Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029

Coventry City Council

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a potentially transformational moment for Coventry's creative industries. With strengths in both creativity and technology, two strong universities and the creative legacy of UK City of Culture 2021, Coventry is well-placed to maximise the potential of its creative industries and secure significant investment to support this.

Coventry's creative industries represent a significant economic force that extends far beyond traditional creative boundaries. The city hosts 1,290 creative businesses comprising 13% of all local enterprises, directly employing 7,250 creative and cultural workers.

However, the sector's true impact is much larger, with approximately 14,500 workers, (9% of the city workforce) engaged in creative occupations, from designers at Jaguar Land Rover to creative marketing professionals in utility companies. When combined with Warwickshire, the sub-region boasts over 7,000 creative businesses and 80 game development studios, forming one of the UK's most significant creative clusters.

Our mapping work shows that Coventry has particular strengths in:

- Createch (encompassing all creative industries sub-sectors)
- IT, software and computer services (includes the games industry)
- Music, performing and visual arts
- Design
- Advertising and marketing, publishing
- Film, TV, video, radio and photography and other creative content creation

Coventry has developed a particular strength in createch, the fusion of creative skills and emerging technologies to create new products, services and experiences. This provides unique opportunities to combine the creative knowhow with innovation across other key sectors, from automotive to advanced manufacturing & healthcare.

This strategy sets out a practical plan to turn potential into progress, as well as makes the case for why Coventry's Creative Industries should be supported by new investment at regional and national level.

It responds to national priorities outlined in the UK Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan and aligns with regional ambitions under the West Midlands Growth Plan. Our goal is simple: to make Coventry one of the most inclusive and innovative creative cities in the UK - where talent from all backgrounds can start, stay and succeed.

Coventry's creative industries are a driver of economic growth, cultural identity, and technological innovation. They intersect with key sectors such as advanced manufacturing, future mobility, and health, creating spillover benefits for the wider economy. With targeted investment and collaboration, Coventry can lead nationally in createch, immersive technologies, and digital content.

Despite these strengths, the sector faces barriers with a 13.7% decline in creative businesses since 2017, fragmented business support, skills shortages and limited affordable workspace. There is also a need for stronger branding and integration with tourism and city development.

The strategy focuses on five delivery themes:

1) Businesses, clusters & networks – Strengthening Coventry and Warwickshire Exchange (CWX) as a cluster body, expanding business support and securing further investment to provide targeted support to meet the needs of our creative industry businesses
2) Skills & workforce development – Delivering targeted skills development opportunities including training, mentoring, and internships with a focus on diversity and graduate retention
3) Places & spaces – Unlocking affordable creative workspaces and explore opportunities to open up existing specialist facilities.
4) Tourism & branding – Position creative industries at the heart of Coventry's visitor economy and storytelling
5) Funding & policy – Aligning with regional and national strategies to secure public and private investment

Through this strategy we want to work collaboratively with all our stakeholders to ensure that Coventry will have a thriving, financially resilient creative sector, a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and a stronger creative city brand by 2029. Creative industries will contribute to economic growth, innovation, and placemaking, supported by robust partnerships and sustainable investment.

Together, we can unlock Coventry's creative potential, attract new investment and ensure it plays a central role in shaping the future economy.

2. FOREWORD

Cllr Naeem Akhtar – Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities

Coventry has always been a city of makers and doers. From our engineering heritage to Delia Derbyshire and the entrepreneurial spirit of our creative communities, this is a place that brings ideas to life. In recent years we have invested in people and places, from FarGo Village and the Daimler Powerhouse, to the City Centre Cultural Gateway now taking shape. These assets give us a platform to grow jobs, businesses and pride across every neighbourhood.

This strategy sets out a practical plan to turn potential into progress. It is evidence-led and industry-informed. It backs Coventry's strengths in createch, film and TV and design, and it recognises the vital role of our musicians, performers, makers, freelancers and creative businesses. It also proposes clear actions on how we address some of the current barriers and challenges to unlock the full potential of the 14,500 people and 1,290 creative businesses that work in this sector.

Delivery will be a partnership effort. The Council will play its convening role, working closely with the University of Warwick and Coventry University, Createch Frontiers, CWX, the West Midlands Combined Authority and most importantly, with our local businesses and freelancers. Our ambition is simple: to make Coventry one of the most inclusive and innovative creative cities in the UK where talent from all backgrounds can start, stay and succeed.

I commend everyone who has helped us to develop this strategy and invite you to work with us to deliver it. Together we can build a creative economy that creates opportunity, generates investment and enhances the quality of life for everyone who calls Coventry home.

3. INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The term creative industries was first formally introduced in the UK in 1998 through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Creative Industries Mapping Document. This report defined the sector as:

"Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property." (DCMS, 1998)

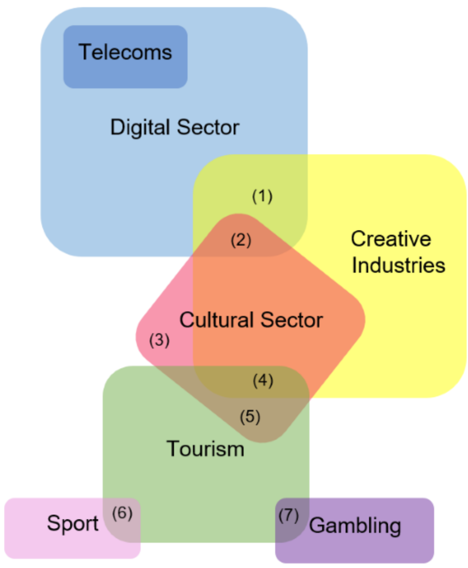
Since then, the concept has evolved through successive strategies, most recently the UK Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan (DCMS, 2025), which sets out a wider plan to drive the growth of these industries, as part of the Modern Industrial Strategy's long-term growth agenda to 2035.

Despite the various strategies and plans, the foundations of creative industries are still recognised to be in the exploitation of intellectual property (IP), individual creativity, and the potential of wealth/job creation.

To ensure that the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy aligns with the national policy and funding landscape, we have adopted the DCMS definition of creative industries sub-sectors, to include:

- Advertising and marketing
- Architecture
- Crafts
- Design and designer fashion
- Film, TV, radio and photography
- Museums, galleries and libraries
- Music, performing and visual arts
- Publishing
- IT, software and computer services (includes video games)

We also recognise that these sub-sectors overlap both with each other, as well as other related sectors as outlined here in the DCMS Venn diagram[1]:



(1) Publishing, computer games, software publishing, computer programming, computer consultancy activities
(2) Film, TV, Music, Radio
(3) Heritage, retail of music and video recordings, manufacture of musical instruments, reproduction of recorded media
(4) Arts, Museum activities
(5) Heritage
(6) Renting of sports goods, operation of sports facilities, other sport activities
(7) Gambling

Note: Civil Society has not been depicted in this figure because it spans across all industries, both within DCMS sectors and outside. The overlap between Civil Society and other DCMS sectors is taken into account for All DCMS totals (mainly SIC 90 – Arts, which overlaps with Creative Industries, Cultural Sector and Tourism sector).

