West Midlands Screen Bureau
Clusters Development Plan

7 October 2019

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Summary

This development plan is the final piece of work following the successful bid by West Midlands Screen Bureau (WMSB) to the British Film Institute (BFI) Creative Clusters Challenge Fund in 2017. The WMSB appointed Michael Gubbins as Strategic Project Manager in 2018. Over the past two years, the WMSB has undertaken a programme of work to develop a strategy to identify and grow a cluster of screen industry expertise in the West Midlands, building on previous work such as the Greater Birmingham Film Review and the area's work toward a Channel 4 bid, and consulting widely with local industry experts on how to best move forward on key barriers to growth through a series of 'design lab' events.

The plan is based on the outcomes of the WMSB and recommends actions for the new Screen Industry Body (SIB). The new SIB will be responsible for taking forward the ideas contained in this plan, with the understanding that the body will need to set its own priorities and develop its own work programme. The recommendations fall under four key areas:

- Leadership
- Networks
- Infrastructure
- Communication.

1.2 Recommendations

Leadership

Screen Industry Body - The new SIB should be developed as a strategic body and the lead partner in taking forward the development of the screen sectors. It will need to prioritise and focus on objectives that will both tackle immediate needs and deliver benefits in the short term, and lead to sustainable growth in the medium and longer term.

Infrastructure

Spaces – A comprehensive spaces strategy should be developed that audits existing provision and explores areas of opportunity and how these can best be addressed, including proposals for new studio development, the role of physical hubs and the need for smaller-scale and more flexible spaces.

Skills Pathways – A skills strategy should be developed that addresses skills gaps (both technical/craft and business development skills.) The strategy should support learning and development at each stage of a career, giving clear pathways that enable the region to attract, develop and retain talent.

Diversity - Skills development should include a culturally diverse leadership programme that provides mentoring opportunities and supports a broad and inclusive industry.

Business Development and Finance – Networks, training and support should be encouraged to help businesses to develop. There is a particular need for support for businesses to help them to identify and build partnerships and effectively access funding from different sources.

Networks

Networking – Mechanisms should be developed to help industry to work together, to develop joint projects and to share ideas and research.

Hubs – The SIB should explore the potential to build on and develop a permanent physical hub or hubs to support networking. This should be enhanced with the development of virtual hubs.

Mapping – The SIB should develop the initial mapping work undertaken by WMSB into a comprehensive mapping project by researching, recording and sharing information about businesses across the screen sectors.

Website – The SIB should build on the initial website created by WMSB to share research as part of this project, developing a comprehensive website which creates a network to link all the work that is going on in the region.

Communication

Branding – A clearer brand (or brands) needs to be developed for West Midlands screen, based on the strengths and unique qualities of the region. This should build on the work of the Channel 4 bid and broader plans for Coventry City of Culture and the Commonwealth Games.

Events – Consideration should be given to the potential to develop events to strengthen networks and enhance the profile of the region, building on existing festivals and events and highlighting areas of strengths within the sectors. This should be done in an incremental way, through existing festivals and pop-up events.

2. Analysis

2.1 Challenges

The West Midlands has some existing strengths, such as the games cluster, but much of the sector is underdeveloped and has lacked investment. The Greater Birmingham and Solihull region, for example, saw a 42% drop in employment in film, television, radio and photography between 2010 and 2015, down from 3,700 jobs to 2,100[1].

In the long term, the region has the potential to develop a global brand as a place where stories and ideas are developed by the screen sectors into a wide range of intellectual property. But those ambitious plans need to be built on strong economic foundations. The West Midlands needs to make rapid and ambitious progress to establish a firm economic base for growth in the highly-competitive screen markets. A diverse, sustainable and competitive sector needs to offer job prospects and career development today if it wants to create an exciting and innovative sector for the next generation.

The Creative Clusters Challenge Fund recognised that a plan of action would help the West Midlands' screen sectors to achieve their full potential. The 2015 Greater Birmingham Film Review and Strategy Report by BOP Consulting for the BFI, Greater Birmingham Creative Cities Partnership and Birmingham City University found a lack of a 'compelling narrative' around film. It found that 'film in Birmingham is characterised by low levels of both engagement and production'. It identified a lack of networks and connections to the national sector, leading to a sense of isolation. Work by

[1] P29, GBSLEP Creative Economy Mapping (BOP Consulting)

the WMSB over the past eighteen months has highlighted the fact that these problems remain and need to be addressed.

The Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP Access to Finance Report 2015 also identified some key gaps. These include: a fragmented supply chain with a mainly freelance crew; little prime time TV or high budget filmmaking; and relatively few independent TV production companies. The report also found a problem of under-investment in the region. There has been a poor record of success for applications to different funding sources from the screen sector – applications to the West Midlands Production Fund have been low in number and those applications that are made have had a low success rate.

