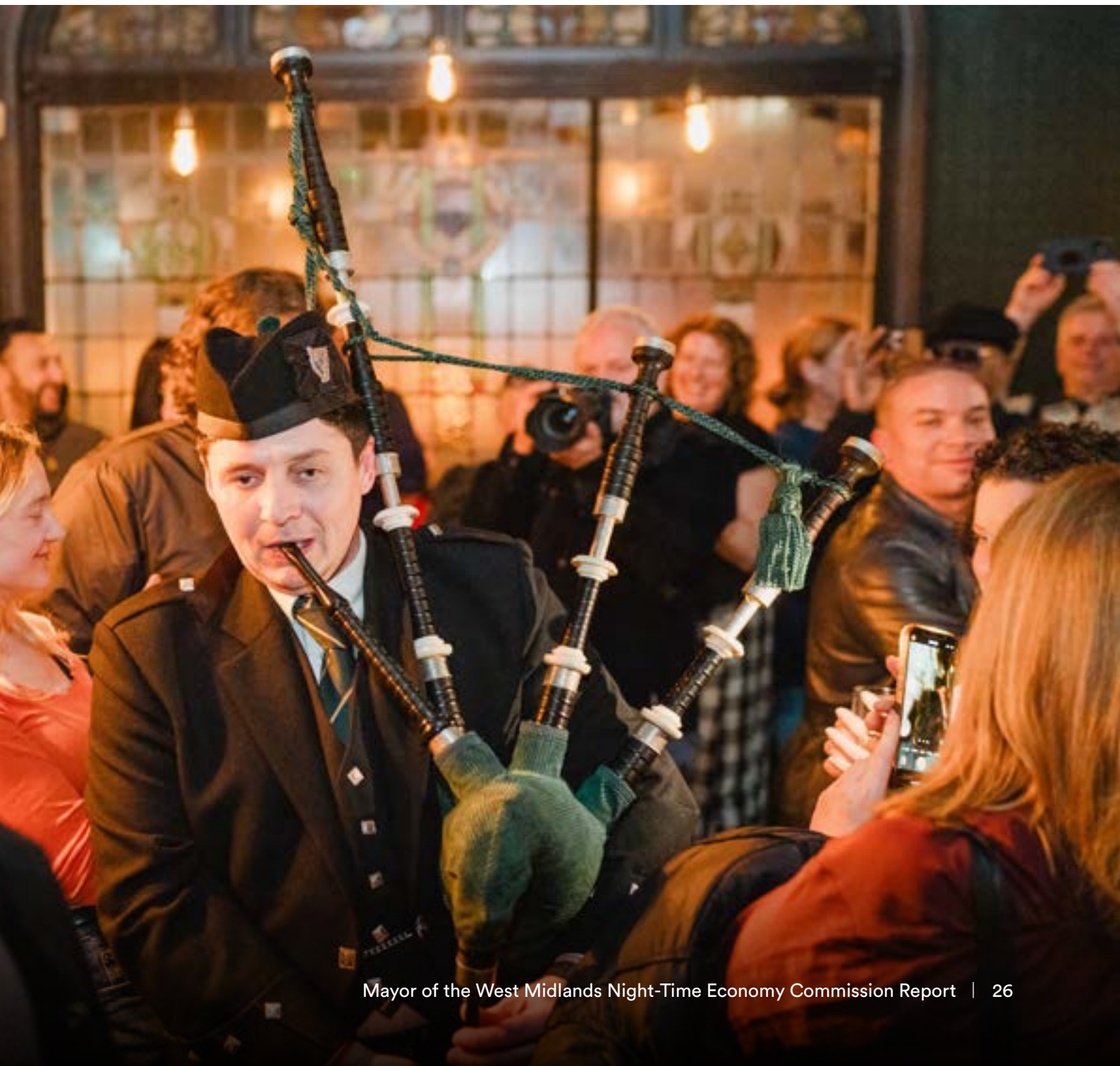


## 4.2 Develop an on-demand minibus pilot scheme to get Night Workers Home Safely

Building upon the on-demand minibus pilot TfWM ran in Coventry (during the day) the Commission recommends a duplication of this pilot, but focused on the post-midnight period to get night-time economy workers home safely. This should be delivered in conjunction with employers and BIDs on a public-private partnership model.