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-methodology/dcms-sector-economic-estimates-methodology

The creative industries contribute **£124 billion in GVA and support 2.4 million jobs** nationwide. By 2035, the UK Government aims to increase annual business investment from £17 billion to £31 billion, positioning the UK as a global leader in film/TV, video games, music, and advertising.[2]

Creative Industries outperform many traditional sectors in both GVA and employment. For example, creative industries are:

- ✓ around 8–9 times bigger than automotive manufacturing, employing more than automotive and mining combined
- ✓ nearly 10 times larger than agriculture, employing five times more people
- ✓ around 8–9 times bigger than automotive manufacturing. They also employ around five times more people than agriculture and vastly more than automotive and mining combined.
- ✓ more than three times that of energy production and utilities [3]

Creative industries are however not just beneficial for their employment and economic impact, but also support:

- **Placemaking & visitor economy** (e.g. music festivals, film tourism, music tourism) and pride of place
- **Health & wellbeing** by providing a wide range of activities for residents to participate in
- Grassroots participation, local venues and public art that enhances **social cohesion** [4]

[2] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries
[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates
[4] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries

4. STRATEGY CONSULTATION PROCESS

Coventry has not had a creative industries strategy before, although some scoping work was done in 2020-21 and, for example, the Council's Economic Development team has been delivering and informing creative industries related activities as part of the wider economic development activity for the city. In addition, some data existed at regional and sub-regional level (e.g. WMCA, previous LEP reports & plans).

As part of the development process for this strategy, Coventry City Council has undertaken consultation and other evidence gathering activity including:

- Review of the previous mapping done in 2020-2021 and other available data
- Review of the current creative industries related activities undertaken by the Council economy and other teams (e.g. filming requests)
- Commissioning an independent consultant in May 2025 to deliver a creative industries mapping report, to provide up to date evidence & data about creative industries in Coventry. This included several industry and academic roundtables, as well as individual interviews with key experts across different parts of the creative industry, with over 40 people taking part in in-depth consultation. This was augmented with an analysis of current and recent reports and strategies, both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- A public event was held on 24 June 2025 to share key findings from the report and collect further sector evidence, with the event targeted for Coventry creative industries businesses and freelancers. This event was attended by circa 80 creative industries professionals and stakeholders.
- Publishing the report on 2 October 2025 on the Council website: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries and sharing this with all Elected Members and the public
- An All-Member Seminar on Creative Industries delivered in partnership with the University of Warwick and Coventry University on 6 October 2025
- Final sector consultation event held on 30 October 2025, attended by approximately 20 sector experts and stakeholders
- Ongoing conversations in 2025-26 with the WMCA on their creative industries plans for 2026-2029, including alignment with Coventry's strengths in this area

This evidence – and particularly the 2025 Creative Industries Mapping Report – has given us a strong foundation to build our strategic approach on. The report was primarily focused on economic development of the creative industry sector, although it also considered links to culture, tourism and the visitor economy.

The key findings, together with the recommendations from the independent consultant are summarised in the next chapter. These, together with the feedback from public consultations have strongly informed our overall strategy approach.

5. CREATIVE INDUTRIES IN COVENTRY

To provide some wider context, Coventry has a population of 345,325, making it the 10th largest English city and the second largest in the West Midlands, after Birmingham. It has enjoyed 9% growth in the last decade. Based on assumed levels of future fertility, mortality and migration, and based on the 2021 census data, the population in Coventry is projected to change from 400,523 people in 2025 to 449,021 people in 2040. This is an increase of 12.11% over a 15-year period.

The same data shows that 45% of Coventry's residents identify as part of the global majority (identify with the majority of the world's population who are not from white ethnic groups). Coventry is also a very young city, with 22% of its population aged under 18.

In terms of creativity, Coventry is known for many things such as its music legacy (e.g. Two Tone) and brutalist architecture, with design also being central to Coventry's role in being the birthplace of the British motor car industry. More recently, Coventry hosted the UK City of Culture 2021 and is a leading city in the UK for createch – which is the fusion of creative skills and emerging technologies to create new products, services and experiences. Both the University of Warwick and Coventry University provide creative industries study opportunities & world-class research.

In terms of the **number of creative businesses**, the Creative Industries Mapping Report shows that there are a total of **1,290 creative businesses** – representing 12.9% of all our businesses, including;

- 860 businesses engaged in the production and provision of **digital goods** and services, such as serious games, games and digital publishing
- 1,020 businesses that could be classed as **'core' creative industries businesses,** such as advertising & marketing, architecture, fashion, film/tv/radio and photography
- 355 businesses focusing on the production, preservation, and dissemination of **cultural products**, such as design, crafts, music, and visual arts

In terms of the **number of people working in the creative industries**, Coventry has 7,250 employed creative and cultural workers, representing 4.4% of total the total 165,000 workers in the city. However, this does not represent the full picture as:

- Around 45-50% of creative workers are freelancers, and therefore not included into worker statistics
- In addition, 50-55% of all creative workers are actually employed in other sectors (e.g. designers at Jaguar Land Rover) and therefore not included in the creative industries occupational statistics

This means that the **more likely figure of creative industries employment in Coventry is around 14,500 workers**, nearly 9% of the total workforce in the city.

The mapping data shows us that **Coventry has specific strengths** in:

- ✓ Createch (encompassing all creative industries sub-sectors)
- ✓ IT, software and computer services (includes the games industry)
- ✓ Music, performing and visual arts
- ✓ Design
- ✓ Advertising and marketing, publishing
- ✓ Film, TV, video, radio and photography and other creative content creation

However, given the rapid development of new technologies and more blurred lines between the different sub-sectors, a wider focus may be needed to support a more developed creative industries ecosystem within Coventry – allowing a number of sub-sectors to thrive. This should however be combined with some targeted interventions to address specific gaps or needs, where required.

It is important to ensure that Coventry is connected to wider regional initiatives and plans – but will be empowered to meet the specific needs of its creative ecology, as a key sub-regional emerging cluster. There also needs to a consideration for the long-standing collaboration between Coventry & Warwickshire – given the strengths around clustering and supply chain.

When we consider Coventry & Warwickshire as a **combined creative sector,** its importance becomes even clearer. With over **7,000 creative businesses** and 80 game development studios, the region has an abundance of talent. From design and digital marketing to virtual reality, film, and TV, around **44,000 creative people** are contributing to our economy.