Without a central mechanism to co-ordinate action, the film and TV industry in the West Midlands has in the past lacked focus. It needs to improve co-ordination and leadership in order to raise the profile of the sector and build its capacity in terms of skills and facilities. Better networks need to be created to help develop relationships and galvanise and catalyse this rich and diverse sector. Lastly, film makers and producers need support to build audiences and to access local, national and international finance, resources and markets.

The games industry is one of the region's success stories but the 'Blueprint for Growth' has highlighted the need for sector specific support for games businesses in the areas of skills, funding, innovation support and infrastructure development[2].

2.2 Opportunities

The Creative Clusters Challenge Fund has helped the WMSB to start to address these current weaknesses. The bid has enabled the WMSB to commission further research and develop networks and co-ordination within the region.

This development plan builds on these actions by outlining the need to address leadership, infrastructure, workforce skills development, networking, promotion and audience development.

2.2.1 *Leadership*

The potential of a united screen sector is becoming clear. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the campaign to bring Channel 4 to the region provided some positive lessons in terms of the way in which the sector worked together to develop a clear and compelling vision for the region.

The momentum from the Cluster work and the Channel 4 bid has led to the creation of a new Screen Industry Body (SIB) with the mandate and drive to lead the region into a new era. The SIB will be a high-level, strategic, industry-led organisation that will drive an ambitious programme to grow the sector.

2.2.2 *Infrastructure*

There is currently a shortage of production space in the region. Steven Knight has been a figurehead for the region for his drama Peaky Blinders and his plans for new studio facilities in Birmingham have highlighted the potential for investment in studio space to support production in the West Midlands.

There are a range of programmes with potential to help grow the West Midlands screen sectors, including the DCMS Creative Scale Up programme and the relaunch of the West Midlands Production Fund, which are potential sources of financial and business support.

[2] http://www.cwlep.com/sites/default/files/games_industry_-_blueprint_for_growth.pdf

There are also important assets that are currently under-exploited, including talent that is either undeveloped or has moved away to find success elsewhere because of the lack of work in the region. The youth and diversity of the region are significant assets and these strengths should be better utilised. Skills development and business support needs to focus on inclusion to create pathways to growth and make the most of these assets.

The selection of the West Midlands to be the home of the UK's first large-scale 5G test bed is another great boost to the region, particularly for the games industry. The multi-million-pound trial of new high-speed connectivity will offer further opportunities for growth in a sector that is highly reliant on digital infrastructure. The infrastructure, including spaces and skills, needs to be in place to enable the sector to take advantage of this opportunity.

The mandate for out-of-London independent production for public service broadcasters and servicing major shoots from international productions makes the West Midlands ideally placed to take advantage of inward investment, given the right emphasis on building infrastructure and services. It is worth noting that Birmingham is under two hours away from many major production hubs, including Cardiff, Manchester, Leeds, Pinewood and Leavesden. Linked to this, the future of the HS2 rail link is currently under review but, if it goes ahead, this infrastructure investment will help to connect towns and cities within the West Midlands and nationwide, making it an even more attractive place to live and work.

2.2.3 *Networks*

Creating better networks is central to this work on the development of creative clusters. There is already a globally significant video games cluster in Leamington Spa (Silicon Spa). As well as video games, the region also has other areas of expertise, including factual television and young people's content.

The Screen Industry Body will need to develop links with existing local and national screen industry organisations so that more effective channels of communication can be established. The remit of different regional organisations needs to be clear with each playing a clear role in the delivery of the ambitious growth plans for the sectors. By developing better physical and virtual networks, through hubs, mapping and online resources, it will be possible to bring together businesses to create a stronger and more dynamic screen sector.

2.2.4 *Communications*

The branding report set out the benefits of developing a strong regional (screen based) brand, including the potential for inward investment, attracting talent, promoting the region's work more widely and establishing the region as a location for production.

One way in which a brand can effectively be grown is through the development of events and festivals that build on and showcase the region's strengths. As part of this, the region is hosting a series of exciting events that will provide opportunities to support sectoral growth. Coventry, UK City of Culture 2021[3] and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games[4] will be a chance to highlight progress and attract international attention.

3. Progress

3.1 West Midlands Screen Bureau

[3] https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=coventry+city+of+culture&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8
[4] https://www.birmingham2022.com

The West Midlands Screen Bureau (WMSB) was formed in 2016 as a partnership between public and private organisations in the screen sectors. The screen sectors include film, television, video games, animation, VFX and VR/AR. The Bureau includes industry representatives, Screen Central, Film Birmingham, Flatpack Festival, Higher Education Institutions and public sector partners.

3.2 BFI Creative Clusters Challenge Fund

In 2017 a consortium from across the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) applied to the British Film Institute (BFI) Creative Clusters Challenge Fund. The application was designed to help develop a strategy to identify and grow a 'cluster' of screen industry expertise in the West Midlands. It aimed to create a blueprint to grow capacity and develop talent in the West Midlands area.

