

CULTURE COMMONS

A review of devolution and the UK's creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem

DISCUSSION PAPER

Eliza Easton

Trevor MacFarlane

Jack Shaw

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Abstract:

The creative, cultural and heritage sectors contribute significantly to the economic, social and cultural life of the United Kingdom. Successive UK governments have pursued devolution across a broad range of powers - both to the devolved administrations and England's combined authorities - and there is now an emerging realisation that these two policy agendas are complementary. How the creative, cultural and heritage sectors intersect with devolution is, however, less than clear and this report explores what the shape of this relationship is and how its direction of travel could evolve over time. Places with 'skin in the game' are well-placed to benefit from a culture-led 'devolution revolution' and we make some tentative suggestions about how this might be achieved.

Keywords: creative, culture, heritage, devolution, combined authorities, mayors, local authorities, arm's length bodies, Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

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The Authors

In alphabetical order:

Eliza Easton is a creative industries expert, who runs her own think tank, [Erskine Analysis](#). Prior to this, Eliza spent five years as Head of Policy and then Deputy Director of the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) - an £8m Government and AHRC funded research and policy centre based at Nesta. In 2014, Eliza was part of the founding team of the Creative Industries Federation (now Creative UK), where she headed up their research work, as well as their International Council and Higher and Further Education group. Eliza has written more than thirty policy and research papers about the creative and cultural sectors, including on arts funding in England, research and development, keeping the UK's creative industries internationally competitive, the changing digital and creative skills needs of the economy, and the impact of Covid-19 on diversity in the creative industries.

Trevor MacFarlane is an expert in creative, cultural and heritage sector policy design and advocacy and is Founding Director of Culture Commons. He was a policy advisor to the now Deputy Prime Minister, a former Shadow Secretary of State for DCMS and several senior parliamentarians in both the European and UK Parliaments. Trevor is a former theatre director, having worked on award-winning production across the UK. Trevor is leading up 'the future of local cultural decision making' - an open policy development programme bringing 30 national partners from across the four UK nations and all regions together to explore of how devolution will impact on the ecosystem. Trevor has previously written articles, research papers and book chapters on a variety of subjects related to the UK's creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem.

Jack Shaw is an expert in devolution, local government and place-based economics. Jack is a Senior Advisor at Labour Together, having spent time at the Institute for Public Policy and Research, Parliament and the Local Government Association. Jack is a Policy Fellow at the University of Manchester's The Productivity Institute, a Fellow at the University of Cambridge's Bennett Institute for Public Policy and a Honourary Senior Research Fellow at Queen Mary, University of London.

Culture Commons

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About the Programme

[‘The future of local cultural decision making’](#) is an open policy development programme led by Culture Commons and a coalition of partners made up of local governments, the creative and cultural sectors, arm’s length bodies, grant giving bodies and leading research institutions.

Together, the partners are exploring how further ‘devolution’ and/or increased local decision making might impact on the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem in different nations and regions of the UK. More information about the programme can be found on the [digital hub](#).

Open Policymaking

Open Policymaking was described by UK Government in 2014 as a process that ‘opens up the formation of public policy to a wider variety of stakeholders’. Culture Commons have adopted some of the key principles sitting behind this approach and elaborated on them when designing this policy development programme, particularly the commitment to openness and transparency.

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Introduction

This Discussion Paper explores the role of the creative, cultural, and heritage ecosystem in the story of UK devolution to date. It serves as a foundational analysis for an open policy development initiative led by Culture Commons, in collaboration with 30 UK-wide partners, focused on **‘the future of local cultural decision making’**.

We begin by presenting an inclusive definition of the ‘creative, cultural, and heritage ecosystem’ as a dynamic network of infrastructures, stakeholders, inputs, and outcomes. It is expected that this framework will evolve through input from programme partners as the open policy development process progresses.

Our analysis picks up in the late 1990s as a new Labour government comes to power, which ushered in a new era of devolution by transferring significant powers and responsibilities to Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. We also trace the early stages of English devolution through the rise of combined authorities, which are now at the forefront of the so-called ‘devolution revolution’ expected to accelerate in the coming years.

We then examine how decision-makers have increasingly looked to the creative, cultural, and heritage sectors to drive economic, social, and civic benefits in their regions. In some instances, culture has been explicitly included in devolution deals. However, many policies affecting the ecosystem’s functioning remain under the purview of the UK Government.

When considering the diverse range of stakeholders who invest in the ecosystem – both financially and through other forms of support – alongside the complex web of interdependencies that connect them, we see a fragmented policy landscape with significant spatial and sectoral differences.

This analysis is set against the backdrop of significant cuts to local authority budgets over the past decade, which have hampered their ability to invest in local cultural infrastructures. We also highlight the stark disparities in investment across different regions and nations of the UK. While London’s global status as a cultural hub partly explains these imbalances, we also identify deeper regional inequities that are likely to be harder to address through devolution alone.

Finally, we propose several recommendations aimed at strengthening the creative, cultural, and heritage ecosystem. These suggestions focus on how devolution could be better leveraged to bring decision-making closer to local communities, ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across the UK.

The significance of the ecosystem

Defining the ecosystem

The 'Creative Industries' were first mapped by the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 1998.¹ In 2015, the DCMS adopted Nesta's 'Dynamic Mapping' approach to define the creative industries, with a particular emphasis on subsectors with a higher percentage of the workforce employed in 'creative occupations'.² These 'creative occupations' are ones with "a role within the creative process that brings cognitive skills to bear to bring about differentiation to yield either novel, or significantly enhanced products whose final form is not fully specified in advance".³ The resulting subsectors range from architecture to software, publishing to film, but are bound together by a focus on creative practice; as a result of this focus they share some distinctive characteristics such as a tendency to co-locate in specific places, create new intellectual property (IP) and have a higher prevalence of freelance and self-employed workers.⁴

The DCMS definition is used in policy originating from Westminster, but there are slight variations in what is included in the definition of the Creative Industries in the UK's constituent nations - for example the Scottish Government includes archives, antiques, textiles and cultural education in their definition, and the Creative Wales definition (also used by the Welsh Government) excludes computer consultancy activities but includes the manufacture of clothing and textiles.⁵ The Government in Northern Ireland primarily uses the DCMS definition.⁶

The 'Cultural Sector' is also an important consideration for the purposes of this paper. The Cultural Sector as defined by DCMS includes a broad range of subsectors including film, museums and heritage. As the intersecting sectors of the DCMS portfolio (Figure 1) show, some parts of the Creative Industries and the Cultural Sector overlap, including a double overlap in the Digital Sector and Tourism portfolios. Whilst the heritage sector, visitor attractions and music shops are all

¹ GOV.UK. 'Creative Industries Mapping Documents 1998', April 1998.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-mapping-documents-1998>

² 'Creative Industries Economic Estimates'. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, January 2015.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75c589e5274a545822e183/Creative_Industries_Economic_Estimates_-_January_2015.pdf.

³ Bakhshi, Hasan, Peter Higgs, and Alan Freeman. 'A Dynamic Mapping of the UK's Creative Industries'. NESTA, January 2013. <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/a-dynamic-mapping-of-the-uks-creative-industries/>.

⁴ The full list of sub-sectors is: advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design and designer fashion; film, TV, video, radio and photography; information technology, software and computer services; publishing; museums, galleries and libraries, and music, performing and visual arts.

⁵ 'The Creative Industries in Scotland'. Accessed 19 June 2024. <http://www.gov.scot/publications/policy-statement-creative-industries/pages/2/>; Miklos Fodor, Mate, Marlen Komorowski, and Justin Lewis. 'Report Update: The Size and Composition of the Creative Industries in Wales in 2022'. clwstwr, 2023. https://clwstwr.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/Creative%20Industries%20Report%20No%201_3_Final.pdf;

'Ad-Hoc Statistical Requests: 6 to 17 November 2023 | GOV.WALES', 27 November 2023. <https://www.gov.wales/ad-hoc-statistical-requests-6-17-november-2023>.

⁶ Communities. 'Creative Industries | Department for Communities', 4 August 2015. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/creative-industries>.

considered part of the Cultural Sector, they are excluded from the DCMS definition of the Creative Industries because they aren't primarily focussed on producing new ideas or products.

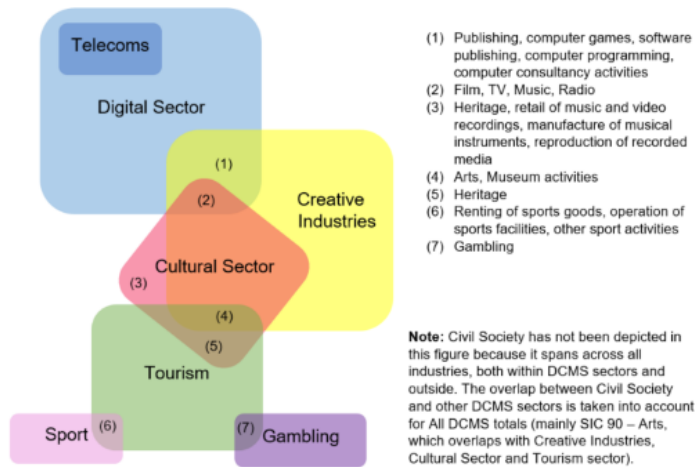


Figure 1: DCMS graphic showing overlap between cultural sector and creative industries Image: UK Government. Note: we do not include gambling or telecoms as sectors of focus in this paper.

In practice, supply chains, workforces, and outputs are often shared across the subsectors that make up the DCMS portfolio, and within the Creative Industries and Cultural Sector in particular. It is a combination of these portfolio overlaps and the interdependencies between the creative, cultural and heritage sectors that have led us to apply an 'ecosystem' lens to this paper, in-line with Culture Commons' approach to the wider open policy development programme.

While sectors are helpful to classify and identify at a national level to support appropriate policy interventions, it would of course be a mistake for any one group to try to draw up a definitive list of what constitutes culture. This is because culture is something derived from and shaped by all citizens, playing out in different ways across places and in different communities, and cannot be decided by a Government department.

Other examples of important cultural infrastructures which don't currently sit within DCMS definitions include leisure and community centres, pubs, green spaces and faith institutions; many of these spaces are also multi-purpose, hosting galleries, libraries, and community groups, for example. Further, 'everyday creativity' is increasingly understood to involve very small scale, non-institutionally supported and seldom formally recognised cultural activities in the home and private spaces. Whilst the wider programme this paper is developed for does not explicitly include Sports,

it has a clear cultural dimension: both for those who participate directly in activities and clubs across the country, and for those who support their local or national sports people and teams.⁷

The purpose of this paper is not to determine what does or doesn't constitute the 'Creative Industries' or the 'Cultural Sector' per se, but instead to consider the broad contours of how they are perceived, particularly by local, regional and national policymakers. This is important because the varied perceptions of the constituent parts of the ecosystem have determined the shape and degree to which they have or have not been embedded in devolution policy, and whether the emphasis has been placed on economic or social objectives.

Why governments invest in the ecosystem

The UK Government, Welsh Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive – as well as the local governments within each – invest in the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem for a wide variety of reasons.

Some parts of the creative industries are engines of economic growth, particularly in areas that are home to small communities of creative firms that are often referred to as 'creative clusters' and 'creative micro-clusters', and that benefit from access to shared skills, knowledge and customers.⁸ Whilst London is undoubtedly the largest of these clusters, they range from the Northern Quarter in Manchester, to the Dundee games cluster in Scotland and the burgeoning screen clusters we see emerging in Wales and Northern Ireland.⁹ They are now rightly seen as important investment opportunities by decision makers; research from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre indicates that clusters grew at twice the rate of the regional economies they were part of between 2010-17 and each new job in the creative industries creates two additional 'non-tradable' jobs in local areas.¹⁰

Of course, industries and sectors within the ecosystem are also valued by policymakers for reasons beyond their economic value, including as vehicles for supporting local communities and for

⁷ Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people. 'Culture and Sport - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People - Wwww.Coe.Int'. Accessed 24 June 2024. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/culture-and-sport>.

⁸ Siepel, Josh. 'Small Engines of Growth: Understanding Creative Microclusters'. *Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre Blog* (blog), 19 November 2020. https://pec.ac.uk/blog_entries/small-engines-of-growth-understanding-creative-microclusters/.