A major part of this activity is the West Midlands Games Cluster, which includes 10% of all UK games companies, employing around 3,500 people, 2,500 of which are based in Leamington Spa. This Games cluster is one of the UK's most significant and diverse, internationally recognised and worth around £224m per year. It includes the disciplines of entertainment games and eSports alongside serious games for training, simulation and education alongside animation, visual effects, immersive experiences and other content creation. [5]

Since the publication of the above data the sector has been hit by cutbacks, with a reduction in the number of businesses and a cut in employment, although the exact scale of these cutbacks is not known. Fortunately, alongside these cuts there are emerging new opportunities, which need to be maximised.

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[5] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries

Despite this, Coventry & Warwickshire together form a nationally significant creative cluster.

Given that **createch** is a strength for Coventry and Warwickshire, it is worth exploring the definition and activities covered by createch in more detail.

What is createch?

Essentially it is a newly emerging fusion of all creative sub-sectors, defined in the UK Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan[1] as the 'fusion of creative innovation and cutting-edge technology'. It enables the creation of:

- New products (e.g., immersive games, interactive media, AI-generated art)
- Innovative services (e.g., virtual production for film/TV, AR/VR experiences)
- Unique experiences (e.g., digital fashion shows, interactive museum exhibits)
- New systems and business models (e.g., creative content marketplaces, blockchain for digital rights management)

Examples of use-cases include:

- Films using virtual production and real-time game engines
- AI-powered music composition tools
- Augmented reality in advertising and design
- Virtual reality training for education or performance arts
- Digital platforms for licensing and monetising creative content

Createch embraces all creative sub-sectors, as defined by DCMS:

- Advertising
- Architecture
- Crafts
- Design and designer fashion
- Film, TV, radio, and photography
- Museums, galleries, and libraries
- Music, performing, and visual arts
- Publishing
- Software and computer services (including video games)

Within createch, the focus is on those businesses in these sub-sectors that are actively developing or innovatively using technologies such as:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR)
- Real-time game engines
- Blockchain and distributed ledger technologies
- Advanced digital production tools

Createch activities are especially prominent in:

- Film, TV, and visual effects (e.g. virtual production, digital animation)
- Video games (e.g. immersive and interactive content)
- Advertising and marketing (e.g. personalised, data-driven campaigns)
- Design and fashion (e.g. digital prototyping, virtual clothing)
- Music and performing arts (e.g. AI composition, virtual concerts)
- Museums and cultural heritage (e.g. digitisation, interactive exhibits)

The earlier point about creative industries workers being employed by other sectors also highlights the opportunity for creative industries to contribute to the growth of Coventry's **other key industry sectors** such as:

- **Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering** – including automotive, aerospace, rail, motorsport, engineering, material sciences and metrology
- **Automotive & Future Mobility** – automotive manufacturing, electric and hybrid vehicles, connected and autonomous vehicles (CAV), off-highway vehicles, and future mobility solutions
- **Energy & Low Carbon** – clean energy, low carbon technologies, storage, utilities, and sustainable infrastructure
- **Modern Services** - professional and financial services, legal, accountancy, management, fintech, proftech (high technology) shared services, and outsourcing
- **Health & Life Sciences** - healthcare, pharmaceuticals, medical technology/devices, biotechnology, clinical trials, and health innovation [6]

Coventry is nationally recognised for its innovation and activity across these business clusters and is especially known for advanced manufacturing, future mobility and energy and low carbon. They are especially relevant to developing Coventry's creative sector now because:

✓ Coventry's business strengths align exactly with the UK government's newly published 'Modern Industrial Strategy' and its high-growth sector focus

✓ Coventry's creative industries can benefit all of these sectors, because they are a catalyst for cross-sectoral innovation and growth within all of them

✓ Coventry's creative sector uniquely blends multiple creative sub-sectors with tech such as immersive and games, meaning that it is already a strong createch cluster

The statistics however show a worrying trend, where Coventry's creative industries workforce has been declining faster than in the West Midlands or nationally, as Coventry saw a **13.7% decrease** in its number of creative businesses between 2017-2022. This drop is considerably bigger than the 5.8% decline across the West Midlands and a 4.7% decline in creative businesses UK wide during the same period.[7]

Given the opportunity for creative industries to provide jobs for the future, support our key industry sectors, as well as diversify our economic base, **it is important that we try to address some of the issues facing our creative workforce.**

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[6] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries
[7] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries

Our evidence shows that there are a number of **specific barriers and challenges** facing the creative industries businesses and freelancers at the moment, which are outlined in the next two sections.

5.1 The current sector challenges

This section outlines the key challenges identified through the Coventry creative industries mapping report.[8] The list is not exhaustive, and some of these challenges are not specific just to Coventry – but exist both regionally and nationally.

1. Business Challenges	
Uncertainty	Many creative businesses, especially from the cultural sector, are experiencing a period of uncertainty that has led to a 'survival mode mentality', which has negatively impacted their ability to innovate, invest and grow
Business & Freelancer Support	Business support is highly fragmented and lacks dedicated sector specialists with knowledge of sector specific issues such as IP. The same applies for freelancers. There is a shortage of funding to support business growth, both smaller scale loans and grants as well as risk capital from, e.g. angel investors. Available funding is often focused on capital expenditure, whilst creative businesses are people-driven and thus need growth funding to support staffing and capacity rather than equipment or physical assets.
Networking & Partnership Working	Lack of opportunities to effectively network and collaborate. Creative industries are driven by clustering, with different businesses looking to collaborate with complementary or supply chain businesses - but brokerage is needed. Scarcity of substantial anchor tenants to drive significant job creation and supercharge the region's growth. Institutional processes need to be speeded up, e.g., universities need to speed up contracting and other processes.
Skills & Workforce	Shortage of highly skilled workers and specialist/industry-linked training programmes, low graduate retention. Lack of diversity is a major issue across the creative industries, and this should be addressed urgently through inclusive skills opportunities & better careers awareness. Training programmes are often short and do not cater for freelancers, nor make direct links to employers. Significant pressures on universities due to changes in the operating environment. Impacts of AI – and the uncertainty around impacts on future skills requirement and workforce.