3.3 WMSB Actions

The Clusters funding was administered through the WMSB and a programme of activities has taken place over 2018 and 2019 including:

- design labs
- mapping
- research
- website.

More information about each of these is below and at Appendices 1 and 2.

3.3.1 Design labs

WMSB held a series of design labs, which were set up with a number of objectives:

- *Consultancy:* Engaging a cross-section of industry representatives in debates around the future of the sector and bringing together perspectives to create strategies.
- *Ideas creation*: Creating a mechanism for collecting ideas and approaches from within the sector.
- *Collaboration:* A method for network collaboration on ideas and creating a collaborative culture.
- *Active networking:* Helping create partnerships for future work.
- *Knowledge exchange*: Sharing best practice and market intelligence.

The design labs were used to collect evidence and ideas from the industry, which have been used to inform this report. Three labs were held in November 2018, February 2019 and July 2019 in Birmingham and Stratford-Upon-Avon. The structure of all the events was a morning session of expert speakers to provide context for an afternoon session of structured workshops with industry participants. More than 100 delegates took part in each event, covering a wide cross-section of screen businesses. The full results can be seen on the WMScreenBureau.com website.

3.3.2 Mapping

WMSB has created a searchable map of businesses across the sector, enabling businesses to identify potential partners within industries, businesses to find potential partners for cross-sectoral development, investors to discover regional opportunities and freelancers and job-seekers to find work. The initial design is intended as a starting point which the new SIB can build and develop as an industry resource.

The Interactive Mapping project of all existing businesses in the sector was an example of the kind of agile thinking that should be employed where possible.

3.3.3 Research

As well as the findings of the design labs, the WMSB commissioned a series of three research projects that looked at areas identified as important in developing the West Midlands screen cluster. The first report was a broad analysis of the elements that are important in creating successful clusters around the world. The branding report addressed the need to develop a stronger identity for the screen sector in the region. The need for the screen sectors better to reflect the range of talent in the region was explored in the report on diversity.

Anatomy of a Creative Cluster (Zanna Creative)

An international survey, looking at best practice in some of the world's most successful regional creative clusters – Ontario (Canada), Bangalore (India), Berlin (Germany), Mexico City (Mexico) and Abu Dhabi (UAE).

Branding in the Screen Industries (Dr Finola Kerrigan/Katharina Stolley)

A study looking at how to define, understand and develop a West Midlands screen brand. The report outlines some key trends in place branding, specifically in relation to brands developed through a strong screen presence.

Diversity leadership development (Lara Ratnajara/Helga Henry)

Research identifying leadership development pathways for diverse and thriving creative screen individuals and businesses in the core sectors – television, games and film – and considering diversity in emerging sectors, such as AR and VR.

The findings and recommendations of all three studies have influenced and are referred to throughout this plan. A summary of the findings of these reports is at Appendix B. The full reports have been passed to the new SIB to inform its future work.

3.3.4 Website

The WMSB created a website for sharing information with the emerging network of businesses. (WMScreenBureau.com). The site has been primarily used to share the ideas and outcomes of the design labs and will be home to further reports and case studies created during the project.

4. Key Priorities and actions

The original vision set out in the WMSB Cluster Challenge Fund bid was for the West Midlands to be at the forefront of a diverse and sustainable screen-sector economy in the UK.

The aim was for a mixed economy, in which high-quality production and development studios and a skilled, competitive and entrepreneurial local independent sector would earn a reputation in the UK and internationally for quality and service. By joining together expertise across the region, the industry would create diverse and innovative content for new and existing audiences. The work of the WMSB over the past two years has helped to develop and refine these ideas and to create a development plan for the future. This plan sets out priorities and actions in four key areas:

- Leadership
- Infrastructure

- Networks
- Promotion.

These priorities build upon and develop the objectives set out in the original Challenge Fund bid.

4.1 Leadership

Objective: to improve co-ordination, strategic leadership and promotion of the screen sectors by joining up screen sectors related activities and providing a central focal point for the region

4.1.1 Screen Industry Body

Recommendation: The new Screen Industry Body should be developed as a strategic body and the lead partner in taking forward the development of the screen sectors. It will need to prioritise and focus on objectives that will both tackle immediate needs and deliver benefits in the short term and lead to sustainable growth in the medium and longer term.

Since the demise of Screen West Midlands in 2011, there has been a lack of a regional body connected to screen-sector businesses. The loss of that institution came at an unfortunate time, with the decline of regional production studios, leading to an exodus of film and television talent at a time of returning growth.