⁹ 'Economic Estimates: Earnings 2023 and Employment October 2022 to September 2023 for the DCMS Sectors and Digital Sector'. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, May 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-estimates-earnings-2023-and-employment-october-2022-to-september-2023-for-the-dcms-sectors-and-digital-sector>; Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. 'Creative Clusters Case Studies', 28 June 2022. https://pec.ac.uk/blog_entries/creative-clusters-case-studies/.

¹⁰ Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. 'The PEC's Response to the 2023 Spring Budget', 16 March 2023. https://pec.ac.uk/blog_entries/the-pecs-response-to-the-2023-spring-budget/; 'Place Matters: Local Approaches to the Creative Industries'. Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, June 2022. <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/download-hub/place-matters-report>; 'Cornerstones of Culture'. Local Government Association, December 2022. <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/cornerstones-culture>.

promoting social capital. Whilst the evidence base is still in its infancy, we can now show that access to cultural experiences can boost health and wellbeing,¹¹ and we know that preserving the heritage of a place can connect us to a shared history and can be critical to the way people feel about the locality they live in.¹² Research also suggests that international cultural or sporting events, like the Commonwealth Games¹³ and the City of Culture programme, can boost civic pride and tourism, although there are questions about how long-standing the economic impact is likely to be from a singular intervention as opposed to that of a longstanding investment.¹⁴

In the creative industries, non-economic outcomes particularly drive policy relating to some sub-sectors including film, performing arts, galleries, games, music, craft and libraries. In the broader cultural sector, these outcomes evidently drive much of the investment in the heritage and sports sectors, but non-economic benefits have also driven policy relating to nightclubs and pubs, and the natural landscape.¹⁵

Whether their values are articulated through a social, cultural or economic lens, the evidence of the benefits of investing in the ecosystem is increasingly compelling.

Funding the ecosystem

As a result of the broad spectrum of potential outcomes it can bring about, funding for the UK's creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem can come from a variety of sources. Public investment comes from:

Table 1:

UK and national governments	Who interact with the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem including by consulting them, providing strategy direction, directing grant-in-aid, designing pilots and programmes, enforcing legislation (for example around Intellectual Property) and by providing loans (for example, as part of the Cultural Recovery Fund set up in the wake of the
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¹¹ 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing'. APPG Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, July 2017.

¹² 'The Role of Heritage in Bringing People Together | Heritage Counts | Historic England', 29 November 2023. <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-society/social-cohesion/>.

¹³ Shaw, Jack, Owen Garling, and Michael Kenny. 'Townscapes: Pride in Place'. University of Cambridge; Bennett Institute for Public Policy; CRASSH; The New Institute; Humanities and Social Change Centre, August 2022. <https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Pride-in-Place-Report.pdf>.

¹⁴ 'Coventry UK City of Culture 2021: Impact Evaluation', 2023. <https://coventry21evaluation.info/strategy-reports/final-evaluation-report/>; Lee, Neil, Dave O'Brien, and Oriane Nermond. 'The European Capital of Culture: A Review of the Academic Evidence'. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, London School of Economics and University of Edinburgh, 13 July 2021. <https://www.pec.ac.uk/discussion-papers/the-european-capital-of-culture-a-review-of-the-academic-evidence>.

¹⁵ 'Night Vision: Rebuilding London's Night-Time Economy London Assembly Economy Committee'. London Assembly, December 2021. <https://gla.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s95611/06a%20Appendix%201%20-%20Rebuilding%20Londons%20Night%20Time%20Economy.pdf>; 'Landscape and Outdoor Access'. Accessed 12 July 2024. <https://www.gov.scot/policies/landscape-and-outdoor-access/>

	<p>pandemic). Many initiatives may have their own objectives, and they don't originate from a singular department. For example, in Whitehall, funding mechanisms from the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government have looked to the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem to support their strategic objectives around improving pride in place and supporting communities. Non-departmental Government bodies like UKRI are also investors in culture through research grants, as well as direct support for businesses, with recent investments including the Creative Clusters Fund and the Creative Catalyst Programme.¹⁶</p>
Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs)¹⁷	<p>Based in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, such as Arts Council England, Sport Scotland and Screen NI distribute grants to specific organisations over the longer-term and on project-by-project basis.</p>
The National Lottery	<p>Which is the state-franchised national lottery established in 1994 in the United Kingdom apportions 20% of the money it earns for expenditure on or connected with the arts, 20% for expenditure on or connected with sport and 20% for expenditure on or connected with national heritage.¹⁸</p>
Local government	<p>Which in all parts of the UK remains the largest public investor in UK culture, despite significant cuts to local culture budgets as a result of the decreasing overall funding settlement (between 2009-10 and 2022-23, per person in real term, local government revenue funding of culture and related services decreased by 29% in Scotland, 40% in Wales and 48% in England).¹⁹ Like other parts of government, local governments invest in culture for all kinds of different reasons including</p>

¹⁶ 'Creative Industries Clusters Programme'. Accessed 19 June 2024. <https://creativeindustriesclusters.com/>; Innovate UK's Creative Catalyst Programme - Innovate UK Business Connect'. Accessed 12 July 2024. <https://iuk.ktn-uk.org/programme/creative-catalyst/>.

¹⁷ For an overview of how Arm's Length Bodies in each of the four UK nations are preparing for further devolution, see Culture Commons' paper on 'Arm's Length Bodies in a devolved policy landscape', August 2024. <https://www.culturecommons.uk/publications/arm's-length-bodies-in-a-devolved-policy-landscape>

¹⁸ Woodhouse, John. 'The National Lottery: Research Briefing'. House of Commons Library, 8 February 2024. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8744/CBP-8744.pdf>

¹⁹ Ashton, Dr Heidi, David Brownlee, Jack Gamble, and Dr Melanie Stavrou. 'The State of the Arts'. Campaign for the Arts and The University of Warwick, July 2024. <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/The-State-of-the-Arts.pdf>.

	improving promoting civic pride, contributing to inclusive social and economic outcomes and addressing skills and health inequalities. ²⁰
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Like other areas of the economy, investment in the creative, cultural and heritage focussed companies can also come from:

Private Investors	Including through crowdfunding, angel investment, corporate partnerships, commercial loans and venture capital. ²¹ Foreign direct investment has been particularly critical for the UK's film and television sectors who received £4 billion in 2023 which is now flowing into areas with historically low levels of support such as Barking and Dagenham (London, England) and Sunderland (North East, England) where 1,000 jobs are being created through the Pallion Shipyard Studios - the "world's largest covered water studio". ²²
Grant Giving Bodies²³ and philanthropy	As cultural organisations deliver many positive societal benefits, they may also receive funding from individual donors, endowments, trusts and foundations, legacies and corporate sponsorship. Community and voluntary sector stakeholders are also directly responsible for delivering a range of creative and cultural activities. ²⁴

More than anything, these divergent sources of funding are testament to the fact that - despite the breadth of subsectors that make up the creative industries and cultural sectors - they can, in the right circumstances, add significant value to the UK economy and its communities, with values that cut across multiple geographies, and government priorities.

²⁰ 'Section Two: Why Invest in Local Culture? | Local Government Association'. Accessed 9 July 2024. <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/cornerstones-culture/section-two-why-invest-local-culture>.

²¹ 'Creative Industries - Routes to Finance'. Creative Industries Federation; ICAEW, 2015. <https://www.icaew.com/-/media/corporate/files/technical/corporate-finance/corporate-finance-faculty/creative-industries/creative-industries-routes-to-finance.ashx>.

²² 'More than £4bn Invested in UK Film and TV Production in 2023 - The Creative Industries'. Accessed 6 June 2024. <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/site-content/more-than-ps4bn-invested-in-uk-film-and-tv-production-in-2023>.

²³ For an overview of how Grant Giving Bodies are responding to devolution, see Culture Commons' Insight Paper, 'Grant Giving Bodies in an increasingly devolved policy landscape' August 2024. [Arm's Length Bodies in a devolved policy landscape](#)

²⁴ Creative Lives. 'Creative Lives'. Accessed 24 June 2024. <https://www.creative-lives.org/>.

The creative industries are now broadly established as an integral part of industrial policy and recognised as being able to support the reduction of place-based economic and social inequalities across the UK.²⁵

Distribution of the ecosystem

Despite the potential benefits of the creative, cultural and heritage sectors to all communities, the distribution of these sectors is markedly uneven across the UK. Around thirty per cent of those working in the creative industries in the UK are based in the capital,²⁶ with the majority of GVA generated by the sector created in London (50.8% in 2022. For context, 23.7% of overall UK GVA was generated in London).²⁷ The cultural sector is slightly more spread across the UK, but London is undoubtedly a hotspot of artistic activity, with around 28% Arts Council England National Portfolio, Investment Principles Support and Transfer Organisations for 2023-26 based in the capital, although many work further afield.²⁸

As a result, there have been calls for the redistribution of wealth and resources to help widen access to jobs in the sector and cultural experiences for the public more broadly.²⁹ The effort to deal with between and within region disparities associated with the ecosystem is now a clear policy of the new UK Government.³⁰ Nonetheless, there are challenges to realising this in practice.

London isn't just dominant in the UK - it is one of the most globally significant hubs for the creative, cultural and heritage sectors. For example, London is home to two of the ten most visited museums and galleries in the world.³¹ Since the creation of the British Fashion Council in the 1980s, London

²⁵ Tether, B (2019) Mind the gap: Regional inequality in the UK's creative industries. London: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre and the University of Manchester. Available from: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/assets/publications/PEC-Discussion-Paper-1-Regional-Inequalities-October-2019-FINAL.pdf>; Gutierrez Posada, D., Kitsos, T., Nathan, M. and Massimiliano, N. (2021) Do creative industries generate multiplier effects? Evidence from UK cities 1997 - 2018. Multiple: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre; City-REDI, the University of Birmingham; University College London. Available from: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/discussion-papers/do-creative-industries-generate-multiplier-effects>

²⁶ 'Economic Estimates: Earnings 2023 and Employment October 2022 to September 2023 for the DCMS Sectors and Digital Sector'. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, May 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-estimates-earnings-2023-and-employment-october-2022-to-september-2023-for-the-dcms-sectors-and-digital-sector>

²⁷ GOV.UK. 'DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates: Regional Gross Value Added 2022'. Accessed 12 July 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-regional-gva-2022/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-regional-gross-value-added-2022>.

²⁸ Author's analysis based on Arts Council England. '2023-26 Investment Programme: Data'. Accessed 12 July 2024. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/how-we-invest-public-money/2023-26-Investment-Programme/2023-26-investment-programme-data>.

²⁹ Powell, David. 'Hard Evidence: Does London Get Too Much Arts Funding?' The Conversation, 5 February 2014. <http://theconversation.com/hard-evidence-does-london-get-too-much-arts-funding-22328>.

³⁰ GOV.UK. 'Funding for UK's growth-driving creative industries confirmed in the Budget', Accessed 6 November 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-for-uks-growth-driving-creative-industries-confirmed-in-the-budget>

³¹ The Art Newspaper - International art news and events. 'The 100 Most Popular Art Museums in the World—Blockbusters, Bots and Bounce-Backs', 26 March 2024. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/03/26/the-100-most-popular-art-museums-in-the-world-2023>.

Fashion Week (LFW) has been regarded as the cornerstones of the global fashion calendar.³² The capital is also home to the two higher education institutions judged as best in the world in art and design, Royal College of Art (RCA) and University of the Arts London (UAL), as well as the world's best performing arts school according to the QS rankings, the Royal College of Music.³³ The world's highest grossing advertising agency group is WPP, is also based in London, as are leading businesses in design, film, architecture, games and music.³⁴ This means that policymakers have to balance the soft power and economic benefits of London being a global frontrunner, with the advantages of moving resources elsewhere within the UK.