[8] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries

Places & Spaces	Lack of affordable and accessible workspace, performance/ showcasing/practice, innovation, incubation and collaboration space. Shortage of match funding and investment schemes to de-risk creative projects and the spaces needed to run them in. Lack of large build spaces for film and TV (5,000-15,000 sq.ft)

2. Tourism, Visitor Economy & Branding Challenges	
City of Culture	Coventry's UK City of Culture event in 2021 was highly successful in stimulating significant capital infrastructure build across the city. It was also notable in bringing stakeholders together and improving the perception amongst young people of Coventry as a place to study, work and live. However, the independent City of Culture Trust entering administration also generated some negative perceptions, impacting confidence.
Footfall	Whilst Coventry has had increases in overall tourism visits, there are still challenges around footfall particularly in the city centre.
Branding	Coventry needs a stronger brand and clearer identity to communicate its creative strengths; this includes the need for coherent storytelling around Coventry and the region.
Destination Coventry	Coventry's Destination Management Organisation, Destination Coventry has recently restructured and launched its new branding and website content, including a focus on attracting major sporting events to the city. Further coordination and progress is still needed though, especially around fashion, music, eSports and digital events.

3. Public Funding, City Development & Government Policy challenges	
Government Funding	Government funding for business support has been very short term, leading to inefficiencies and fragmentation and as a result, sub-optimal publicly funded business support across Coventry & Warwickshire.
Business Growth	Coventry lacks a stable and robust support network to facilitate business growth, which is needed to improve connectivity and visibility between creative and other sectors. To facilitate this there is a need to put greater emphasis on the importance of putting in place dedicated cluster management within Coventry City Council or through other structures (e.g. CWX, universities), to help drive the development of existing and emerging creative clusters across the geography.
Investment	There is a difficulty attracting large companies to Coventry through inward investment due to costly, cumbersome processes and a lack of convenient mechanisms, such as efficient licensing and business planning. A clearer understanding of the levers required to make creative industries inward investment more compelling is required.
WMCA & WMGC	Care must be taken in the way the West Midlands Combined Authority and West Midlands Growth Company action their responsibilities across their sub-regional patch as they could create unintended consequences, mismatches and unfair effects for parts of the wider geographic West

	Midlands outside of their patch. This is especially relevant to Coventry as its economic and business ecosystem is joined so closely to that of Warwickshire.

4. Artificial Intelligence hallenges	
Integration	Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption among SMEs remains limited and exploratory with few significant productivity gains or market opportunities developed to date. More specialist business support in this area is needed urgently to help businesses, freelancers and not-charitable creative/cultural organisations make informed decisions as they develop their businesses for the future.
Copyright Laws and Policy	There has been a lot of public conversation around the use of AI and copyright in 2025-26, with the creative sector advocating for a ‘case-by-case’ licencing model rather than an opt-out model, where the onus is on the creative individuals and organisations. The new legislation is still forthcoming as of January 2026. Businesses will need additional support to fully understand the evolution of UK law around AI, and especially the training of AI models, so they can protect their rights with the least amount of cost and complexity.
Artificial Intelligence	Automated AI workflows are a threat to some jobs, for example, aspects of junior roles in web companies. Support is needed to help businesses and workers better understand the challenges coming their way and how they might adapt to overcome them.

5. Screen Production (film, TV, social media) sub-sector challenges	
Spaces	There is a lack of build space (e.g., 5,000–15,000 sq. ft with 5–7 metres height) to support set builds, which is a key requirement for attracting and retaining film and TV productions. Suitable spaces do not have to be dedicated soundproof ‘studios’, they can be converted warehouses, or even school gyms, used just in the school holidays.
Skills	There is a lack of skills locally for local freelancers to fill Head of department roles on screen productions. Further specialist training is required. Also, there is a lack of specific screen related bootcamps based in Coventry, as most bootcamps available in the region are centred on Birmingham. This makes it harder for Coventry based people to attend, especially if they need to fit the training around their existing work commitments.

6. Theatre sub-sector challenges	
Costs	Rising operational costs; such as energy bills and staffing are contributing to making theatres less sustainable.

Audience	Post-pandemic struggles with audience behaviour, e.g. younger generations are consuming media differently and often find theatre tickets too costly as an entertainment choice for them.
Workforce	There is a precarious employment situation for staff and freelancers which is resulting in, for example, theatres losing talent to the screen sector who offer better pay and conditions.
Funding	There are currently limited sources of public money that can support infrastructure investments in the theatre sector, such as for maintenance or making changes to improve the long-term sustainability of venues.

5.2 The current sector opportunities

This section outlines the key **opportunities** identified through the Coventry creative industries mapping report. Again, the list is not exhaustive, and opportunities may also be wider than just Coventry.

1. Business & Freelancer Support	
Collaboration	Opportunities can be explored to enable more business partnerships; both across Coventry and Warwickshire, the wider Midlands, nationally and internationally.
Business Growth	Opportunities can be leveraged amongst business leaders to increase their skills and capabilities to identify transformational change through ‘low hanging fruit’, i.e., where a small change or investment from them can make a big difference to their companies’ prospects.
Investment	Opportunities exist to attract more business anchor tenants into Coventry through inward investment, such as big brand names, by leveraging Coventry and Warwickshire’s strategic advantages around location, low housing costs, and strong sustainability credentials.

2. Networking & Partnership Working	
Industrial Strategy	Using the Industrial Strategy to further cement Coventry & Warwickshire’s immersive tech and games cluster to become established as a national centre of excellence for tech and gaming. ‘Entertainment Games’ versus ‘Serious Games’ or educational content is now widely dispersed between both geographies.
Createch	Leveraging the CreaTech Frontiers project as a key part of the above, ensuring that Coventry can fully capitalise on the opportunities this brings, this means ensuring that the city can establish an effective creative cluster itself, which is linked to Warwickshire.
Places and Spaces	Establishing a physical space in Coventry City similar to 1 Mill Street in Leamington Spa and linked to it. This could be a temporary meanwhile use space initially. Leverage any potential funding or support coming from WMCA and the government linked to the Modern Industrial Strategy.

	Making better use of the Delia Derbyshire Building at Coventry University as a facility that businesses can engage with on a regular basis, to foster greater collaboration and trust between the creative sector and the University.
Esports	Seizing all available opportunities to build a stronger eSports cluster, leveraging the University of Warwick's position as the top UK university for eSports courses over the last six years. Leveraging existing gaming clusters into healthcare/education applications, e.g., partnership with NHS and the USA market on resilience training using immersive tech.
Technology	Leveraging opportunities for growth in virtual production, immersive technologies and cultural heritage. Feedback from the consultation said that Coventry's unique strengths lie in live performance, motion capture, digital mapping, and projection, rather than broad claims like AI or virtual production. Extending innovation in theatre beyond VR/technology to include creative audio, gaming, and interdisciplinary approaches. Creating new work streams through tech convergence, with opportunities for partnership-level investment and enhanced tech infrastructure to help retain university talent.

3. Skills & Workforce Development	
Industrial Strategy	Explore any new opportunities for skills and workforce development through the Modern Industrial Strategy.
Education	Leverage the opportunity for curriculum modernisation in universities, to offer improved courses in subjects such as AI/immersive tech and content creation, e.g., Coventry University is implementing innovative changes to education delivery which includes six entry points per year and block-style learning.