The benefits of a strong regional institutional sectoral base is now evident in the success of regions such as Yorkshire, where the leadership of industry body Screen Yorkshire has helped the region's screen sector to take tremendous steps – securing Channel 4's new headquarters and investment through AHRC's Creative Industries Clusters Programme, as well as experiencing the fastest rate of growth of any area between 2009 and 2015[5]. Without such a body in the West Midlands there have been areas of growth but the overall picture for the region has been fragmented.

Recognition of the need for a permanent strategic body was one of the early themes of the WMSB design labs. This became still clearer during the Channel 4 bid, where a unified message made an impact, even if the final result was disappointing. This report suggests that successful clusters and dynamic screen sectors are led by anchor institutions with business at the centre of policy-making.

The creation of a new SIB was announced in July 2019, with Ed Shedd as the Chair. The membership has been selected by the Chair, together with the region's Mayor and senior figures from the region's three Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The very creation of that body has been a welcome statement of intent in terms of industry-public sector relationships. Its creation was strongly encouraged and actively supported by the West Midlands Combined Authority and launched by the region's Mayor Andy Street[6].

The body will have the following remit:

- development of a single delivery plan – turning strategy into action;
- securing and delivering public/private funds;
- commissioning a variety of activity; and

[5] http://www.pact.co.uk/news-detail.html?id=new-figures-reveal-yorkshire-humber-is-uk-s-fastest-growing-region-for-film-and-tv

[6] https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/west-midlands-mayor-announces-new-screen-industry-body-to-boost-creative-sector/

- lobbying and promotion[7].

It is envisaged that, where appropriate, the new SIB will take on responsibility for the work started by the WMSB and set out in this development plan. This includes both the assets created during the project, and this development plan, which offers analysis and recommendations to the new body to help inform future decision making, whilst recognising that the new body will want to set its own priorities.

The SIB will be industry-led, inputting into policy-making. It is intended primarily as a strategic body, rather than an organisation to deliver projects. But it needs to have a structure that enables adequate and timely delivery of projects and coordination of activities that emerge from its strategies. The SIB will identify and commission work, rather than delivering projects itself, so specialist groups will be needed to test and develop ideas, together with a thorough and transparent system of key performance indicators.

These specialist groups should include experts and industry professionals in a range of key areas. These include issues such as skills development and infrastructure. It is likely that groups will also want to look at issues such as funding and promotion of the sectors.

Projects and initiatives from the SIB may be delivered by existing sector bodies, which offer a useful link to businesses in the region. These bodies may include the following intermediaries:

- Film Birmingham
- Screen Central (formerly the Producers Forum)
- Film Audience Network (Film Hub Midlands)
- Crew Birmingham
- Silicon Spa
- Silicon Canal
- Trade organisations, such as Royal Television Society, UKIE and TIGA.

In the past, some sectoral bodies have not worked closely together. The new SIB presents an opportunity to bring together these organisations to create a richer knowledge base, generate ideas and drive cross-sectoral development.

4.2 Infrastructure

Objective: to build capacity in relation to facilities, skills, leadership and talent in order to attract new production and development in the region.

The screen sector is a large and growing industry. According to the BFI Research and Statistics Unit, for example, between April 2018 and March 2019, total UK film production spend was £1.8bn, 82% of which came from inward investment production.[8] The number of high-end TV programmes produced in the country in the same period rose 21% to 69.[9] The market is still expanding, with the UK government expecting inward investment film and television production to reach £4bn by 2025.[10]

[7] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pmppSGJBrBa3IuFAHkIl0vd83MJaOAZ7/view
[8] https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-film-other-screen-sectors-production-uk-q1-2019.pdf
[9] ibid
[10] https://deadline.com/2018/03/uk-government-5-7b-film-tv-inw
ard-investment-2025-1202354598

Growth has been particularly strong from global streaming services, notably Netflix, for whom UK production is a major part of its strategy. That market is ripe for further expansion with major new competition coming from other players.

International television and film shoots have created a major boost to regions, often those which have lost jobs and investment in declining manufacturing sectors. Birmingham City Council for example cites high figures for the overall value of shoots in the region, serviced by Film Birmingham. In 2017-2018, filming brought in direct income to Film Birmingham and the city council of just under £90K but the wider economic impact is calculated as £11m[11].

Film and TV shoots also brings wider value including:

- spend on local talent and industry services to support a shoot;
- spend on local amenities and services, such as restaurants;
- perceived value to tourism in promoting a region; and
- value to local businesses in the sector.

However, the West Midlands has lacked the necessary infrastructure to seize these opportunities, failing to match the big investments that some other areas of the UK have made. There are still major opportunities for the West Midlands but there needs to be a clear strategy to provide the necessary infrastructure, including skills and spaces, and to market the region more effectively.

A strong and growing production base will attract valuable ancillary businesses, such as freelancers, distributors, post-production, and coders, as well as service providers, such as lawyers and accountants. An ecosystem will quickly grow up around production centres. The underlying argument of the approach suggested here is that the West Midlands should build a virtuous circle by creating the regional infrastructure, spaces and skills that provides a reason for people to stay, return and move here.