Recent experience suggests that knee jerk approaches to redistribution of funding without appropriate consideration and support can have unintended consequences, including forced redundancies for workers, and reductions in the amount of work that national organisations are able to do outside the capital.³⁵ For example, in November 2022, Arts Council England announced its 2023-2026 Investment Programme which, directed by the Conservative government, included £56 million worth of cuts to London's arts funding.³⁶ In response, Rufus Norris, then the Artistic Director of National Theatre, pointed out that the Theatre would actually be able to "do less work nationwide because of those cuts" as their grant and London-work was subsidising the valuable but costly work they do across the UK. He pointed to the fact that at that moment the National Theatre were already spending £4m more than their entire grant on nationwide work, and that more than 50% of their UK audience were from outside London.³⁷

Perhaps a more challenging phenomenon to address is *within*-region disparity associated with funding for culture, creativity and heritage. Many places outside of London also see an uneven distribution of overall funding. Arts Council England investments in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority region, for example, saw the city council of Sheffield receiving £12.17 of investment per head of population, whilst Doncaster – the council just next door – received just £3.60 per head in the 2023/24 investment year.³⁸ This was more stark in Greater Manchester, where Manchester City Council received £303.62 of investment compared with £1.76 in

³² Easton, Eliza. 'Keeping the UK's Creative Industries Globally Competitive: A Playbook to Protect Our Future Prosperity and Security'. UAL and Erskine Analysis, May 2024.

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/436047/UAL_EA_Fullreport.pdf.

³³ Easton, Eliza. 'Keeping the UK's Creative Industries Globally Competitive: A Playbook to Protect Our Future Prosperity and Security'. UAL and Erskine Analysis, May 2024.

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/436047/UAL_EA_Fullreport.pdf.

³⁴ Statista. 'Revenue of the World's Largest Ad Agency Groups 2022'. Accessed 5 October 2023.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/273879/revenue-of-the-worlds-largest-agency-companies/>.

³⁵ 'MU Briefing: What MPs Need to Know About Arts Council England Funding Cuts'. Accessed 12 July 2024.

<https://musiciansunion.org.uk/news/mu-briefing-what-mps-need-to-know-about-arts-council-england-funding-cuts>.

³⁶ 'Cuts to Arts Funding in London (2) | London City Hall'. Accessed 12 July 2024. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/cuts-arts-funding-london-2>.

³⁷ Alberge, Dalya. 'Arts Council Cuts Will Hobble Regional Touring, National Theatre Director Warns'. *The Guardian*, 19 June 2022, sec. Stage. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/jun/19/arts-council-cuts-will-hobble-regional-touring-national-theatre-director-rufus-norris>.

³⁸ Figures arrived at by authors based on data accessed on Arts Council England's 'National investment Dashboard', accessed 6th November 2024. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/our-data/national-investment-dashboard>

neighbouring Bury City Council area per head of population in that same year.³⁹ Of course, focussing on 'per head' spending on the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem may not always be the most helpful measure given that these sectors often coalesce in clusters and micro clusters which see concentrations of infrastructures in particular places.

The Musicians Union have suggested that rather than focussing on the redistribution of relatively small pots of cultural funding, we should instead focus on the significant decrease in overall funding available as the core problem in realising the benefits of the creative, cultural and heritage sectors outside of the capital.⁴⁰

³⁹ Figures arrived at by authors based on data accessed on Arts Council England's 'National investment Dashboard', accessed 6th November 2024. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/our-data/national-investment-dashboard>

⁴⁰ 'MU Briefing: What MPs Need to Know About Arts Council England Funding Cuts'. Accessed 12 July 2024. <https://musiciansunion.org.uk/news/mu-briefing-what-mps-need-to-know-about-arts-council-england-funding-cuts>.

Interest in the creative and cultural industries

Growing national policy interest

The creative industries were first mapped in 1998 by a New Labour government shortly after they came to power in the 1997 General Election. This ambitious mapping exercise was initiated by the new Culture Secretary, Chris Smith MP, who established a Creative Industries Taskforce in response to a government wide directive to 'modernise' the economy.⁴¹ The work sought to give shape to a newly defined sector comprising businesses that were particularly dependent on "artistic creativity" for their success and bring them into UK policy-making in a more concerted way.

In 2011, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition that had been formed the year before set up the Creative Industries Council (CIC), whose aim was to provide a singular industry and government forum that could support partnership working and stimulate policy and industry change. The CIC was announced as part of the UK's Government's 'Plan for Growth', which "identified ways to increase economic growth in key industries such as music, film and video games".⁴² This plan was published alongside the announcement of new creative industries focussed tax incentives in the 2011 Budget, which was delivered by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP.⁴³

The foundation of the CIC suggested that political understanding of the industries had matured and were now recognised as a strategic priority.⁴⁴ Equally, it hinted that the new coalition Government saw the opportunity to formalise and publicise their relationship with the sector as a way of building on the groundwork put in place by the previous Labour leadership.

Since then, there have been several important investments in the creative sector at a national level. These have included a creative industries Sector Deal and Sector Vision, both accompanied by research and development (R&D) investments, and a number of additional tax incentives.⁴⁵ Some

⁴¹ Gross, Jonathan. 'The Birth of the Creative Industries Revisited: An Oral History of the 1998 DCMS Mapping Document'. London: King's College London, n.d. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cmci/assets/report.pdf>.

⁴² GOV.UK. 'Chancellor Announces Tax Breaks for Philanthropists'. Accessed 19 June 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-announces-tax-breaks-for-philanthropists>.

⁴³ 2011 Budget: A strong and stable economy, growth and fairness (2011). HM Treasury. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-2011>. (Accessed: 11 September 2023).

⁴⁴ Eliza Easton. 'Evidence and Lobbying: How the UK's Creative Industries policy and research ecosystem developed during the 2010s.' In *Creative Industries and Cultural Diversity: Part 1 - Understanding the UK Policy Ecosystem*. Cultural Diversity Laboratory, Creative Impact Research Centre Europe, Nov 2024

⁴⁵ 'Creative Industries: Sector Deal'. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 28 March 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-sector-deal>; 'Creative Industries Sector Vision'. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 14 June 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-sector-vision>; 'Spring Budget 2024'. HM Treasury, March 2024. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8578eb559930011ade2cb/E03057752_HMT_Spring_Budget_Mar_24_Web_Accessible_2.pdf.

of these interventions have targeted specific regions and places, for example the Creative Industries Clusters Programme, which was launched as part of the Sector Deal and renewed in the Sector Vision, as well as funded R&D partnerships based in creative clusters in all four nations of the UK.⁴⁶

Each of the devolved governments has also pioneered creative industries and cultural sector related initiatives. For example, Scotland was a trailblazer in the creation of Creative Scotland - an arm's length body which looked to blend support across both commercial and publicly funded creative and cultural organisations. Creative and digital technologies formed a central pillar of Northern Ireland's 2017 Industrial Strategy.⁴⁷ And in 2022, the Welsh Government published a New Creative Skills Action Plan, backed by a £1 million fund for Wales' creative industries.⁴⁸

Currently, there is broad rhetorical support for the creative and cultural sectors across political parties in all four UK nations. However, there are differences in the approaches to positioning and supporting them. For example, the Conservative Government in Westminster more frequently focussed on the economic benefits of the wider creative industries (with key exceptions including on the ability of culture to support pride in place as part of the 'levelling up' strategy⁴⁹), whilst the language of the Labour government has, so far, focussed on increasing access particularly amongst young people, with the new Secretary of State for Culture using her initial speech to say that *"whether it's through investing in grassroots sport, a visible symbol of what our young people mean to us in every community, or enabling brilliant working-class kids to succeed in drama, dance or journalism - their raw talent so obvious, but for too many of whom geography is destiny, we will be a government that walks alongside them as they create that country I've believed in all of my life, but never quite yet seen."*⁵⁰

In Scotland, the arts, culture and creative economy have all been foregrounded for their ability to deliver both economic and wellbeing benefits.⁵¹ In Wales, a Development agency Creative Wales was set up to focus on economic growth but talks about it in terms of an ambition to "position Wales as the best place for creativity to thrive" and to drive "growth across the creative industries, build on existing success and develop new talent and skills", whilst other activities focus on the

⁴⁶ 'Creative Industries Clusters Programme'. Accessed 19 June 2024. <https://creativeindustriesclusters.com/>.

⁴⁷ 'Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland'. Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland Executive, 2017. <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/industrial-strategy>.

⁴⁸ 'New Plan to Help Develop Wales' Creative Talent | GOV.WALES', 20 September 2022. <https://www.gov.wales/new-plan-help-develop-wales-creative-talent>.

⁴⁹ 'Levelling Up the United Kingdom'. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, February 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>.

⁵⁰ Walker, Peter, and Peter Walker Senior political correspondent. 'Era of Culture Wars Is over, Pledges New Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy'. *The Guardian*, 9 July 2024, sec. Politics.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jul/09/era-of-culture-wars-is-over-pledges-new-culture-secretary-lisa-nandy>.

⁵¹ 'Scotland's Creative Economy'. Accessed 19 June 2024. <http://www.gov.scot/publications/building-new-scotland-culture-independent-scotland/pages/9/>.

other benefits of culture.⁵² In Northern Ireland, the Government's strategic report on 'A Way Forward' post-pandemic highlighted the ways in which culture could be a driver "of equality, inclusion, and social and economic change".⁵³

Particular differences between the approaches to this area have emerged around the place of the arts in education, with other nations and parties' policies in contrast to that of the most recent Conservative Government who assessed student attainment at 16 using a group of subjects (the EBacc) which explicitly excludes the arts.⁵⁴ In contrast, ensuring access to a broader education has been tabled as a priority for the Labour Party's most recent election manifesto, and has been more central to the Scottish and Welsh Government's approach to school education in general.⁵⁵ This continues in the approach to Higher and Further education - which also have marked differences ranging from focus to per capita spend.⁵⁶

Falling investment in culture driven by a falling investment in local government

Despite the active role successive governments have played in supporting the creative, cultural and heritage sectors, there are also several serious challenges facing them, including issues which have been created or exacerbated by policy decisions.

One such example is the growing skills gaps, which many in the sector have long argued have been made worse by the sharp decrease in the numbers of people studying creative subjects at school in England, which have driven down UK-wide figures.⁵⁷ Other areas of concern include sustainable funding for Public Service Broadcasting,⁵⁸ a lack of innovation funding (with the Council for Science and Technology writing to then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to bring his attention to the

⁵² 'Homepage | Creative Wales'. Accessed 19 June 2024. <https://www.creative.wales/>.

⁵³ 'Culture Arts and Heritage - A Way Forward'. Department for Communities, Northern Ireland, 27 October 2022. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/culture-arts-and-heritage-way-forward>.

⁵⁴ Evennett, Heather. 'Arts Education in Secondary Schools', 2 June 2021. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/arts-education-in-secondary-schools/>.

⁵⁵ 'Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024'. The Labour Party, 13 June 2024. <https://labour.org.uk/change/>; 'Arts in Education: Review of Creative Scotland Research into Arts and Creativity in Schools in Scotland'. Research Scotland, December 2022. <https://www.creativescotland.com/binaries/content/assets/creative-scotland/resources-and-publications/research/2022/arts-in-education-final-report-december-2022.pdf>; 'Expressive Arts: Introduction - Hwb'. Accessed 27 June 2024. <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts>.

⁵⁶ 'Creating Growth: Labour's Plan for the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries'. The Labour Party, 14 March 2024. <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Labours-Arts-Culture-Creative-Industries-Sector-Plan.pdf>; 'Higher Education in Devolved Nations - AHUA'. Accessed 20 June 2024. <https://www.ahua.ac.uk/higher-education-in-devolved-nations/>.

⁵⁷ Cultural Learning Alliance. 'Hours of Arts Teaching and Number of Arts Teachers in England's Secondary Schools Continue Stable after Years of Decline', 12 October 2022. <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/hours-of-arts-teaching-and-number-of-arts-teachers-in-englands-secondary-schools-continue-stable-after-years-of-decline-2/>; Easton, Eliza. 'Creative Education Agenda'. Creative Industries Federation, 13 May 2015. https://stage.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-05/CIF_EduAgenda_spreads.pdf.

⁵⁸ Maher, Bron. 'BBC Warns 6.7% Licence Fee Rise Will Lead to £90m Further Cuts'. *Press Gazette* (blog), 7 December 2023. <https://pressgazette.co.uk/publishers/broadcast/bbc-licence-fee-rise-lower-commercial-funding-review-2023/>.

disproportionately low level of investment in the sector)⁵⁹ and a significant decline in the public funding available to cultural organisations, explored in this section.