4. Places and Spaces	
City Centre Cultural Gateway	Ensure the upcoming City Centre Cultural Gateway can become an effective sector hub which helps enable improved creative sector networking, partnership working and the establishment of an effective creative cluster across Coventry that connects to Warwickshire and beyond.
Createch	Look for opportunities to support and partner with Createch Village, a major new development at the University of Warwick. This will transform an area at the heart of the campus into a flagship hub for creative industries, connecting businesses, academia, and communities.
Co-working Spaces	Look for opportunities to establish other co-working spaces or repurpose unused buildings into innovation and creative spaces, with a focus on affordable city centre creative and tech spaces. Develop an equivalent space to 1 Mill Street in Coventry City Centre, as detailed in the previous section. This could be a temporary meanwhile use space initially.

Creative Spaces	Integrate the need and opportunity for more creative spaces and more effective creative networking with developments at FarGo Village in Coventry, such as with more parking, more business units and a safer environment.

5. Tourism, Visitor Economy & Branding	
Destination Coventry	Embracing Destination Coventry, its services and a new approach to the visitor economy, which is now providing an opportunity to make a big difference to visitor numbers. It has moved from a Council run model to a commercial operation, inspired by models from Liverpool, Bristol, and Manchester, with its new board also having members from creative industries.
West Midlands Growth Company	Leverage opportunities emerging from the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) and their Destination Development Partnership (DDP) status. Combining this with the relaunched Destination Coventry means there is no better time to maximise the potential for tourism and the visitor economy across the city.
Branding	There is the opportunity for a huge win for Coventry through launching effective new branding using the tools provided by creative industries in creative impactful narratives about the city. This is needed to better attract national investment and larger companies, as well as promoting the city as a great place to live.

6. Public Funding, City Development & Government Policies	
Modern Industrial Strategy	It will be crucial for Coventry City Council and other public sector partners to fully understand all the ways the UK's new Modern Industrial Strategy, launched in June 2025, creates an opportunity for developing the economy and placemaking across the city. It will be important that Coventry City Council works very closely with all stakeholders involved in this strategy roll out, such as WMCA, as well as with other pro-active plans for the city and sub-geography from the universities, Chamber of Commerce and existing clusters and networks. This should include actions that will help position Coventry and Warwickshire as a creative and tech testbed, capitalising on strengths in createch, eSports, immersive experiences, and entertainment and serious games.
Creative Cluster Manager	An important aspect of this could be to Invest in a Creative Cluster manager so that Coventry City Council can play a pro-active and central role in maximising the impact and value of new and existing creative clusters across the city, alongside leveraging opportunities to get more creative spaces of all types for the sector. This role could be employed between the various stakeholders within the cluster, e.g. university led, with some direct co-funding from the Council or the Combined Authority.

7. Artificial Intelligence	
Business Clusters	Identifying ways for Coventry’s business clusters to adopt artificial Intelligence early, thus giving Coventry creatives an edge in the market. Specialised business support, such as workshops and knowledge transfer will be required. All creative businesses will need to consider how they will be affected and how best they can respond.
Content Creation	Generative AI tools will democratise a lot of content creation; with smaller, simpler or less demanding tasks being most affected. This will enable anyone to generate a wide range of creative assets without any training, from video and audio clips to coding their own commerce-enabled website. This means that in many scenarios AI will remove the need to contract a creative business or creative worker altogether, which could be seen both as an opportunity (e.g. increasing capacity) but also a challenge. This is also likely to mean that there will be new types of jobs linked to content creation, some of which have not yet been invented. The task is therefore to ensure that we are at the forefront of this change, to ensure that we can better adapt to new circumstances.
Film & TV	With film and TV production, AI tools are being widely used in post-production, pre-production and script writing. AI can assist in tasks like creating pitches and language translation.

8. Screen Production (film, TV, social media)	
Skills and Training	Opportunity to advocate for specific screen related bootcamps and other creative training, to be based in Coventry.
Places and Spaces	To seek out readily available ‘build spaces’, large enough to build temporary sets for TV & film production companies. These can be re-purposed spaces or, like school gyms, hired exactly as they are during the school holidays. In addition, there is an opportunity to fund new Studio Build spaces (5-7m high with an area of 5,000-15,000 sq. ft), to encourage larger productions to build their sets and shoot in the city on a more regular basis.
Collaboration	Create a more coherent approach to filming in the city, working in partnership with e.g. Production Central.

9. Emerging	
Coventry and Warwickshire Gigapark Investment Zone	The Coventry and Warwickshire Gigapark Investment Zone (CWGIZ), which across its four zones will potentially provide £1.5 billion of investment into the fabric of Coventry and beyond.
Technology	Greater adoption of immersive technology will increase markets over the next few years as will many other products, services and experiences developed through createch.

	Universities will potentially carve out a nationally recognised niche around excellence in working hands-on with creative tech businesses and creatives, including bringing co-creation into universities. AI enabled content creation and data analysis will become more sophisticated, leading to new markets opening up for creative businesses.
Music	Coventry has a significant music sector that could be developed further, including the well regarded and popular Coventry Music Museum. This includes highlighting both Coventry's musical heritage, as well as the current talent pool in the city.
Screen Production (film, TV, social media)	A regional film office was launched in 2025 by the West Midlands Growth Company, WMCA, and Create Central, the industry screen cluster. This should make it easier to bring major film & TV productions to the city and region, by enabling simpler coordination of location, facility and permitting needs. If new production and build spaces can be made available, that will position Coventry well to benefit from the evolving commissioning model that requires regions to demonstrate sufficient infrastructure to support productions. Commissioning is now often on a single-show basis with longer turnaround times, making regional readiness and available facilities more important. There is also an emerging opportunity to put in place facilities to support streamers and influencers, to ensure the city is adapting to a content creation landscape that includes platforms like YouTube, reflecting broader trends in audience consumption and the need to engage with non-traditional, non-linear platforms.

6. THE STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR COVENTRY

This is a potentially transformational moment for Coventry's creative industries. With specific local strengths (e.g. createch), dedicated Government support for creative industries, strong industry collaboration from the University of Warwick & Coventry University, a recognised joint cluster with Warwickshire, and continued placemaking potential post UK City of Culture 2021. Coventry now needs the right targeted actions to deliver lasting economic and social value to the city and the wider region.

6.1 The national context

In June 2025, the UK Government published the **Creative Industries Sector Plan** as part of its Modern Industrial Strategy, which identifies eight high-growth sectors critical to national productivity and innovation. The plan positions creative industries as a driver of economic growth, cultural impact, and technological convergence, linking creativity with advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and digital technologies.