4.2.1 Spaces

Recommendation: A comprehensive spaces strategy should be developed that audits existing provision and explores areas of opportunity and how these can best be addressed, including proposals for new studio development, the role of physical hubs and the need for smaller scale and more flexible spaces.

The closure of Pebble Mill in 2004 and the BBC's decision in 2011 to move network television and radio production from Birmingham to Bristol effectively ended the production of network terrestrial programmes in Birmingham. The decline of television production in the West Midlands has had a major impact on sectoral growth

The Greater Birmingham and Solihull region saw a 42% drop in employment in film, television, radio and photography between 2010 and 2015.[12]

Years of under-investment in studios and talent have followed, which have had a knock-on effect as many production professionals diversified into other work or left the region. Only a handful of independent production companies remain active in the region. The region now has a low provision

[11] Figures from Film Birmingham, calculated using the 'Average Spend Figures' provided by Creative England according to the number of days, genre and production budget

[12] P29, GBSLEP Creative Economy Mapping (BOP Consulting)

of production studio space in comparison with other rival parts of the UK. Without a studio, high-end production companies and support services, it is difficult to break into the major growth that Netflix in particular has brought to the UK production market.

However, the West Midlands offers existing and potential advantages as a production base in terms of connectivity. Much of the Channel 4 bid 'Get Closer' centred on the geographical position of the region. A 120-mile radius around Birmingham would take in London, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester. Liverpool and Cardiff, all connected by rail and road. It also has the UK's third busiest non-London airport. There are emerging opportunities in terms of both physical connections (HS2) and virtual connections (5G), all of which have the potential to encourage the development of studios and other spaces.

Studio spaces come in different types and sizes. While there has been a shift towards outside locations for many years, major film and television drama productions routinely need many shoot days in studio. Other regions have found ways to support flexible studio spaces, recognising the threats and opportunities of changing production need. Developments such as the Sharp Project in Manchester and The Bottle Yard in Bristol are examples of agile spaces, developed with regional investment, that demonstrate the potential to attract inward investment production and the flexibility to support a variety of regional productions and new media developments.

Flexible group workspace has also been identified as an important need. The Sharp Project[13] in Manchester is home to over 60 digital entrepreneurs and production companies specialising in digital content production, digital media and TV and film production. It is based in a 200,000-sq. ft. former warehouse previously occupied by electronics company Sharp. It offers flexible office, production and event spaces at affordable prices.

The Bottle Yard Studios[14] in Bristol are on the site of a large former winery and bottling plant, which was owned by Bristol City Council and handed over to a partnership which created 300,000 sq. ft. of adaptable studio spaces. The Bottle Yard has developed as a flexible regional resource and is self-sustainable and demonstrates the possibilities for collaboration between entrepreneurial private sector organisations and public-sector bodies with under-utilised assets.

The opportunities are clear, with studio businesses booming and well-established developments, such as Littlewoods Studios in Liverpool and Belfast Harbour Studios have been reaping the benefits. Pinewood Shepperton announced it would become the UK base of Netflix in 2019[15]. Other UK regions have also recently constructed or are in the process of constructing new studios, including Rebellion Studios[16] at Didcot in Oxfordshire, Salters Gate, Dalkeith, near Edinburgh,[17] Leith, also close to the Scottish capital,[18]and Dagenham East in London.[19] The competition will not just be from the UK, with plenty of studios in Europe looking for UK productions and backed by aggressive tax breaks. The West Midlands needs to ensure that it is not left behind as other regions develop their infrastructure.

The Creative Industries Sector Plan, produced as part of the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) identified the need to "Invest in specialist infrastructure to grow creative sector capacity, e.g., Film & TV studio capacity and Immersive technology studios."[20] The design labs also looked at the

[13] https://www.thesharpproject.co.uk
[14] https://www.thebottleyard.com/
[15] https://media.netflix.com/en/press-releases/netflix-creates-uk-production-hub-at-shepperton-studios
[16] https://rebellionproductions.co.uk/news
[17] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-46808937
[18] https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17281513.huge-industrial-building-in-leith-will-be-scotlands-new-film-studio/
[19] https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/tech/100m-dagenham-studios-given-go-ahead/5127740.article
[20] https://gbslep.co.uk/local-industrial-strategy

need for new spaces for both film and TV production and for games companies and in particular identified the need to short-term production and rehearsal spaces and for virtual reality studio facilities.

In the games industry, a review of the physical environment for workspace, business incubation and inward investment suggested that greater coordination is needed. The distributed nature of the games cluster is good in offering a range of environments for company founders and managers of existing businesses, but less helpful in coordination of marketing messages. The 'Blueprint' report suggests that initial efforts around creating start up space have been good, and evidence of demand provides a rationale for further investment in incubator and grow-on space to ensure that there is a pipeline of games-ready business premises [21].