In England, capital and revenue expenditure in the arts by local authorities has fallen by more than 48 per cent in real terms between 2009/10 and 2022/23 in response to an overall reduction in government investment in local authorities over the same period, as seen in Figure 2.⁶⁰ Much of this comes from a significant drop in funding to libraries, although excluding libraries, evidence still points to a in real terms decrease in per person spend from £15.36 to £8.79.⁶¹

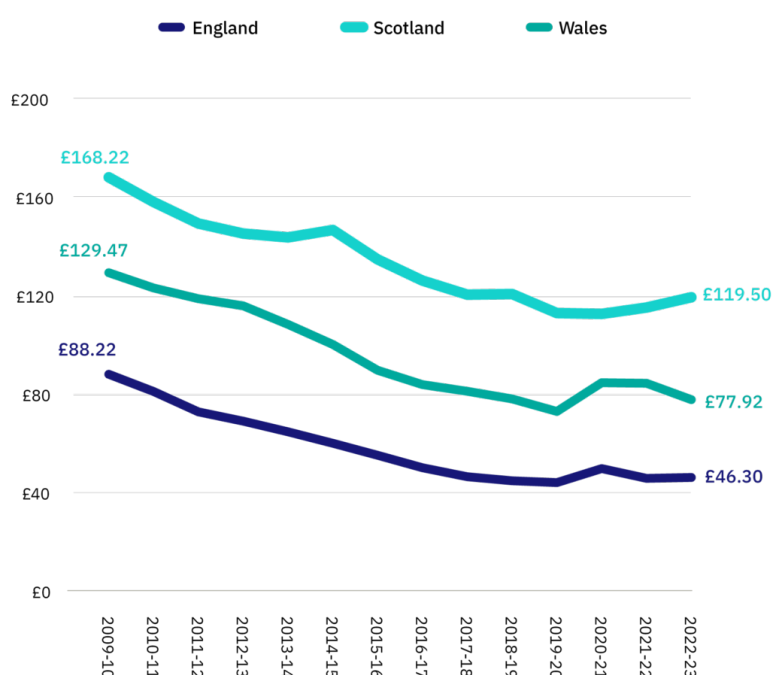


Figure 2: Data from the Campaign for the Arts and the University of Warwick on the Local authority revenue spending on cultural and related services per person, 2009-10 to 2022-23 (real terms, 2022-23 prices). Image Culture Commons, 2024.⁶²

Given local authorities are by some margin the most significant public investor in arts and culture in England, changes in their spending priorities can have a significant impact on the viability of the

⁵⁹ Dame Angela McLean and Lord Browne of Madingley. 'The Council for Science and Technology Publishes Advice on Harnessing R&D in the UK's Creative Industries - Letter to the Prime Minister', 5 October 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-council-for-science-and-technology-publishes-advice-on-harnessing-rd-in-the-uks-creative-industries>.

⁶⁰ Ashton, Dr Heidi, David Brownlee, Jack Gamble, and Dr Melanie Stavrou. 'The State of the Arts'. Campaign for the Arts and The University of Warwick, July 2024. <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/The-State-of-the-Arts.pdf>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Reprinted with permission. Source: Analysis of MHCLG Local authority revenue expenditure and financing (RO5), Scottish Local Government Finance Statistics, Welsh Government outturn expenditure summary (various years); ONS mid-year population estimates (England, Scotland, Wales, various years); GDP deflator. Notes: Net current expenditure. Ashton, Dr Heidi, David Brownlee, Jack Gamble, and Dr Melanie Stavrou. 'The State of the Arts'. Campaign for the Arts and The University of Warwick, July 2024. <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/The-State-of-the-Arts.pdf>.

sector.⁶³ As touched on earlier, academics have also set out the uneven spatial consequences of arts and culture expenditure, with significant variation both *between* and *within* regions, which challenges commonly held assumptions about 'London versus the rest'.⁶⁴

In Scotland, local government is also the biggest funder of culture: the net revenue expenditure on 'culture and related services' from 2022-23 by its 32 local authorities was £651 million, which is ten-fold the settlement for Creative Scotland, at £63 million in 2022-23.⁶⁵ Not only has investment significantly reduced (by 29% since 2009-10)⁶⁶, the demand for services has also continued to rise in statutory services - such as homelessness and social care - and as a result local authorities have disproportionately had to reduce 'unprotected' services to balance their budgets.⁶⁷

In Wales, data from the Campaign for the Arts suggests that the real terms reduction in spending by local government on libraries, culture, heritage, sport and recreation may be as much as 40% since 2009/10.⁶⁸ The impact of this is compounded by the fact that direct National Welsh Government support for the arts has reduced by £10 million in real terms since 2011-12.⁶⁹

Unfortunately, data from Northern Ireland detailing the exact breakdown of local government spending is less available - although it seems likely that cultural organisations have also seen a reduction in funding and that this may be about to get worse: we know that budgets for local councils are set to fall and that the Arts Council's resource allocation for 2023-24 represented a 5 per cent cut based on the previous year's allocation and further compounds the much longer-term disinvestment in arts funding.⁷⁰

Across the UK, this reduction in spending at the local level has affected the ability of local authorities to invest in culture directly, but indirectly it has also created a series of challenges, with decision makers reducing the amount they invest in the voluntary sector, which plays an important role in delivering cultural provision and, in some cases, renegotiating the taxes they charge cultural institutions. The absence of a long-term tenancy at council-owned Gateshead International

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Rex, Bethany, and Peter Campbell. 'The Impact of Austerity Measures on Local Government Funding for Culture in England'. *Cultural Trends* 31, no. 1 (1 January 2022): 23-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2021.1915096>.

⁶⁵ 'Annual Publication Providing a Comprehensive Overview of Financial Activity of Scottish Local Authorities in 2022-23 Based on Authorities' Audited Accounts', 5 March 2024. <http://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-local-government-finance-statistics-2022-23/pages/3/>.

⁶⁶ Ashton, Dr Heidi, David Brownlee, Jack Gamble, and Dr Melanie Stavrou. 'The State of the Arts'. Campaign for the Arts and The University of Warwick, July 2024. <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/The-State-of-the-Arts.pdf>.

⁶⁷ 'Local Government in Scotland Financial Bulletin 2022/23'. Audit Scotland, January 2024. <https://audit.scot/publications/local-government-in-scotland-financial-bulletin-202223>.

⁶⁸ Ashton, Dr Heidi, David Brownlee, Jack Gamble, and Dr Melanie Stavrou. 'The State of the Arts'. Campaign for the Arts and The University of Warwick, July 2024. <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/The-State-of-the-Arts.pdf>.

⁶⁹ 'Building Resilience: Inquiry into the Non-Public Funding of the Arts'. National Assembly of Wales, March 2018. <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11483/cr-ld11483-e.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Arts Council NI. 'Government's Lack of Investment in the Arts Is...', June 2023. <https://artscouncil-ni.org/news/governments-lack-of-investment-in-the-arts-is-affecting-those-most-in-need>

Stadium, for example, prevented Gateshead Football Club from competing for promotion to the English Football League. A debate has ensued about the amount of income Gateshead Council receives from the club and whether it could generate more.

English mayors representing combined authorities have up until this point played a relatively peripheral role in investment, but there is an emerging consensus - as we set out in the next section - that they have an important role to play in supporting the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem.

Local government funding for culture is important because those who live in a place are often the best at understanding its unique traditions, needs and opportunities. Whilst it can leverage additional funding from public and private sources, it can also fund things which might not seem of consequence to those considering the national picture but are evidently important to those in a particular area, including making areas more attractive, fostering local communities, developing education programmes, acting as a site of democratic participation and improving local wellbeing.⁷¹

The relationship between the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem on the one hand and devolution on the other therefore cannot ignore chronic under-investment and uneven distribution of associated infrastructures across the UK.⁷² Given that most investment in culture in the UK is still decided at a local level, that this funding has been put under immense pressure as a result of wider policy decisions has had a significant impact on the sector.⁷³

In recent years other investments aiming to support culture at the local level have emerged - namely the UK Government's UK City of Culture scheme, Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund; Arts Council England's 'Priority Places', Creative Scotland's 'Place Programme', and Historic England's Heritage Action Zones and High Street Heritage Action Zones programmes. However, many of these are competitive processes with outcomes decided in Whitehall, or by national Arm's Length Bodies, and tend to invest in capital projects in specific areas for relatively short periods of time. Whilst welcome, they do not replace that long term revenue and capital investment in key local infrastructures. Those investments originating from Whitehall have also caused some controversy, as - for example - the Welsh Government argues

⁷¹ Evans, Mark. 'Bridging the Trust Divide: Understanding the Role of "Localism" and the "Local" in Cultural Policy'. *Cultural Policy Is Local Understanding Cultural Policy as Situated Practice*, 2023.

<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/76230/978-3-031-32312-6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁷² Alexandrova, Anna, Steph Coulter, Diane Coyle, Owen Garling, and Michael Kenny. 'Measurement of Social and Cultural Infrastructure: Vision and Approach'. Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge, March 2024.

<https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Measurement-of-social-and-cultural-infrastructure.pdf>

⁷³ Rex, Bethany, and Peter Campbell. 'The Impact of Austerity Measures on Local Government Funding for Culture in England'. *Cultural Trends* 31, no. 1 (1 January 2022): 23-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2021.1915096>.

Wales will receive £772 million less funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund between January 2021 and March 2025 compared to the amount that would have been received through EU Structural Funds.⁷⁴

Do the public care about the creative and cultural sectors

The attention of policymakers at all levels - from the hyper local to the international - is spread across a large number of competing priorities. Understandably, polls in recent years have suggested that the UK public's priorities for policymakers are the economy (specifically the 'cost of living crisis') and the National Health Service.⁷⁵ Other policy areas indicated as important to the public include immigration and housing.⁷⁶

Whilst they may not be a primary concern of voters under their own steam, the creative, cultural and heritage sectors are linked to each of these policy areas. This is particularly true of health policy, where there is increasing interest in the place of the arts and cultural organisations in supporting wellbeing and population health.⁷⁷ It is important to note that in Ipsos's 2022 Global Happiness survey, access to entertainment and sport was seen as more important than the state of the economy in its potential to make people happy.⁷⁸

However, interventions in areas like social prescribing have been challenging for NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to take forward in full at a time when some warn that the foundations of the health service are crumbling.⁷⁹ Nowhere is that more so than at a local level, where - for example - across the UK local government is struggling to balance more holistic interventions with specific needs for funding basic adult social care services.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ 'How Are Levelling up Funds Working in Wales?' Accessed 11 July 2024. <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/how-are-levelling-up-funds-are-working-in-wales/>

⁷⁵ YouGov. 'The Most Important Issues Facing the Country'. Accessed 9 May 2024.

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/society/trackers/the-most-important-issues-facing-the-country/>

Mansfield, Iain. 'The People's Priorities: What Must the Government Deliver in 2023?' Policy Exchange, 2022.

<https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/The-Peoples-Priorities.pdf>.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing'. APPG Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, July 2017. <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>.

⁷⁸ 'Global Happiness Survey 2022'. Ipsos, April 2022. <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-04/ipsos-global-happiness-survey-2022.pdf>.

⁷⁹ 'Re-Thinking Local: Adult Social Care | Local Government Association'. Accessed 6 June 2024.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/re-thinking-local/re-thinking-local-adult-social-care>.

⁸⁰ Local Government Association. 'Further Savings Mean Tough Decisions for Social Care Leaders'. Accessed 27 June 2024.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/further-savings-mean-tough-decisions-social-care-leaders>; 'National Benchmarking Overview Report 2022-2023'. Scotland: Local Government Benchmarking Framework, March 2024.

<https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/news/march-2024/financial-workforce-and-demand-pressures-mean-tough-decisions-for-councils#:~:text=Councils%20are%20having%20to%20make,a%20new%20report%20published%20today>.

Whilst it seems likely that concerns about the economy are driven by the individual impact of high inflation and stagnant productivity as opposed to an interest in specific approaches to fixing this, there could be a place here for the creative industries as levers of growth at all policy levels.