The sector plan recognises **West Midlands as a priority area** with specific focus on createch, film & TV, games industry, music industry, performing arts and design, with Coventry having strengths in most of these. The plan outlines ambition to develop creative clusters, with Coventry & Warwickshire already showing a strong opportunity in this regard.

The sector plan also outlined a number of investment initiatives to support its delivery, including:

- Increased funding towards innovation including a £100 million UKRI investment to support the next wave of R&D creative clusters in new sub-sectors and locations throughout the UK as well as a new Local Innovation Partnerships Fund, giving up to £500 million to regions across the UK and make local leaders part of decision making.
- A £25 million Creative Futures programme expanding the current CoSTAR network across the UK, adding five new R&D labs and two showcase spaces to strengthen commercialisation and tech adoption. The West Midlands has not been successful in creating a successful bid in the past.
- New £75 million screen growth and £30 million video games growth packages, over three years, to develop and showcase UK screen content and support inward investment.
- Up to £30 million over three years for a music growth package to support emerging artists, alongside a new industry-led ticket levy on arena gigs to support the grassroots sector.
- The government allocating £132.5m to increase disadvantaged young people's access to enrichment opportunities, including in arts and culture, aimed at improving wellbeing and employability.
- The government and industry delivering a refreshed UK-wide £9 million creative careers service, working closely with key partners such as the new Jobs and Careers Service.
- Planning reforms enabling faster development of economic infrastructure such as film studios, music arenas and large-scale performing arts venues – as well as improving the implementation of the 'agent of change' principle for live music venues. There are also plans for changes to the licensing system that supports the growth of the creative and hospitality sectors, including live music.
- Unspecified further capital investment for arts and cultural institutions across England
- New Creative Places Growth Fund (CPGF) devolving a total £150 million over three years to six high-potential Mayoral Strategic Authorities, including the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).[9]

This is the first time that the Government has perhaps fully recognised the potential of the creative industries and allocated significant investment to drive its growth as one of the priority sectors in the UK.

It is also worth noting the ambitious plans around **createch,** which is one of the strengths for Coventry. Createch spans all creative sub-sectors (advertising, design, film, music,

[9] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-sector-plan

games, performing arts, etc.) and involves technologies such as AI, AR/VR, real-time game engines, immersive media, and blockchain. It is positioned as a “frontier industry” in the 2025 Creative Industries Sector Plan because of its disruptive growth potential and cross-sector spillover benefits, and it is projected to add £18 billion GVA and 160,000 jobs over the next decade.

Overall, Coventry is well positioned to grow its creative industries sectors and align with the existing Government priorities. This could help to secure more investment from the support package linked to the creative industries sector plan.

6.2 The regional context

The Government announced in September 2025 that WMCA will be receiving £25m from **Creative Places Growth Fund (CPGF),** providing a potential opportunity for Coventry to benefit as part of the WMCA region. The £25 million allocation has been awarded to WMCA over three years to drive growth and innovation in the creative industries across the region. Following consultation with the industry, Local Authorities, and other stakeholders, the funding will flow into the region, following WMCA’s governance processes, from April 2027- March 2029. The CPGF programme is structured on cross-cutting thematic priorities which have been endorsed by stakeholders, consultees and partners, aligning with the national Creative Industries Sector Plan, West Midlands Growth Plan objectives, and local barriers to growth including increasing jobs and productivity. Overall, CPGF will deliver a blended model of region-wide strategic themed interventions designed to accelerate industry wide growth and productivity to maximise economic impact outcomes.

The West Midlands Growth Plan includes creative industries as a priority sector for the region’s economy, and the CPGF funding will therefore be granted to the region via the Economic Growth and Regeneration Pillar of the WMCA 3-year Integrated Settlement. This means the agreed outcomes and objectives of this pillar, **creating high value jobs, improving productivity and unlocking commercial development**, must also be responded to by the CPGP.[10]

There are also changes taking place on how the regional economic development functions are delivered, with a new regional **Economic Development Vehicle (EDV)** currently being planned by the WMCA. This reconfigured EDV aims to bolster support for both international investment and local innovation, including early-stage businesses support, especially those businesses with the highest growth potential.[11]

Local Authorities will have a key role to play in delivering Local Enterprise Support to facilitate the growth and support the long-term competitiveness of wide range of different businesses with potential to include creative freelancers. The Coventry Creative

[10] https://growth.wmca.org.uk/
[11] https://wmgrowth.com/about-us/strategy-and-business-plan/

Industries Strategy should therefore respond to these outcomes to ensure good alignment with the regional priorities.

Coventry is already benefiting from the regional **CreaTech Frontiers programme**. Whilst not exclusive to Coventry, CreaTech Frontiers is a five-year, £7.2 million initiative funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). It is designed to transform the creative industries ecosystem in the West Midlands. The project is led by Birmingham City University (BCU) in collaboration with Coventry University, the University of Birmingham, the University of Warwick, Royal Shakespeare Company and Digital Catapult. The focus of the programme is on:

- Immersive and virtual production technologies
- Gaming and eSports
- Animation and 3D modelling
- Applied artificial intelligence for creative applications
- Digital heritage and live performance
- Integration of generative AI, green production, IP protection, and commercialisation.

Many Coventry-based creative businesses have already benefited from this programme, with a number of future funding calls still being planned.

The other existing initiative is **CWX - Coventry & Warwickshire Exchange.** CWX is the cluster management organisation for the creative & immersive tech sector. Its goal is to support creative industries businesses to access more opportunities – including investment and access to markets. CWX is designed to support innovation and the development of groundbreaking ideas. By fostering collaboration and providing access to support, opportunities, community, and resources, CWX helps unlock the potential of the Coventry & Warwickshire region, positioning it as a leader in the UK's creative economy. Led by the University of Warwick and Coventry University and funded through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), CWX has built capacity with key regional partners: Coventry City Council; Warwickshire County Council; Warwick District Council; WMCA and Invest CW.[12]

This shows that there is **already some investment in place** to support the sector, although for example CWX funding will be coming to an end in 2026, unless a new funding source is identified.

It is important to ensure that Coventry is connected to wider regional initiatives and plans but will be empowered to meet the specific needs of its creative ecology, as a key sub-regional emerging cluster. Consideration will also need to be given to the long-standing collaboration between Coventry & Warwickshire, especially given the strengths around clustering and supply chain – even though this might be challenging from a WMCA geography.

[12] https://www.coventry.gov.uk/arts-1/%E2%80%99s-next-coventry%E2%80%99s-creative-industries

6.3 The city context

There are several changes taking place across Coventry, which link with the creative industries opportunity for the city.