An audit should be undertaken to assess existing space provision, needs and gaps in provision, and potential new spaces that could be used or adapted. The West Midlands' towns and cities have an abundance of unused space, some of which could relatively quickly be re-used as flexible ad hoc spaces for the industry. Regional producers have called for more flexible studio spaces but assessing market potential still needs work. Following a feasibility study, *Peaky Blinders* creator Steven Knight has been developing proposals for new studios in Birmingham. The creation of such new studio space would help to attract new production to the region.

In considering the provision of spaces, it will also be important to look at exhibition space and audience development. The diversity report highlights the need for the industry to connect with and meet the needs of a diverse audience. It highlights the work of the Film Hub Midlands in working with local film exhibitors who represent a diverse range of communities and settings. Active collaboration with exhibitors in a variety of spaces allows for a more nuanced dialogue with audiences.

4.2.2 Skills Pathways

Recommendation: A skills strategy should be developed that addresses skills gaps (both technical/craft and also business development skills). The strategy should support learning and development at each stage of a career, giving clear pathways that enable the region to attract, develop and retain talent.

Recommendation: Skills development should include a culturally diverse leadership programme that provides mentoring opportunities and supports a broad and inclusive industry.

The region has a strong base in the creative industries overall, boasting more than £4bn in GVA, 9,975 Creatives enterprises and 48,800 jobs[22].

New talent is supported through the presence of high-quality universities and the BFI Film Academy (see more details at Appendix 1), the presence of the BBC3, BBC Academy and other successful institutions, such as BOA.[23] In 2019, the West Midlands became the first UK region to launch its Local Industrial Strategy, with Creative Content, Techniques and Technologies[24] as one of the four main target areas for action. The region's universities offer a wide range of options for skills training

[21] http://www.cwlep.com/sites/default/files/games_industry_-_blueprint_for_growth.pdf

[22] https://gbslep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/West-Midlands-Creative-Industries-STATS-2019.pdf

[23] https://www.boa-academy.co.uk

[24] https://gbslep.co.uk/local-industrial-strategy

and education but the reality has been that lack of work has seen those acquired skills go elsewhere. Skills development then needs to be part of a much broader strategy.

ScreenSkills' Quarterly Screen Barometer investigates current and future skills gaps and needs in the screen industries. The latest report highlighted skills shortages and problems in recruiting staff. It highlighted the need for improvements to the quality and relevance of education and vocational training.[25]

Skills shortages have been identified as a particular barrier to growth for the games industry. Games companies need to develop and retain the best talent to further their own growth. Employers have expressed particular concerns about the shortages of experienced staff in key programming, creative and management roles, the risk of losing existing staff to higher paid jobs outside the UK and the fact that graduates are often not 'work ready' and employers need to take time retraining them[26].

Talent retention has been a dominant theme in regional screen policy and for obvious reasons. Investment in educating and training people without the industry and infrastructure to keep them, is simply spending money for economic benefits elsewhere.

However, a dynamic and sustainable economy has fluidity of movement, attracting great people, ideas and businesses to the region, whether relocating or returning home. While some regional talent and production will inevitably leave to pursue careers elsewhere, they will act as advocates and ambassadors, and other creatives and businesses from outside the region will be encouraged to set up shop here. Talent retention is not an end in itself: what really counts is creating a business environment that means that capital and project investment grows in the region.

The approach recommended in this plan is therefore to focus strongly on retention, attraction and return of production businesses across the sector to support the growing infrastructure and build an economic base to sustain jobs creation.

A regional skills taskforce has already begun to map existing skills gaps. It will be important for the SIB to connect into this creative sector wide mapping work, to ensure the screen sector's needs are properly represented. More broadly, as much public-sector funding for skills development is broader even than just creative industries, it will be important to demonstrate that skills interventions are considered in the context of the wider regional and creative sector skills agenda

Mapping existing skills gaps and creating skills development pathways should help support emerging and diverse businesses to grow. What is needed is a combination of training and skills programmes, based on relationships with universities and training organisations in the region, and with an emphasis on enhancing diversity in the sector. There are already some close links between academic institutions and businesses but this needs to be built upon to drive the next stage of development.

The potential benefits of a region with such a rich demographic mix of people has long been recognised. The phrase 'young, digital and diverse' has become an unofficial motto of the region. In 2010, Birmingham achieved majority ethnic status, meaning no one ethnic group comprises more than 50% (Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2008). Just five years later, it was listed as the youngest city in Europe. Deeper analysis of the figures outlined showed not only were 40% of the population under 25, but the figures comprised school children from 87 ethnic backgrounds, who

[25] https://www.screenskills.com/media/2907/2019-09-04-quarterly-screenskills-barometer.pdf
[26] http://www.cwlep.com/sites/default/files/games_industry_-_blueprint_for_growth.pdf

spoke 108 languages (Birmingham Toolkit, 2018). The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2015) also documented Birmingham as hosting some of the most deprived communities in England.