### Case Study: TfWM, Coventry

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, TfWM, BIDs, Private Sector	2027	Medium



## 5. Licensing

### 5.1 Work with WMP to ensure consistency in Police Licensing across the West Midlands

The Commission recognises the work that WMP have recently undertaken to improve licensing consistency across the West Midlands, and recommends the expansion and consolidation of this work, to ensure the recognition of positive economic impact, boost private sector confidence and ensure region wide consistency.

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, WMP, OPCC	2026	High

### 5.2 West Midlands Mayoral Licensing Powers

If successful in London, the Mayor should consider the expansion of the GLAs Strategic Licensing Pilot to all MSAs and consider adoption in the West Midlands, providing the Mayor with call-in licensing powers and the ability to set a regional licensing strategy.

#### Case Study: GLA Strategic Licensing Pilot

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor, WMCA, LAs	2029	Medium

## Case Study

### GLA Strategic Licensing Pilot

#### 5.2 West Midlands Mayoral Licensing Powers

The Strategic Licensing Pilot is a pilot scheme introduced in 2026 by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the Greater London Authority (GLA). Enabled by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act (2026), this pilot gives the Mayor call in powers on some licensing applications, empowers the GLA to produce a region wide Licensing Policy Statement covering the following licensable activity:

- 1) the sale by retail of alcohol,
- 2) the provision of regulated entertainment, and
- 3) the provision of late night refreshment

The pilot is due to start in the summer of 2026 and will be reviewed after a period of two years.

### 5.3 Support Licensing Data collection and analysis across the West Midlands

As identified in the Licensing Taskforce Sprint and response by Government, licensing data nationwide is not fit for purpose. What should be one of the strongest NTE public data sources is challenging to access and use. WMCA should work with our Local Authority Licensing Departments to increase the quality of Licensing Data provision, including assisting with the upskilling of Licensing officers and support with analysis.

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, LAs	2029	Medium

### 5.4 Street Trading Licensing

The UK’s street trading rules are nearly half a century old - determined by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. Inconsistent licensing fees and consents for traders on private land, and rules fixed on local authority boundaries do not support a modern, sustainable mobile catering sector.

Street food traders and pop-up caterers work collaboratively with venues, events, wet-led pubs and other hospitality venues that have no catering provision to help drive footfall and support a thriving Night-Time Economy.

The Commission recommends that the WMCA and Mayor lobby for a more consistent national approach to Street Trading Licensing and develop good practice guidelines for Local Authorities in the West Midlands Combined Authority region’

#### Case Study:

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor, WMCA, LAs, IoL	2027	Medium



## 6. Planning and Placemaking

### 6.1 Ensure NTE policies are included in the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy and associated policies.

The Commission recognises the groundbreaking nature of the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy and calls for the inclusion of policies which support NTE growth.

These policies should include:

Agents of Change

Pub Preservation

Lighting

Wayfinding

Night Safety Design principles (including safe walking routes)

Hospitality and events infrastructure

Branding, artwork and events listings

Activation through sport and play

Meanwhile space use at night

These should be combined with workshops for LA teams and private sector developers.

#### Case Study: The London Plan 2021

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, LAs	2026	High

## Case Study

### The London Plan 2021

#### 6.1 Ensure NTE policies are included in the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy and associated policies.

The London Plan, released in 2021 by the Greater London Authority, is the statutory planning document laying out the strategic plan for development in the city, and as such, is similar in scope to the in-development West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy. It includes policies on Agents of Change (Policy D13), Town Centres and High Streets (Policy SD6), Supporting the Night-Time Economy (Policy HC6), and Protecting Public Houses (Policy HC7).

The London Plan 2021 is currently being re-freshed.

## 6.2 Lobby for strengthening the Agents of Change principle in legislation

The Agents of Change principle is vital in ensuring the security of venues. The Commission thus calls on the Mayor and WMCA to encourage government to strengthen the statutory footing of the Agents of Change principle.

Partners	Timeline	Priority
Mayor, WMCA	2028	Medium

## 6.3 Guide to the planning and licensing system

The Commission calls upon the WMCA to produce an easy to understand guide to regulatory systems to support venues across the West Midlands operate effectively and improve savings for businesses and local authorities.