An area where there is significant public interest directed specifically at elements of the cultural sector is as a way to maintain or increase 'pride in place'. A poll conducted by Public First in 2021 found that residents rated local heritage more highly than many other aspects of their town as a driver of civic pride, and that people have a strong, palpable, desire to foster a connection with their industrial history.⁸¹

Given that the very nature of culture is hard to define, it also stands to reason that it is hard to comprehend the total level of cultural participation in the UK. This is because, for some, cultural participation might mean dancing in the living room, for others it might mean singing in church, and for others it might mean gardening. However, to give some sense of the importance of public support for the arts and culture, it is useful to consider the level of participation in some activities, even if we recognise it doesn't tell the whole story about the importance of culture in a place.

From the Participation Survey run by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (now the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) we know that in England during October 2021 to March 2022, over 4 in 5 adults had physically engaged with the arts (attended or participated) in the previous 12 months to being interviewed.⁸² This took many forms - from going to see a comedy show, to writing a short story. Just under one in four of adults in England visited museums and galleries, whilst almost two in three visited a heritage space.⁸³

The numbers in attending cultural events in Scotland in the 12 months before being interviewed in 2022 were comparable - with 88% of adults had been culturally engaged in the last year, either by attending a cultural event or place of culture or participating in a cultural activity. Just over one in four people in Scotland had attended a museum, and just under one in five had attended a gallery, whilst almost a third had been to a historic place.⁸⁴

⁸¹ 'Levelling Up Poll Results - 16th Nov - 22nd Nov 2021'. Public First, 2021. https://www.publicfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Levelling_Up_Poll.pdf.

⁸² GOV.UK. 'Main Report for the Participation Survey (October 2021 to March 2022)', 30 November 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-survey-2021-22-annual-report/main-report-for-the-participation-survey-october-2021-to-march-2022>.

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Scottish Government. 'Culture and Heritage - Selected Findings from the 2022 Scottish Household Survey, Organised by Topic Area.' Accessed 27 June 2024. <http://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2022-key-findings/pages/11/>.

In Wales, from 2022-2023, 72% of adults participated in 'arts, culture or heritage activities' more than three times a year.⁸⁵ In Northern Ireland, just over three out of five adults (62%) had engaged in culture and arts in 2021/22 - a broad category including activities like craft, music, photography, as well as attendance at arts events and institutions.

One reason that the value of cultural organisations could be underestimated is that it can be particularly hard to quantify the complex and manifold benefits that free museums, historical buildings and access to other arts organisations bring to the communities they are part of, or the nation as a whole. For example, we know that people benefit from living in areas with cultural organisations even if they are not frequent visitors themselves (i.e. that people like to live in an area where others have access to them, or they are a visible part of the community) but that, like the importance of the natural landscape, this can be hard to measure.⁸⁶ That is why the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has developed the Culture and Heritage Capital Programme - a programme that Culture Commons is contributing to⁸⁷ - which is exploring methods such as 'willingness to pay' to demonstrate the many benefits of culture and heritage to people around the country.

We know that when the population at large are asked about what government priorities should be when it comes to spending on culture (according to some as yet unpublished data from Public First⁸⁸), historic buildings and monuments come out top, followed by smaller, local arts organisations and venues, like theatres and music venues around the country, local museums and art galleries and local cultural events and festivals.

Campaigns to support the arts and culture involving the public have also seen recent success: for example, 25,000 people joined a campaign to support the cultural sector in Scotland following a U-turn on spending commitments, resulting in new commitments from the Scottish Government to maintain and grow public investment in the arts.⁸⁹ Windsor and Maidenhead Council also abandoned plans for a 100% cut to the arts, and instead increased arts funding by 17%, after a local campaign run by Campaign for the Arts was backed by more than 4,900 people.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Stats Wales. 'Percentage of People Who Attend or Participate in Arts Culture or Heritage Activities Three or More Times a Year by Local Authority'. Accessed 27 June 2024. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/National-Survey-for-Wales/Sport-and-Recreation/percentageofpeoplewhoattendorparticipateinartcultureheritageactivities3ormoretimesayear-by-localauthority-year>.

⁸⁶ Lawton, R, D Fujiwara, S Mourato, H Bakhshi, A Lagarde, and J Davies. 'The Economic Value of Heritage: A Benefit Transfer Study', October 2018. https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Cathedrals_and_Historic_Cities_report_Nesta_and_Simetrica_021018.pdf.

⁸⁷ See <https://www.culturecommons.uk/projects-1/valuing-culture-and-heritage-capital>

⁸⁸ With thanks to Public First for sharing this data.

⁸⁹ 'Petition to the Scottish Government: Deliver the Arts Funding You Promised', 28 September 2023. <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/petitions/scotland-cuts-reimposed/>.

⁹⁰ 'Our Impact | Campaign for the Arts', 26 April 2022. <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/about/impact/>.

Local organisations are often seen as more popular recipients for public investment than national flagship organisations. However, they both exist within the same ecosystem - the National Theatre's acclaimed *War Horse* might have started its life in London but throughout 2024 and 2025 will be touring around the UK, bolstering out-of-London organisations. Equally, many of the artefacts and exhibitions being displayed in our national museums are on loan from local civic museums based in areas outside of the UK's core cities. 'Standing at the Sky's Edge', a new musical about Sheffield, first appeared on stage at the Crucible and is now running in the West End before it embarks on a national (and potentially international) tour.

Fundamentally, even if individual sectors don't appear on the list of primary policy concerns for UK voters, there is every reason to believe that they contribute significantly to the way we feel about a place, and the way we feel in ourselves.

What is the relationship between the creative, cultural and heritage sectors and devolution?

Devolution has gathered pace over the last quarter century. 1999 marked a watershed with the creation of the Greater London Authority, the Senedd in Wales and the Scottish Parliament. Wales and Scotland have had significant oversight over many policy areas since then. Scottish government has been responsible for legislating from inception, but it wasn't until the Government of Wales Act 2006 that the Assembly could pass primary legislation. There are, however, intersections with other policy domains - such as international trade and employment policy - that the UK Government is still responsible for.

Policy Area	Scotland	Wales	NI
Health and social care	D	D	D
Education and training	D	D	D
Local government	D	D	D
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	D	D	D
Transport	D	D	D
Some taxation	D	D	D
Justice and policing	D	R	D
Some social security	D	R	D
Sport and culture	D	D	D
Defence			
Foreign Affairs			
Immigration		R	
Trade Policy			
Constitution			
Broadcasting (NI may legislate with SoS consent)			

Figure 3: Outline of devolved policy areas in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: the distribution of devolved and reserved powers in the devolved administrations of the UK. Image: Culture Commons.

A UK-wide perspective

Across the UK, the relationship between the creative and cultural industries and devolution reflects the different forms of devolution pursued. In the Devolved Administrations (DA), Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have significant oversight over culture, which is broadly considered a 'devolved matter'. The DAs do have less oversight over policies that underpin these sectors. In the case of the creative industries, attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to boost the sector is a UK-wide prerogative.

Under the Sewell Convention, when the UK Government legislates on culture in a way that infringes on devolved responsibilities, each DA is able to take action through a formal process called a 'consent motion', which enables them to make clear their position to the UK Government.⁹¹ Wales recently voted to withhold consent over the UK Internal Market Bill which gave the UK Government power to allocate investment to Scottish and Welsh local authorities directly, rather than through the DAs - and this could have implications for cultural investment, given the UK Government had made use of the legislation when it sidestepped the DAs by allocating the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.⁹²

As suggested, there are a number of policies that are either directly within the cultural and creative industries or underpin their success that are 'reserved matters' and the responsibility of the UK Government. Alongside FDI, fiscal policy, the tax regime, employment law, migration and visas all shape how institutions and businesses within the creative, cultural and heritage sectors operate - meaning that UK Government policy does continue to play a significant role in the direction and viability of what is otherwise a broadly devolved landscape.

Public service broadcasting is a specific example where significant attention has been paid to devolving, with the Welsh Government particularly vocal about the importance of having a greater say over broadcasting regulation.⁹³ According to the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales, the goal of further devolution in this area "is to strengthen Welsh output, content creation, and public engagement with democratic institutions in Wales to safeguard the Welsh language, identity and culture and ensure that the needs of the citizens are met."⁹⁴

That said, the debate outside of England has tended to focus on what the UK Government should devolve to Holyrood, Senedd and Stormont, and comparatively little attention has been paid to 'double devolution' from those legislatures into their respective regions, sub-regions and localities. Though there are place-based institutions responsible for overseeing broader economic and skills activity, such as Regional Economic Partnerships in Scotland, with significantly fewer local

⁹¹ 'Sewel Convention | Institute for Government'. Accessed 6 June 2024.

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/sewel-convention>.

⁹² 'After Brexit: The UK Internal Market Act and Devolution'. Constitution Directorate, Scottish Government. Accessed 17 July 2024. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/brexit-uk-internal-market-act-devolution/pages/6/>; Institute for Government. 'Sewel Convention', 16 January 2018. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/sewel-convention>.

⁹³ The Institute of Welsh Affairs' Broadcasting Regulation in Wales report (Broadcasting Regulation in Wales: Part 1, 2022 and Broadcasting Regulation in Wales: Part 2 and 3, 2023) • The Expert Panel on a Shadow Broadcasting and Communications Authority for Wales report, A new future for broadcasting and communications in Wales (A new future for broadcasting and communications in Wales, 2023) • The Westminster Parliament's Welsh Affairs Select Committee report into Broadcasting in Wales (Broadcasting in Wales, 2023)

⁹⁴ 'Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales: Final Report'. Welsh Government, 11 December 2023. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2024/1/3/1705532246/independent-commission-on-the-constitutional-future-of-wales-final-report.pdf>.

authorities in Wales and Scotland there has been little appetite to establish a sub-regional or regional tier of governance such as mayoralities. There are 22 authorities in Wales and 32 in Scotland, compared with 317 in England. Consequently, there is a risk that this broadly 'centralist' approach relies too heavily on government or government agencies and is at a scale that isn't sufficiently responsive to local needs.

We contrast this with the emergence of strategic partnerships between DCMS and the ALBs that the department oversees on the one hand and combined authorities in England on the other - as in the case of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA). There is some suggestion that the next Scottish Government could see a shift away from Holyrood, with Scottish Labour suggesting that, if it wins power in Scotland, it would 'reset devolution' and enshrine in legislation a Local Democracy Act to create mayoralities.⁹⁵ The Scottish Government's Verity House Agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities was meant to put central-local relationships on a more mutually productive footing, and it did instigate a Culture Summit - which Culture Commons attended - aimed at bringing officials inside and outside of government together, but a spat between the Scottish Government and local authorities in early 2024 suggested that the former was only interested in partnerships when it suited ministers.⁹⁶

A second divergence is whether or not interventions appear to prioritise 'people' over 'places'. In England, the focus is primarily on place-based policies, whereas in Scotland and Wales there is emphasis on supporting individuals - which was especially apparent in their support for freelancers working in the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Welsh Government's Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, a long-term plan to improve the lives of Welsh residents, also outlines culture as one of its pillars and cites the importance of "encouraging *people* to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation."⁹⁷

To this point, it is notable that in the guidance for applications for funding for Arts Council Wales the six principles judged to determine investment are "creativity, widening engagement, Welsh language, climate justice, nurturing talent and transformation"⁹⁸ whilst Arts Council England has made geographic rebalancing an overt priority, identifying 54 places across the country where they believe investment is too low and using this list when considering investment in National Portfolio Organisations and Investment Principles Support Organisations.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ The Times. 'Anas Sarwar Plans for "Metro Mayors" in Scotland', 31 March 2024.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/anas-sarwar-plans-for-metro-mayors-in-scotland-00l0ckkdb>.

⁹⁶ BBC News. 'Cosla Declares "dispute" with Ministers over Funds'. 14 February 2024, sec. Scotland.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-68292972>.

⁹⁷ 'Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 - The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales'. Accessed 6 June 2024. <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>.

⁹⁸ 'Investment Review 2023 Report and Decisions'. Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymr/Arts Council Wales, 2023.

https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2023-09/Investment_Review_2023_Report_and_Decisions%5B1%5D.pdf.

⁹⁹ Arts Council England. 'Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places'. Accessed 6 June 2024.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/your-area/priority-places-and-levelling-culture-places>.