Diversity presents a range of potential advantages if properly harnessed. 'Untapped stories' offer value in terms of originality and authenticity. There are also potential international links that come with a multicultural population. McKinsey's Diversity Matters project offered evidence of both the social and economic value of diversity: "We increasingly live in a global world that has become deeply interconnected. It should come as no surprise that more diverse companies and institutions are achieving better performance."[27]

There have been a number of excellent initiatives in the region, such as Hello Culture[28], Foot In The Door[29] and Back In[30]. The region also has a great campaigner for industry diversity in Sir Lenny Henry. But there remains a lack of coordination and clarity about pathways to success. It is essential that the growth of the screen sector in the region reflects the diversity of its population in terms of developing content, audiences and talent.

The diversity report commissioned by WMSB (details at Appendix 2) offers the following themes on developing best practice:

- There is power in a collective approach, with groups or cohorts of people facing similar challenges coming together to share experiences and gaining confidence in their abilities.
- Developing business skills is essential to ensuring that great ideas find their way to markets.
- Confidence building is at the heart of ensuring that people outside the dominant group in any part of the sector find jobs and pitch their ideas in the most effective ways.
- Networks matter and it is essential that connections created through events and courses turn into more permanent and sustainable organisation.
- Mentoring is vital in developing skills in a business setting, and can also create business relationships with recommendations for work from mentors and potentially even shared projects.
- Entrepreneurship creates the jobs for emerging talent and is essential to diversity.

It is essential that the growth of the screen sector in the region reflects the diversity of its population in terms of developing content, audiences and talent. Future work on development pathways should aim to promote and support a broad and inclusive industry.

4.2.3 Business Development and Finance

Recommendation: Networks, training and support should be encouraged to help businesses to develop. There is a particular need for support for businesses to help them to identify and build partnerships and effectively access funding from different sources.

Closely linked to the need for skills development pathways, is the need for better business development support and guidance on access to finance.

27 Page1,Diversity Matters (McKinsey, 2015) https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/why%20diversity%20matters/diversity%20matters.ashx

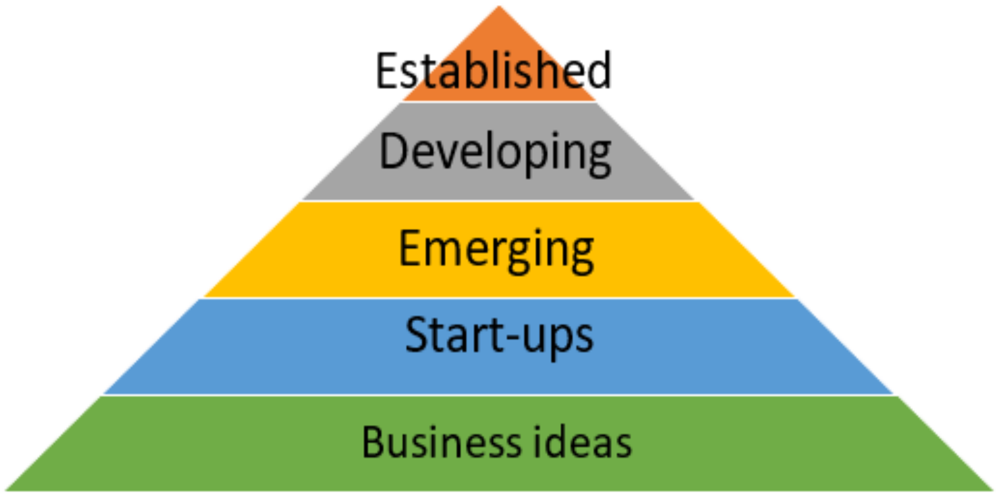
28 https://www.helloculture.co.uk/meet-the-team/lara-ratnaraja/

29 https://creativealliance.org.uk/fitdbrum/

30 https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birminghams-black-minority-ethnic-film-15109140

For businesses to grow and develop, they need to progress from start-ups to more established businesses that can succeed in challenging and competitive markets. The success of the Silicon Spa cluster has demonstrated the potential fluidity between small businesses and high-end gaming companies. However, games companies have reported difficulties in getting access to appropriate finance. They need to work with experienced investors to understand better the risks and benefits of different markets and how to get investment to scale up their businesses[31].

More widely, businesses have describing the sector as having a 'pyramid' structure.



New and emerging businesses can find it difficult to progress up the pyramid and to become successful and established companies. This plan has therefore identified the need to support fledgling businesses to develop and grow. The region does already offer opportunities for business development, including the Scale Up programme[32], which could help to unlock the potential of some small businesses.