### **Case Study: GMCA/MVT Guide to the planning system for Grassroots Music Venues**

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, Industry Bodies	2027	Medium

# Case Study

## **GM Music Commission/MVT Guide to the Planning system for Grassroots Music venues**

### **6.3 Planning Best Practice Guide for GMVs**

In collaboration with the Music Venue Trust and the Greater Manchester Music Commission, Greater Manchester Combined Authority Night Time Economy Office released a guide to the planning system for grassroots music venue operators, to encourage best practice during the planning process, which both protects existing cultural infrastructure and encourages responsible development that creates housing of good amenity, soundproofed appropriately against the existing nighttime cultural soundscape. The guide provides the tools needed to navigate the planning system and where necessary to empower operators to submit effective consultation representations.

## 7. Health and Harm Reduction

### 7.1 Health Portal for Night workers

Working at night comes with an increased risk of health issues. From poor sleep health and hearing damage to addictions (alcohol, drugs, gambling) there are a raft of health issues which night workers are at risk of.

The Commission thus recommends the establishment of a health portal and training for night workers to increase the health of our nighttime workforce and reduce the barriers to people working at night.

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, BGWM, NHS Trusts	2027	Medium

### 7.2 Establish a Drugs Harm Reduction programme for the region

The Commission recommends the establishment of a drugs harm reduction and intelligence gathering programme for the region's NTE. The pilot should provide near-site drug checking, welfare support, and tailored public health messaging at high-footfall venues and events. Key components include trained multidisciplinary teams, real-time data sharing with partners (police, local authorities, and health services), and anonymised profiling of substances to inform alerts.

This approach will enhance public safety, reduce pressure on emergency services, and provide actionable intelligence to inform long-term NTE harm reduction strategy. Evaluation metrics should include reductions in drug-related incidents, improved early warning capabilities, and increased engagement with support services.

#### Case Study: The Loop, Bristol City Council

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, PCC, WMP, LAs, NHS Trusts	2028	Low

## Case Study

### The Loop, Bristol Drugs Project Drug Testing Service

#### 7.2 Establish a Drugs Harm Reduction programme for the region

A collaboration between The Loop and Bristol Drugs Project. People can submit a substance of concern for checking. These substances help the project build a picture of the drug supply in the city, and this data helps the development of harm reduction campaigns in the city. Substances are submitted to the project team. These are then tested in a laboratory by The Loop. Results then inform harm reduction advice shared with the public.

## 8. Workforce and Diversity

### 8.1 Pilot Rider Hubs for delivery riders

The prevalence of delivery riders has increased across the country post-Covid amid the rise of online based delivery platforms. However, along with the benefits such market developments bring, there are a host of policy issues created, including poor working conditions and blockages of public space.

Partnering with LAs, unions and using meanwhile use spaces, the creation of a pilot rider hub space for delivery riders. This would provide safe, warm rest areas with access to charging points, toilets, welfare information and kitchen facilities, improving working conditions and reducing issues around public space blockages and access to toilets.

This has the potential to align with both meanwhile use and co-op recommendations (2.3 & 6.1) above and over time, could see the development of co-operative approaches to gig delivery work.

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, TfWM, LAs, Unions	2028	Medium

### 8.2 Expand the WMGC Accessible Tourism Hub

Expand the excellent WMGC Accessible Tourism Hub to include specific NTE issues and policy and explicitly market to NTE businesses across the region. As part of this consideration should be given to access to toilets at night as this remains a key barrier to accessing the NTE for many disabled people, as well as for many night-workers such as delivery riders and taxi/PHV drivers.

#### Case Study: WMGC Accessible Tourism Hub

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, WMGC, Disability Groups, BIDs	2026	Medium

### 8.3 Expand the WMCA Cultural Compact with Unions to include NTE

Building upon the WMCA Culture and Creative Industries MoU with trade unions the Commission recommends duplicating or extending this for the NTE.

#### Case Study: WMCA Culture Compact with Unions

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, WMGC, Unions	2026	Medium

### 8.4 Childcare for night workers

Both working and going out at night is constrained for many residents by childcare responsibilities.

Childcare is often provided via family support networks at night, and where these do not exist, childcare provision is both less available and more expensive than daytime equivalents.

The Commission recommends a regional study into childcare provision at night.

#### Case Study: NYC/Ariel Palitz

Partners	Timeline	Priority
WMCA, LAs, BIDs, , Unions	2029	Medium





**Mayor of the  
West Midlands**



**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**