Firstly, a number of strategies are being refreshed or developed in early 2026, including the Coventry Tourism sector action plan, emerging Heritage Strategy, strategic approach to city events, and the refresh of the 2017-27 Coventry Cultural Strategy delivery plan. This provides a unique opportunity to align these plans with the creative industries priorities – and vice versa, with e.g. the cultural strategy refresh already referencing shared priorities.

The Coventry City Centre Cultural Gateway building (former IKEA) is a new flagship project for the city, with potential links with the wider creative industries' aims for the city. City centre regeneration is also taking place through the City Centre South project, which will provide housing & retail, with the aim to revitalise the city centre.

Creative industries can contribute to place narratives in many ways, including linked tourism (film tourism, music tourism), festivals and events, shaping the perceptions of visitors, and making places more interesting to live in.

7. KEY ENABLERS

Based on the recommendations in the Coventry Creative Industries Mapping Report and the Creative Industries Sector Plan, the length of the strategy has been set to **three years**, aligning with the Government delivery timelines. The sector is also characterised by rapid technological innovation, with three years therefore providing a realistic timeline for delivery.

To truly move the dial, we must take a **collaborative 'One Coventry' approach** involving the Council, the universities, creative industries businesses, freelancers, supply chain, tourism bodies, business networks and membership bodies, other key industry sectors, the other parts of the education sector, as well as our residents.

We already have the evidence, partnerships and knowledge to deliver a step change in Coventry which would lead to:

- A stronger sub-regional cluster, significantly contributing to the development of the wider West Midlands creative ecology
- More/new jobs locally, with focus on high productivity jobs and improved student retention of pool of 60,000 students
- Increase in GVA, productivity and innovation – with a focus on cross-sectoral benefits through being a UK leader in createch
- Given our demographic – making a significant contribution towards the development of a more diverse creative industry in the region, including supporting freelance careers and access to the industry

- A stronger Coventry brand as a creative city – building on the UK City of Culture legacy in a positive way

This could be achieved through creating a partnership between sector businesses/organisations, existing sector networks, Universities, Coventry City Council, Destination Coventry, creative industries freelancers, the Chamber of Commerce, other education sector and other relevant partners.

7.1 Securing funding

Whilst there is some existing funding already in place, together with the wider business growth support across Coventry and the wider West Midlands region, additional investment is needed to fully maximise the creative industries opportunity for Coventry. This would include both revenue and capital funding, as well as access to other finance mechanisms such as loans, bonds and equity investment. This is a priority focus across all the delivery strands, with the strategy providing a robust foundation for making the case for Coventry.

The most immediate opportunity for Coventry is the £25m Creative Places Growth Fund, which will be allocated to WMCA to spend over the next three years from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029. The detailed plans for the allocation of this fund are not yet available, but it is expected there will be a number of cross-cutting thematic approaches aligning with the West Midlands Growth Plan objectives in increasing jobs, productivity and unlocking commercial development – complemented by a small number of focused interventions. This funding will be a split between revenue and capital. There may therefore be opportunities to secure direct, double devolved funding pots or alternatively benefit from thematic or focused interventions.

In addition to the WMCA funding opportunity, there are a number of possibilities for Coventry to secure investment and support from other sources. Coventry City Council, the University of Warwick, Coventry University and other stakeholders have a good track record in securing funding, loans or other investment.

Some of the potential sources include:

- UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) – grants and strategic sector investment
- Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) – Creative Clusters, CoSTAR Labs, grants
- UK Export Finance (UKEF) – loans, guarantees
- Creative UK – grants, Creative Growth Finance
- DCMS – grants, programmes
- British Film Institute (BFI) – grants, distribution funding
- Music Export Growth Scheme – match funding grant scheme
- Arts Council England (ACE) – grants for projects linking with arts & culture, capital funds, strategic programme funds

- Innovate UK – grants, loans, equity & investment support, sector specific calls, investor partnerships
- UK Games Fund & Video Games Support – grants, tax relief scheme
- British Business Bank – loans, guarantees
- Angel investors – such as UK Business Angels Association (screen)

The development of a creative industries strategy will help us to be more strategic with our investment plans, as well as increase funder confidence in their investment delivering robust outcomes.

7.2 Embracing diversity

As highlighted by the Coventry Creative Industries Mapping report, as well as national data, creative industries in the UK are not diverse in terms of their workforce or leadership. The Leadership Diversity in Creative & Cultural Industries report by Creative UK (2025) – the first of its kind – highlighted a significant underrepresentation in leadership across gender, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic backgrounds. It also highlighted the lack of data particularly around leadership roles, and where data exists, it shows that no diverse demographic – other than those identifying as LGBTQ+ - has fair, equal representation in creative and cultural sector leadership.

The key findings include:

- Despite accounting for over 48% of the UK workforce, women occupied just 21% of Director/CEO roles and 30% of managerial roles in the UK games industry
- There are significantly fewer women musicians earning a living through music for over 30 years compared to male musicians – 20% vs 30%
- People from Global Majority heritage make up 15.9% of the currently employed UK workforce yet just over 9.8% of managers and directors were from ethnic minority backgrounds across the entire cultural sector.
- Just 12% of executive or corporate roles in film & TV are held by people of Global Majority heritage, alongside just 9% of senior-level roles. Only 7%, 8% and 11% of senior management in VFX, Animation, and Post-production were from Global Majority backgrounds
- People from an ethnic minority background held only 6% of Director/CEO positions in the games industry and 10% of managerial positions
- Disabled people make up 18% of the UK workforce, but just over 7.7% of managers and directors in the cultural sector identified as disabled
- Just 8% of senior off-screen TV roles are occupied by those with a disability along with just 6.5% of UK based film & TV directors
- Only 4% of Directors/CEOs and 3% of managerial staff identified as having a disability in the video games industry

- Across the wider economy, working class people make up 35% of the workforce. Yet only 17% of UK based film & TV directors are from working class backgrounds
- Only 10% of video game company Directors/CEOs and 12% of Managerial staff were from a working-class background;

Given that Coventry is both a diverse and a young city, it is essential that diversity & inclusion are embedded across key actions and delivery from the start. The delivery plan should include exploring best practice on how to best enable equality of opportunity for disabled people, young people and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage – with a special focus on those experiencing multiple disadvantages across projected characteristics. This should include considerations around access to jobs, supported skills development opportunities, and offering more personalised support such as mentoring, tailored training and other one to one support.

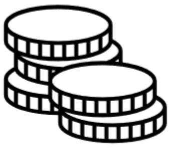
7.3 One Coventry Plan

This strategy will align with the One Coventry Plan, which is Coventry City Council's overarching strategic plan that sets out the city-wide vision and priorities for 2022–2030. It describes how the Council, partners, residents, businesses, and communities will work together to improve Coventry and the lives of people who live, work, and study there. The One Coventry Plan has three main delivery priorities and two enabling priorities.[13]

In terms of **main delivery priorities**, the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy will contribute to all of these, as outlined below.