English devolution

Outside of London, devolution in England has moved slower than anticipated and remains incomplete. The devolution settlements struck first under the Coalition Government, saw Greater Manchester (GMCA) and the West Midlands (WMCA) created alongside five combined authorities in 2017. Anecdotally, the creative, cultural and heritage sectors have played a marginal role in the plans of both combined authorities and government - at least formally - with no reference to the creative and cultural industries in either the GMCA or WMCA settlements.¹⁰⁰ This is especially curious given that at a national level successive governments were engaged in significant policymaking to promote the creative and cultural industries.

As devolution has progressed, the creative and cultural industries have received more attention.

Building on Liverpool's status as the UK's European Capital of Culture 2008, UK Government and Liverpool City Region (LCR) set out their intention to establish a Local Cultural Partnership to "accelerate economic growth, improve skills and further develop its distinctive visitor offer".¹⁰¹ Other combined authorities have followed suit, including Greater Manchester. Newcastle and Gateshead hosted the Great Exhibition of the North with support from the North of Tyne (NoT) Combined Authority to showcase their rich industrial heritage and promote trade and investment. NoT has now merged with the North East Combined Authority to create NEMCA which in 2024 built on this work by establishing a single-purpose investment vehicle, the Culture and Creative Sector Catalyst and a Destination Development Partnership (DDP) pilot designed to support the visitor economy on a regional basis.

Skills policy is also increasingly seen by combined authorities as a vehicle for supporting the creative and cultural industries - such as through improving the employability of young people. DCMS, for example, has supported Local Digital Skills Partnerships in collaboration with combined authorities to coordinate digital skills programmes aimed at tackling digital exclusion and improving digital literacy. In Greater Manchester, we see the early emergence of a new technical education qualification - The Manchester Baccalaureat ("MBacc") - which has identified "creative, culture and sport" as target industries.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ 'West Midlands Combined Authority Devolution Agreement'. HM Treasury and West Midlands Combined Authority, November 2015. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8169cbcd915d74e33fe131/West_Midlands_devolution_deal_unsigned_final_web.pdf; 'Greater Manchester Agreement: Devolution to the GMCA & Transition to a Directly Elected Mayor'. HM Treasury and GMCA, November 2014. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e3f29ed915d74e33f102e/Greater_Manchester_Agreement_i.pdf.

¹⁰¹ 'Liverpool City Region Devolution Agreement'. HM Treasury and Liverpool City Region, November 2015.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74e3b6e5274a59fa715c23/Liverpool_devolution_deal_unsigned.pdf.

¹⁰² GMCA, Manchester Baccalaureat, <https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/work-and-skills/technical-education-city-region/the-greater-manchester-baccalaureate/>

And there is emerging evidence that combined authorities are moving beyond 'boundary driven' approaches. This has not been a significant feature of devolution to date given most settlements reflect clear functional economic geographies and strong identities, but in the case of West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) have suggested creating 'cultural corridors' across 'One Creative North'.¹⁰³

In the main, where the creative industries and cultural sectors have featured in devolved settlements, they have principally – though not exclusively – been seen through the lens of, and as a vehicle for, economic growth. Greater Manchester's Strategic Cultural Partnership has five missions, including attracting local, national and international investment, visitors and talent and improving employability, quality of life and well-being. Yet Greater Manchester's focus in part reflects a longer history of institutional relationship-building across Greater Manchester. And under the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) – the predecessor of GMCA – Manchester's authorities had in place a strategy to invest in culture through its Section 48 grant scheme. Manchester's more developed vision for culture is, in other words, reflective of its long-established experience of collaboration which is not the case in many other places.¹⁰⁴ It is noteworthy that, alongside Liverpool, Manchester is the first city to establish a tourism levy via its Accommodation Business Improvement Districts.¹⁰⁵

Significant attention has also been paid to hosting large-scale events or establishing attractions. Greater London Authority has a long history of doing so, most notably through its role in the Olympics of 2012. Similarly, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games – in which WMCA played a leading role – contributed £1.2 billion to the British economy.¹⁰⁶ Alongside the Great Exhibition of the North, WYCA is investing £25 million to establish a Heritage Fund which will support a 'British Library North' alongside Leeds City Council.¹⁰⁷ Over 70 per cent of the British Library's 170 million item collection – including more than a petabyte of digital content – is housed in the north-east of Leeds.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Arts Professional. 'North of England "creative corridor" Prototype to Launch', 19 September 2023.

<https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/north-england-creative-corridor-prototype-launch>.

¹⁰⁴ BBC News. 'Manchester's "tourist Tax" Raises £2.8m after First Year - BBC News', 7 April 2024.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-68739832>.

¹⁰⁵ 'Accommodation BID: Bringing Together the Accommodation Sector in Liverpool'. Liverpool BID Company, 2022.

https://liverpoolbidcompany.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/LB_A_BUSINESSPLAN_online.pdf; 'Proposal and Business for Manchester Accommodation Business Improvement District 2023-2028'. cityco; Manchester Hoteliers Association and marketingManchester, June 2022. <https://manchesterabid.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ABID-Business-Plan-Final.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ GOV.UK. 'Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Contributed £1.2 Billion to UK Economy', 8 April 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/birmingham-2022-commonwealth-games-contributed-12-billion-to-uk-economy>.

¹⁰⁷ We note that Levelling Up funding for the programme is now in jeopardy. See:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c6247pk3npgg>

¹⁰⁸ Inclusive Growth Leeds. 'The British Library in the North | Inclusive Growth Leeds'. Accessed 6 June 2024.

<https://www.inclusivegrowthleeds.com/british-library-north>.

And while the growth-enhancing value of the creative industries and cultural sectors have been given priority, combined authorities have lent significant weight to the broader place-shaping role of investment in those sectors as well as their ability to strengthen regional and local identities more recently. For example, the Shakespeare North Playhouse - which received significant funding from Liverpool City Region - is a new theatre that celebrates Knowsley's connection to William Shakespeare.¹⁰⁹ Its success is, in part, underpinned by the investment made by Knowsley Council in Prescott Town Centre. As such there is a symbiotic relationship between the strategic direction of devolution and the combined authorities which benefit from that devolution on the one hand, and the absorptive capacity, financial stability and political leadership within local authorities that make up the membership of combined authorities.

Elsewhere, the North East Culture, Creative, Tourism, Sport and Heritage Blueprint established by NEMCA is a sign of the strategic co-production that combined authorities are beginning to pursue with the UK Government. The Blueprint is a formal partnership between DCMS, ALBs and NEMCA that intends to situate the creative, cultural and heritage sectors as a core component of inclusive growth.¹¹⁰ But as a formal 'cultural agreement' it reflects a new approach to policymaking and implementation, with arrangements including data-sharing, co-commissioning research and collaborative decision-making.

This reflects a broader trend toward establishing a framework for the devolution of creative, cultural and heritage sector policy - which relies less on new 'duties' or 'powers' and more on shared decision-making over the priorities and resources across the sub-regions that combined authorities represent. For this reason, despite concerns that Arts Council England and other institutions could be subsumed into combined authorities, those authorities instead are beginning to recognise the positive contribution and deep expertise of such organisations, built over a long period of time, that combined authorities cannot expect to recreate in the short term.¹¹¹

Institutional architectures are also, in some cases, being developed to support combined authorities' appetite for devolution in this space - such as the establishment of WYCA's Cultural, Heritage and Sport Committee. West Yorkshire is not alone. Liverpool City Region established a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, which had its inaugural meeting in May 2024. The Greater London Authority has a much broader Economy, Culture and Skills Committee which is responsible for scrutinising - among other things - the Mayor's Culture Strategy. Greater Manchester has a

¹⁰⁹ Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. 'Funding Boost for Shakespeare North Playhouse and Prescott Town Centre', 31 May 2018. <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/news/funding-boost-for-shakespeare-north-playhouse-and-prescot-town-centre?s=>

¹¹⁰ 'North East Deeper Devolution Deal'. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 6 March 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/north-east-deeper-devolution-deal/north-east-deeper-devolution-deal>.

¹¹¹ Shaw, Jack. 'Manchester and West Midlands Devolution Deals Are Just the Beginning'. *New Statesman* (blog), 30 October 2023. <https://www.newstatesman.com/spotlight/economic-growth/regional-development/2023/10/manchester-and-west-midlands-devolution-deals-are-just-the-beginning>.

Culture and Heritage Steering Group, though it is not a statutory Committee and it is not immediately clear what function it fulfils. Meanwhile, though some authorities do not have a dedicated, public fora specifically to discuss and take decisions on culture, they have been making significant investment in the sector, with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, for example, investing £3 million in a creative and cultural hub designed to support start-ups.

As more devolution settlements have been struck – either through new combined authorities or ‘deeper’ devolution deals with existing ones – their language has also evolved. References to boosting civic pride and improving well-being have become regular features. And this has been mirrored in the language of the Conservative and Labour parties, which have both signalled an intention to devolve culture more recently – although exactly what this means in practice remains unclear.

Delivering a speech at the Convention of the North in Manchester in January 2023, then Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove said that the UK Government was “looking to devolve more control over further and technical education, transport, trade, culture and employment support” and in his 2023 New Year Speech Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer said “we will spread control out of Westminster. Devolve new powers over employment support, transport, energy, climate change, housing, culture, childcare provision and how councils run their finances.”¹¹² This builds on the Commission of the UK’s Future, Chaired by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, which challenges the centralised nature of cultural funding.¹¹³

That said, it is difficult to determine to what degree the emergence of the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem as a feature of devolution is being led by Whitehall, by combined authorities and local actors, or a combination of the two. The recent focus on tackling regional inequalities enshrined in the Levelling Up White Paper (2022) has created significant interest in devolution and in particular the geographical distribution of funding by Arts Council England, while the location of the English National Opera has also been contested and subject to scrutiny.

One thing we can be certain of is that there is increasing interest in the sector in local strategies, even where this has not been transformed into formal policymaking: research for the Creative Industries Council in 2022 demonstrated that English local authorities of all sizes and types are supporting the development and growth of the creative industries, and that the majority of English

¹¹²GOV.UK. ‘Levelling Up Secretary’s Speech to the Convention of the North’, 25 January 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/levelling-up-secretarys-speech-to-the-convention-of-the-north>.

The Labour Party. ‘Keir Starmer New Year’s Speech’, 5 January 2023. <https://labour.org.uk/updates/press-releases/keir-starmer-new-years-speech/>.

¹¹³ ‘A New Britain: Renewing Our Democracy and Rebuilding Our Economy. Report of the Commission on the UK’s Future’. December 2022: Labour, <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads// /Commission-on-the-UKs-Future.pdf> 2022. p.81

LEPs at that time saw the sector as a priority.¹¹⁴ The creative industries are also one of sixth 'growth sectors' in the Highlands and Islands in Scotland, whilst the Creative Cardiff network in Wales demonstrates interest across the region in sharing ideas and resources within the sector across the city.¹¹⁵

One thing we can be certain of is that there is increasing interest in the sector in local strategies, even where this has not been transformed into formal policymaking: research for the Creative Industries Council in 2022 demonstrated that English local authorities of all sizes and types are supporting the development and growth of the creative industries, and that the majority of English LEPs at that time saw the sector as a priority.¹¹⁶ The creative industries are also one of sixth 'growth sectors' in the Highlands and Islands, whilst the Creative Cardiff network in Wales demonstrates interest across the region in sharing ideas and resources within the sector across the city.¹¹⁷

What roles have public bodies and civil society played?

There are 42 agencies, public bodies and arm's length bodies that report to DCMS - ranging from individual museums to significant funders of culture, such as Sports England and Arts Council England.¹¹⁸ There are similar organisations operating solely across Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, for example, there is Creative Scotland, Architecture and Design Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, National Galleries Scotland, National Museums Scotland, Scottish Canals, Sports Scotland, Visit Scotland.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government plays a significant role in investing in culture too, via the annual Local Government Finance Settlement which enables local authorities to invest in public services, including culture, leisure and sport services, as well as via individual funding streams such as the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund, Levelling Up Parks Fund, which each invest in local heritage sites, high streets, green spaces and more. As we touched on earlier, agencies investing in the creative industries are dispersed across a range of government departments - for example, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and its focus on securing Foreign Direct Investment.