One Coventry Delivery Priority	Coventry Creative Industries Strategy
Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within communities 	• Considers how creative industries can contribute to social mobility through e.g. skills development opportunities • Taking action to improve the diversity of the current workforce • Ensuring business development opportunities are shared across the whole city and consider equality, diversity and inclusion in their design • Consider how creative industries can contribute beyond just economic metrics

13 https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan

Improving economic prosperity of the city and region 	• Take a collaborative approach to engage with creative industries businesses and freelancers to ensure they can grow their businesses and economic impact • Exploring possibilities beyond creative industries, especially across our other key industry sectors • Maximising the role that creative industries can play in our visitor economy through sector events, enhancing visitor experience and promoting the city • Alignment with other key strategies
Tackling the causes and consequences of climate change 	• Considers how we can we ensure our creative industries sector is as environmentally sustainable as possible and how we use our existing strengths in this area • What role can creative industries play in raising awareness about climate change and environmental sustainability

The One Coventry Plan also outlines two enabling priorities to support the delivery priorities:

One Coventry Enabling Priority	Coventry Creative Industries Strategy
Ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council 	• Strategy provides a clear plan with identified priorities to unlock future investment and support from key funders • Through business growth, make a positive contribution to the sustainability of the Council through e.g. tax revenue
Strengthening the Council's role as a partner, enabler, and civic leader 	• Building the strategy on the foundations of strong partnership working across the private, public and other sectors • Alignment with the One Coventry Plan

7.4 Cluster development

As noted in the Coventry Creative Industries Mapping Report, **clustering** is one of the key characteristics of the creative industries. A key action would therefore be to ensure that we have a **well-functioning cluster development** body in Coventry (or Coventry & Warwickshire

Some options for how this could be mobilised include:

Option 1:
Using the existing Coventry & Warwickshire Exchange (CWX) as foundation for a cluster development body, with an expanded remit and more representative and diverse governance. This would include a Cluster Manager and some delivery focused roles, with the main focus being on maximising investment for sector support.

Option 2:
Using the existing Createch Frontiers programme as foundation for a cluster development body – although this could be more challenging given the lead organisation and some of the other partners being located in Birmingham and the delivery framework not being primed for this type of strategic approach.

Option 3:
Creating a Creative Economy Development Unit within the Council, which could also include a mixed model with the universities (e.g. secondments, paid roles) which would be guided by a sector and stakeholder governance group. The Unit would then coordinate sector support through different strands of work, including coordinating with existing programmes such as Createch Frontiers.

Option 4:
There could also be a hybrid model where the Creative Economy Development Unit would lead the strategic development of creative industries in the city, as well as delivery of targeted support programmes, whilst CWX would be resourced to deliver the cluster development activity, with a specific focus on createch.

Given the uncertainty around the WMCA funding, it is recommended that Option 1 is adopted as a starting point for year 1, with regular reviews of the viability of the other options, e.g. AHRC Creative Clusters opportunities.

8. THE DESIRED IMPACT

The evidence and the recommendations from the Coventry Creative Industries Mapping report identify a number of suggested key actions across five key themes:

1) Businesses, clusters and networks
2) Skills and workforce development
3) Places and spaces
4) Tourism, visitor economy and branding
5) Public funding, city development and policy

Whilst all the recommendations outlined in the report are relevant in the wider context, it may not be possible to deliver all of these in the space of three years, with the levels of funding secured also impacting delivery. Coventry may therefore have to adopt a phased approach, to secure the 'low hanging fruit' and also build foundations to long-term, systemic change.

The thematic areas are, however, helpful in thinking about the impact we want to see in Coventry in the medium term, at the end of the strategy period – and beyond. Summarising the evidence in report and other feedback, the impact we want to see through the delivery of the Strategy includes:

Thematic area	Desired impact
Businesses, clusters & networks	Coventry has a thriving and financially resilient creative industries sector, with businesses and freelancers being supported and contributing to the city's economy through a well-functioning cluster. The creative industries in Coventry are characterised by a diverse leadership and workforce, with young people particularly staying in the city to be part of the city's creative sector.
Skills & workforce development	Coventry has highly skilled and diverse creative industries workforce, with the leadership of organisations reflecting the diversity of the city. Coventry creative industries benefit from high student retention locally.
Places & Spaces	Creative industries businesses and freelancers in Coventry have the affordable specialist workspace they need to operate efficiently and to deliver a wide range of specialist activities benefiting our economy and people.
Tourism, visitor economy & branding	Coventry's creative industries contribute to the city's visitor economy and are key to promoting the city through storytelling
Public funding, city development & policy	Coventry is taking a strategic approach to creative industries, operating a successful sub-regional cluster and positioning the city as a creative-industrial hub, combining the opportunities and synergies between all priority growth sectors and able to secure investment to maintain a thriving creative sector

The **attached delivery plan** will be based on these desired impacts, outlining the key **objectives and activities** required to deliver them.

9. EVALUATION

The evaluation of the strategy will include a specific evaluation framework and a baseline aligned with each delivery area. This framework is still in development but will track inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts over the delivery period. We will be working closely with the University of Warwick and Coventry University to ensure that the evaluation of the Strategy is closely aligned to and informed by the evaluation processes for CreatTech Frontiers and CWX. Data from other sources will be captured through surveys and sector consultations.

Specific key measures include:

Thematic area	Measures
Businesses, clusters & networks	• Level of investment secured for business support including cluster development • Number of business births and survival rates • Number of businesses supported/scaled up • Number of freelancers supported/scaled up • Number of new cross-sector partnerships • Number of businesses accessing grants and other support to improve environmental sustainability • Number of networking events/year • Level of exports and/or inward investment • Level of other investment secured to support business activities • Location of businesses/freelancers
Skills & workforce development	• Number of new jobs/type of jobs/jobs safeguarded • Number of skills development opportunities (training courses, work placements, internships, CDP, etc.) • Diversity of workforce & leadership of organisations engaging with delivery • Level of other investment secured to support skills development • Level of skills shortages • Shifts in graduate retention for creative industries
Places & Spaces	• Sqm of affordable workspace unlocked • Increases/decreases in creative workspaces and other specialist creative industries spaces
Tourism, visitor economy & branding	• Qualitative impact of creative industries in city promotion and visitor perception

	• Steps taken to develop tourism offer around creative industries (e.g. film and music tourism)
Public funding, city development & policy	• Level of funding secured/won • Level of private capital leveraged • Number of policies being informed by the creative industries strategy aims/level of consultation

APPENDIX 1 – DELIVERY PLAN 2026-2029

See separate attachment