¹¹⁴ 'Place Matters: Local Approaches to the Creative Industries'. Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, June 2022. <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/download-hub/place-matters-report>.

¹¹⁵ HIE. 'Growing Sectors | Highlands and Islands Enterprise'. Accessed 13 May 2024. <https://www.hie.co.uk/our-region/our-growth-sectors/www.hie.co.uk>.

¹¹⁶ 'Place Matters: Local Approaches to the Creative Industries'. Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, June 2022. <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/download-hub/place-matters-report>.

¹¹⁷ HIE. 'Growing Sectors | Highlands and Islands Enterprise'. Accessed 13 May 2024. <https://www.hie.co.uk/our-region/our-growth-sectors/www.hie.co.uk>.

¹¹⁸ 'Departments, Agencies and Public Bodies - GOV.UK'. Accessed 17 July 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations#department-for-culture-media-and-sport>.

The UK Government has taken a more active approach to re-orienting the cultural investment made by agencies in recent years. In 2022, Arts Council England was directed to redistribute £24 million of its funding outside of London. While the spirit of ensuring that more investment in the publicly supported arts and cultural sectors was broadly welcomed, there was nonetheless a widespread concern about the blunt approach taken by the UK Government and a debate has since ensued about the viability and appetite for moving cultural institutions outside London and the South East without due diligence.¹¹⁹

Given that local authorities have long been the most significant investors in the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem, most ALBs have historically attested to the importance of working in partnership with local policymakers and stakeholders. In its first ever annual report in 1946, for example, Arts Council England set out that it wanted to “collaborate with local authorities” and “encourage local institutions, societies and local enterprise to take the lead”.¹²⁰

However, given political and policy instability, the exact nature of what future devolution of powers might mean for ALBs has been met with caution¹²¹, including some concern about losing their influence and position within the ecosystem.¹²² In the case of Historic England, this has meant pointing to their concerns around the potential variety of provision that a blunt devolution of funding might create, with a 2017 paper saying that “Devolution and cuts to local government funding have already demonstrated a range of models, some of which include Historic Environment service provision, and others that don’t. Where the latter is occurring, the is [sic] sever [sic] danger of damage to the historic environment through poorly advised planning decisions”.¹²³

What might the creative, cultural and heritage sectors do to make the most of devolution and increasing local decision making?

As highlighted above, the creative, cultural and heritage sectors have sometimes been an afterthought in devolution deals. Of course, in some places, the inclusion of these sectors is

¹¹⁹ Pidd, Helen. ‘We’re Not All Heathens in Manchester, Andy Burnham Tells ENO’. *The Guardian*, 23 November 2022, sec. Culture. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/nov/23/andy-burnham-enters-eno-row-manchester-arts-council>.

¹²⁰ Bristow, Paul. ‘Arts Council England: Culture and Devolution | Local Government Association’. Accessed 4 June 2024. <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/culture-and-devolution-series-think-pieces/arts-council>.

¹²¹ Culture Commons ‘Arm’s Length Bodies in an increasingly devolved policy landscape’, Culture Commons, August 2024. Accessed 6th November 2024. <https://www.culturecommons.uk/publications/arm-s-length-bodies-in-a-devolved-policy-landscape>

¹²² Bristow, Paul. ‘Arts Council England: Culture and Devolution | Local Government Association’. Accessed 4 June 2024. <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/culture-and-devolution-series-think-pieces/arts-council>.

¹²³ Reilly, Sarah. ‘Devolution: Impacts on National and Local Government, Localism and the Historic Environment (Update to Assessment 2015-06)’. Historic England, 18 October 2017. <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/85-2016>.

growing, for example in the 'trailblazer' devolution areas in England.¹²⁴ As a result, there are unanswered questions around the potential to devolve creative industries and cultural sector-focused interventions to different devolved institutions by the UK Government.

The decrease in funding at a local government level has raised questions about whether further work should be done to establish a more robust framework for cultural provision in particular. As it stands, libraries are the only cultural statutory service councils are required to provide in England.¹²⁵ Legislation provides local authorities scope to determine their priorities, but given their 'unfunded mandates' many have been required to close libraries, reduce opening times and turn them into multi-functional spaces. Museums and art galleries are referenced in legislation, but they are afforded less protection.

Wider cultural provision has no such protection in legislation, and it is entirely up to the discretion of local government. Other research commissioned as part of Culture Commons' open policy development programme finds that internationally derived Cultural Rights, though domesticated into nation law at the national level, are rarely considered within regional and local cultural policy making contexts.¹²⁶

As custodians of creative, cultural and heritage assets, the sector could make the case for stronger protections to safeguard our cultural history. Applications of that may look different and could include places adopting strategies such as a Universal Basic Infrastructure being developed by academics at the University of Cambridge.¹²⁷ In that scenario, it might require authorities to map their assets and determine an appropriate level of need. Armed with that granularity, authorities are then better placed to make strategic decisions about the value of infrastructure in communities.

In other cases, the Government might take an alternative approach to stabilising funding for local authorities. Across England, authorities have been required to sell assets to cover their costs - with particular concern in Birmingham given the authority issued a Section 114, colloquially known as a 'bankruptcy notice'. There has equally been suggestions that the constitutional settlement could afford creative, cultural and heritage infrastructures better protection. While this requires further investigation - and there are already schemes, such as listed buildings, which restrict what actions

¹²⁴ Culture Commons. 'What Could Today's "trailblazer" Devolution Deals Mean for UK Culture & Creativity?' Culture Commons, 13 March 2023. <https://www.culturecommons.uk/post/snap-briefing-what-could-today-s-trailblazer-devolution-deals-mean-for-uk-culture-creativity>.

¹²⁵ Participation, Expert. Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Accessed 17 July 2024. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>.

¹²⁶ Vickery, Jonathan. 'A role for Cultural Rights in local cultural decision making?'. Culture Commons, July 2024. <https://www.culturecommons.uk/publications/a-role-for-cultural-rights-in-local-cultural-decision-making%3F>

¹²⁷ Coyle, Diane, Stella Erker, and Andy Westwood. 'Townscapes: A Universal Basic Infrastructure for the UK'. Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge, 5 December 2023. <https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/publications/townscapes-a-universal-basic-infrastructure-for-the-uk/>.

places can take - it is likely that cash-strapped authorities will find ways to circumvent legislation which will inevitably be broad in scope.

There are also questions about the potential devolution of funding, advice and capacity that can be drawn down from ALBs. ALBs can add significant value in terms of their expertise and industry relationships, sometimes built up over decades, and it is sensible that more places should benefit from the strategic partnerships that DCMS and the ALBs it represents are agreeing with combined authorities.

Though each place inevitably has its own competitive advantages and priorities, there may be an opportunity to roll out strategic partnerships with ALBs across the four UK nations. This could give regional institutions in England a clearer picture of the responsibilities, capacity and appetite for collaboration at a regional level and potentially even instigate new dialogues about regionally coherent partnerships with relevant ALBs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

While devolution has been driven more by places than by the creative, cultural and heritage sectors themselves, there is also scope for smaller, non-governmental organisations to make the case for more devolution. There have been green shoots of this, with businesses in Manchester and Liverpool coming together in Business Improvement Districts to create voluntary accommodation levies, which have been reinvested into artwork, high streets, green spaces and the hospitality sector to ensure places retain their attraction. Culture Commons has similarly reported on the value of Creative Improvement Districts in this space.¹²⁸

Looking to Westminster, Holyrood, Stormont and the Senedd, stark questions remain about the effectiveness of budgets aimed to 'level up' different regions given the paucity of funding at the local and regional levels. An obvious question would be whether hitherto centrally administered pots of money could be devolved rather than allocated primarily through short term, competitive bidding. But notwithstanding the devolution of funding streams, there is a need to coordinate funding streams. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's Funding Simplification Doctrine - introduced under Sunak's premiership - is a helpful starting point. The Funding Simplification Doctrine acknowledges the complexity of the current funding landscape and is designed to simplify and streamline it.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ 'Creative Improvement Districts: Exploring a New Model of Culture-Led Regeneration'. Culture Commons, November 2022. https://www.culturecommons.uk/files/ugd/ba7a73_0cf26163f9c745448bcc28f4dcdb992e.pdf.

¹²⁹ GOV.UK. 'Funding Simplification Doctrine: Guidance and Further Information', 10 January 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-simplification-doctrine-guidance-and-further-information/funding-simplification-doctrine-guidance-and-further-information>.

Applying the lens of creative, cultural and heritage sectors to skills policy, to housebuilding, to education and to fiscal incentives, identity and civic pride opens up a whole set of options for policymakers. And these may not involve new duties per se, but they do suggest a role for strategic partnership and streamlined investments which can be embedded in devolution settlements - and indeed have already begun to.

The size and public remit of Public Service Broadcasters have been a particular interest of the Welsh Government. In England, the BBC's move to Salford has had a significant impact on its development as a cluster, and there are suggestions that Channel 4's move to Leeds could directly contribute to the creation of more than 1,200 jobs and £1 billion in economic impact over the next decade, although the number of such interventions is of course limited.¹³⁰ Greater devolution on Public Service Broadcasting could unlock some of these benefits, although given there are only a small number of PSB providers, there is a clear limit to the number of opportunities in this area.

There is scope too for local leadership - and coordination locally - to promote creative skills, for example the delivery of local skills programmes offered as part of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor.¹³¹ Such an ambitious programme might not have been possible without the level of resource and expertise available through the Greater London Authority, who developed an industrial strategy for the area in 2017 in partnership with the London Economic Action Partnership, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (South East LEP) and the South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN).¹³²

At the level of research and development, the creative R&D pilots at a local level are being established, facilitated by the devolution of funds through programmes like the Creative Industries Clusters Programme.¹³³

At the level of trade policy, mayoralities are beginning to engage in 'paradiplomacy' and trade missions through a series of visits to Ireland, India, China, Japan and the United States. Some English regions already have budgets provided by the DBT to support trade missions, e.g. to Games Developers Conference in 2024 and the three DBT nations offices (Edinburgh, Cardiff and

¹³⁰ Gaikstaite, Helen. 'KPMG Report: The Economic Impact of the BBC's Move to Salford'. *Greater Manchester Business Board* (blog), 27 April 2021. <https://gmbusinessboard.com/news/kpmg-report-the-economic-impact-of-the-bbcs-move-to-salford/>; 'Five Years on after Leeds Wins Bid for Channel 4's National HQ: Has It Lived up to Expectations? - Prolific North', 8 November 2023. <https://www.prolificnorth.co.uk/feature/five-years-on-after-leeds-wins-bid-for-channel-4s-national-hq-has-it-lived-up-to-expectations/>.

¹³¹ Giles, L. and Carey, H (2021) Growth through skills: Lessons from the Thames Estuary Production Corridor. London: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre and Work Advance. Available from: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/discussion-papers/growth-through-skills-lessons-from-the-thames-estuary-production-corridor>

¹³² 'The Thames Estuary Production Corridor | London City Hall', 21 July 2020. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/current-culture-projects/thames-estuary-production-corridor>.

¹³³ Creative Industries Clusters Programme. 'Creative Industries Clusters Programme'. Accessed 13 May 2024. <https://creativeindustriesclusters.com/>. 'South of Scotland CreaTech Fund Criteria', September 2023. https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/media/q2wdx5u/createch_fund_criteria_sept2023-external.pdf.

Belfast) have staff and budgets for creative. In addition, the Welsh Government already organises its own trade missions to unlock further opportunities for the sector in overseas markets.¹³⁴ A more active role in attracting foreign direct investment - facilitated by the Department for Business and Trade would enable places to develop more strategic relationships with international peers, based on cultural, institutional and historical links, as Liverpool and Nashville have done over their shared musical interest dating back to the Beatles. The sector has a responsibility - alongside combined and local authorities - to identify the opportunities for devolution in order to capitalise on them.

The role of creative and cultural institutions

One thing that is certain is the fact that successful local or devolved policymaking centred on the creative and cultural industries must involve cultural and creative organisations from its genesis. There is a place for all kinds of cultural organisations in the conversation about the future of local cultural decision making.

Since the 1980s, the very largest organisations in the UK have taken increasingly seriously their responsibility to ensure that their work is seen by people across the country, and to target specific resources to places where it might have the most benefit. In the performing arts this has manifested as a focus on touring across the UK, whilst for some visual arts organisations like Tate (St Ives and Liverpool) and V&A (Dundee and Stoke) this has meant setting up new institutions in different parts of the country, or moving works across the UK, as is the case with the National Gallery's Art Road Trip which is currently touring the UK, bringing 200 National Gallery workshops and learning activities to different communities who otherwise would not have ready access.¹³⁵

Whilst these activities are clearly to be encouraged, there may be opportunities for National institutions to join up and do more - for example, in France they have introduced a programme of Micro-Folies which are interventions funded by the Government which leverage the work of some of the most influential French arts organisations (le Château de Versailles, le Centre Pompidou, le Louvre, le Musée National Picasso, le Musée du Quai Branly- Jacques Chirac, la Philharmonie de Paris, la RMN - Grand Palais, Universcience, Festival d'Avignon, l'Institut du Monde Arabe, l'Opéra National de Paris et le Musée d'Orsay) to makes them more available to local audiences through the creation of digital museums.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Easton, Eliza. 'Keeping the UK's Creative Industries Globally Competitive: A Playbook to Protect Our Future Prosperity and Security'. UAL and Erskine Analysis, May 2024.

https://www.arts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/436047/UAL_EA_Fullreport.pdf.

¹³⁵ The National Gallery. 'Art Road Trip | Across the UK | National Gallery, London'. Accessed 6 June 2024.

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/across-the-uk/art-road-trip>.

¹³⁶ 'Micro-Folies'. Accessed 18 November 2023. <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Regions/Drac-Provence-Alpes-Cote-d-Azur/Politique-et-actions-culturelles/Micro-Folies>.

In the case of examples like the BBC move to Salford, or the building of Turner Contemporary in Margate and the V&A in Dundee, the introduction or moving of a cultural organisation was conceived as a focus of a wider regeneration project. These types of investments require deep work with local and regional stakeholders to ensure that they don't disrupt delicate cultural ecosystems, and that the new organisation can be embedded in a wider plan for and by local people. The danger if this is not the case, as seen in the example of the question of the ENO's move out of London, is that neither organisation nor region seem to buy into the mission behind the move.

Manchester is arguably a successful example of the benefits of this type of investment. It has been reported that the move of the BBC to MediaCityUK in 2011, and large scale investment in a new flagship cultural centre, The Factory, have given further weight to Manchester's creative city status.¹³⁷ The degree to which these new infrastructures and they outcomes they lead to are accessible to different groups of local residents across the wider conurbation is, however, contested.

The most important cultural stakeholders, are arguably the people and organisations already embedded in a place. Whilst the complex politics, and the perceived risk of losing public funding, could mean that few cultural organisations have expressed public viewpoints on devolution per se, it is self-evident that those who know the cultural ecosystem of a place have much to add to the political conversations about the future of that ecosystem. To some extent, at the very local level, this should happen by default, as arts organisations make applications to local governments, meaning they are aware of local cultural activity, and citizens complain directly to the local government when resources are taken away.

Moreover, local councillors live and work in the place in question and are likely to be aware of the cultural organisations in a personal as well as professional capacity (although the fall in number of staff members working on the cultural brief at a local level has likely disrupted the closeness of these relationships over the last decade, with 78% of respondents to a 2017 survey by Arts Professional saying the number of arts officers at their local authority had been cut¹³⁸).

Embedding cultural organisations in policymaking can be even harder to manage at a regional level, which is why a number of policy leaders have taken steps to ensure that they are hearing the perspectives of a cross section of those working in the sector locally, for example Mayor Tracy

¹³⁷ Hope Bulaitis, Zoe, and Abigail Gilmore. 'Devolved Responsibility: English Regional Creative Industries Policy and Local Industrial Strategies'. *Cultural Policy Is Local Understanding Cultural Policy as Situated Practice*, 2023.

<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/76230/978-3-031-32312-6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹³⁸ ArtsProfessional. 'Local Authority Arts Cuts: Optimism Can Only Take Us so Far'. Accessed 6 June 2024.

<https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/article/local-authority-arts-cuts-optimism-can-only-take-us-so-far>.

Brabin has set up a Culture, Heritage and Sport Committee which includes representatives from cultural organisations across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The Greater London Authority has a Cultural Leadership Board, as well as a team which steers delivery of the Mayor's policy pledges for a specific leadership area, helps shape the Mayor's Culture Strategy and keeps the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Culture & Creative Industries abreast of issues facing the creative industries and culture sector.¹³⁹ In addition, the GLA has introduced a team focussed on 'Culture at Risk' which can be contacted for help by any cultural space in London at immediate threat of closure.¹⁴⁰

These steps to involve those in the community embedded in practice in policymaking are welcome, but there may be opportunity to take more creative approaches involving the local population as well as individual leaders. For example, Coventry City of Culture were the first to trial a Citizens Assembly approach to cultural policy making which worked hand in hand with the Arts Council England funded local Cultural Compact (partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority) to feed into the local cultural strategy.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ 'Mayor's Cultural Leadership Board | London City Hall'. Accessed 6 June 2024. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/mayors-cultural-vision/mayors-cultural-leadership-board>

¹⁴⁰ 'Support for Culture and Community Spaces at Risk | London City Hall'. Accessed 6 June 2024. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/space-culture/cultural-infrastructure-plan-and-toolbox/support-culture-and-community-spaces-risk>.

¹⁴¹ Arts Council England. 'Review of the Cultural Compacts Initiative'. Accessed 6 June 2024. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/review-cultural-compacts-initiative>.

What's next for the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem?

While the creative and cultural industries have - at moments in time - been a priority for the UK and national governments, insignificant attention has been paid to how they might be embedded locally. Instead, too much emphasis has been placed on a 'centralist' mindset, with priority given to the activity taking place in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

To ensure that the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem takes advantage of the 'devolutionist turn' in policymaking over recent decades, a laser-like focus is needed to give places greater agency over creative, cultural and heritage policy, the interventions that sit under it and the institutions that promote it.

There is a multi-scalar set of levers available to support the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem to add more economic and social value to places. These rely on a series of actors. The pyramid outlined below (Figure 4) highlights the institutions involved and the omni-directional nature of some of these levers, with interventions set out nationally having significant impact on local provision of or support for the creative and cultural industries and - paradoxically - that same local provision, including capacity, investment, institutions - affecting the viability of national policy.

For example, scaling back the investment available to local authorities to allocate to the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem not only deprives communities of all the goods these sectors have to offer, but it undermines national priorities too - whether that is government plans to grow the creative industries by £50 billion by 2030 or whether it's Labour's commitment to "bring art ... into communities".¹⁴²

¹⁴² GOV.UK. 'Ambitious Plans to Grow the Economy and Boost Creative Industries', June 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ambitious-plans-to-grow-the-economy-and-boost-creative-industries>



Figure 4: Public funding for the creative and cultural industries

Our analysis is clear that the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem need to be rooted far more in place. A series of activities - at different levels - need to take place in order to ensure that the sectors within the ecosystem are well-placed to capitalise on the devolution agenda. In particular, we suggest that there are four core themes that require further consideration:

First, it is welcome that partnerships are being established to support the creative and cultural industries, whether that's sub-regional tourism bodies, codified partnerships between central government and individual local government authorities or the establishment of committees within combined authorities to scrutinise policy. These serve several purposes, including unblocking coordination challenges, building capacity and expertise and shaping identities. Paired with a stronger accountability regime - which has been an iterative process since mayoralities were elected - these institutions and fora will give central government greater reassurance to devolve more streams of investment to support the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem.

This a welcome direction of travel, though we reflect that - with few honourable exceptions - the public are absent from these conversations. As partnerships continue to be established to maximise the potential of the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem, more will need to be done to address the growing deficit in community engagement. This may be a quid pro quo for further devolution in the future and elsewhere in Europe - such as Paris - significant attention has been paid to the public, in that case via citizens assemblies.

Second, we reflect on the most obvious constraint on the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem - investment - or lack of it. Cultural provision relies heavily on subsidies and the defenestration of local authorities in particular has had a significant impact, both directly on the cultural services authorities run and indirectly, on the services they commission and the viability of the ecosystem of voluntary, community and enterprise sector that benefit from it. Leaders in the arts have turned their attention to identifying new sources of funding to protect the public from the 'cultural vandalism' underinvestment is causing.¹⁴³ Put bluntly, lack of investment at the local level risks undermining any possible opportunities arising from the devolution process.

Turning to the creative industries, the lack of investment is the product, in part, of a wider structural challenge which includes the absence of a codified strategy or long-term vision for the creative industries which is consistent across all departments. Whilst the introduction of tax incentives, and the publication of the Creative Industries Sector Deal and Sector Vision have been welcome, clear policy gaps have emerged in areas like trade policy, innovation funding, immigration policy and - in England - education policy which have undermined targeted investments from the DCMS and across the nations.¹⁴⁴ In addition, with twelve Culture Secretary's between 2010 and June 2024, there has been an inevitable lack of consistency of vision around the sector in Westminster (including U-turns in areas like the privatisation of Channel 4), which has arguably each undermined UK's ability to maximise the industry's growth potential.

With better targeted, substantial, long-term investment - alongside the private sector - the creative, cultural and heritage sectors can play an even greater role in boosting social capital and addressing our lagging productivity. However, the level of fiscal restraint that has been imposed by the two main parties in the lead up to the 2024 general election suggests that our sectors will be competing with a range of sectors, priorities or emergencies.

Third, there isn't a sufficiently clear and compelling narrative about the value devolution can add to the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem and these sectors can enhance devolution. Our analysis suggests there are a multiplicity of reasons for this: relative ambivalence or scepticism about the value of devolution from arm's-length bodies who point to the value of expertise in the areas in which they work, and have raised concerns about the bluntness of some of the recent and potential future mechanisms; the less than clear line drawn between the creative industries and the core purpose of combined authorities - which coalesced around promoting economic growth; and

¹⁴³ Hunt. 'Should UK Museums Remain Free?' *Apollo Magazine*, 3 June 2024. <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/free-admission-uk-museums-hidden-costs/>; BBC News. 'Birmingham Budget Cuts Mean City Faces "Cultural Deprivation"', 21 February 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c51ee94ywj2o>.

¹⁴⁴ 'The State of Creativity'. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, 26 April 2023. <https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/the-state-of-creativity>.

the over-centralised nature of governance in the UK, which requires devolution to overcome barriers including access to skills and capital.

This is also, in part, because what constitutes the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem is so broad and the goods and services it creates – as well as human, economic and social capital - has made it more difficult for mayoralities to see their objectives reflected in the creative and cultural sectors. Where 'cultural devolution' has taken most root is places where institutions were already well prepared for the task (Manchester, the 'creative capital', with a long-standing experience of cultural investment) and where individual mayoralities, such as Tracy Brabin, have taken a keen interest.

As part of the narrativization, localities need to be much clearer about what it is precisely they expect from their governments. Unlike other areas which are the responsibility of the UK Government, cultural provision has been remarkably devolved, though the components of what can support the creative industries - more agency over foreign direct investment, skills policy, trade - is still evolving over time. The idea that 'there is nothing to devolve' with regards to culture - as is a common retort in the sector - is ill-judged. There are plenty of opportunities for strategic investment, for creative clusters, for funding streams and fiscal devolution that can facilitate the develop of the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem.

As has been demonstrated by the devolution processes in London and - latterly - Manchester, where greater resource and expertise is available in sub-national policymaking, there is an increase in a place's ability to work alongside those already in the sector to develop unique strategies involving national organisations, arm's-length bodies, resident cultural leaders and local communities. Devolution need not be a blunt instrument - it should present under pressure public organisations with greater rather than lesser opportunities to improve things for people and places around the country.

Finally, we believe there is cause for optimism. There are pockets of good practice. This needs to reach more corners of the UK, but the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem continue to punch above its weight. While outline these core themes through which policymakers need to give more consideration with respect to the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem. Doing so can bring the creative and cultural industries closer together in the devolutionary orbit and ensure that - with a broad, cross-party consensus in favour of further devolution - the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem will play an important role as new settlements are struck. The failure to take advantage of this opportunity will be a strategic error for sector stakeholders and for policymakers at all levels.

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