The West Midlands Creative Scale Up Programme was launched in 2019. It is a 2 year pilot programme funded by the Department of Culture Media and Sport that offers a total of £1.3 million to support creative businesses in the West Midlands through a series of workshops, seminars and peer to peer mentoring support. Funding will be available for businesses in the West Midlands to overcome specific barriers to growth such as marketing, IP development, sales, pitching and presenting and access to finance support. Introductions to investors will also be provided through a series of showcase events throughout the region with the aim of increasing the amount of private investment in the sector considerably by Autumn 2021.

Access to finance is a concern for many businesses across the screen sectors. In part, that reflects the reality of industries overwhelmingly made up of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In addition, film and games projects are often high-risk and find it difficult to attract investment.

One potential source of funds is the West Midlands Production Fund, which was relaunched by Creative England in November 2018. The fund offers funding of £2.1 million to projects with 50% match funding to support the development of the region as a sustainable TV and film drama hub. It provides access to finance for established production companies and start-ups working in production and is aimed at films with commercial potential (and minimum match funding of £100K).

[31] http://www.cwlep.com/sites/default/files/games_industry_-_blueprint_for_growth.pdf

[32] https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/creative-industries-in-west-midlands-to-get-12m-boost-from-government/

The fund can be used to serve a number of functions, including to provide match equity in productions already up and running or as gap funding to finance debt. Productions can apply for between £100,000 and £1m. The fund was originally set up with an investment of £4m and has been used to help finance a range of projects including *Jawbone, The Girl With All The Gifts, Spooks: The Greater Good, The Call Up, Nativity 2, One Mile Away, Toast, Hustle, Line of Duty* and *Dancing On The Edge.*

The West Midlands Production Fund is a valuable potential source of funding for projects but past experience is that there has been a lack of applications and that some of those applications that have been made are of poor quality or do not meet the funding criteria. There are many and complex reasons for this, including insufficient knowledge of the existence of the fund, the difficulty of raising match funding, the lack of networks to create partnership projects and inexperience in applying for such funds. Screen Central has organised an event to provide information for filmmakers about applying for the fund, but it is clear that further support and guidance is needed to help businesses to access the funds available. This could, for example, include training or a programme to pair local producers with more experienced partners as a means of accessing the fund.

The SIB has the opportunity to ensure that regional funding and industrial strategy is led by industry and co-ordinated to ensure that it brings benefits to the screen industries. There are a range of potential sources of support from the public sector including:

- UK project funding
- European and International funding
- Regional production funding
- Regional business and investment support
- Business support funding
- Innovation Funds
- Social Funds.

The SIB could work to improve mechanisms for accessing those funds.

There is also scope to explore the opportunities for investment around business, innovation and regeneration. Innovation funds are potential sources given the continued growth and evolution of technologies. Public funding can help to unlock private investment by reducing risk and creating potentially better returns. Schemes, such as EIS[33] and SEIS offer tax efficient investment opportunities. Although EIS funds can no longer be used to invest in production, they can support development and risk to capital that will help grow a business.

More generally, there is a strong sense that the region can do better at winning funding and attracting finance from a range of sources. There needs to be a more systematic approach to potential bid identification, application and development. This should provide pathways that will support businesses and allow them to access finance from a variety of sources. The SIB should consider creating a panel of experts to help develop and disseminate expertise to support investment success within the sector. That might include:

- identifying relevant investment and funding opportunities;
- building an up-to-date database of such opportunities;
- bid application expertise;
- creating a more systematic approach to applications and business planning;

[33] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/venture-capital-schemes-apply-for-the-enterprise-investment-scheme

- developing more structured means of industry partnership; and
- offering impartial advice, guidance and training on bid success.

4.3 Networks

Objective: to increase local production and the creation of content across the screen sectors by: developing stronger physical and digital links within the region, nationally and internationally; fostering a culture of creativity, diversity and inclusivity; and cultivate opportunities for the convergence of creative content across different platforms.

Discussions of what makes a creative cluster stress the importance of networks. The British Council[34] defines a 'cluster' as:

"a group of related or mutually-dependent businesses and resources that are grouped together in a neighbourhood or part of a city, although the cluster may be a virtual network that is dependent on good internet connectivity rather than physical proximity".

When looking at the characteristics of clusters, Professor Lisa De Propris[35], University of Birmingham, has suggested that a 'creative cluster' needs to be:

- a community of 'creative people' who share an interest in novelty but not necessarily in the same subject;
- a catalysing place where people, relationships, ideas and talents can spark each other;
- an environment that offers diversity, stimuli and freedom of expression; and
- an open, ever-changing network of interpersonal exchanges nurturing individual identity.

This definition suggests the importance of both networking and hubs to the development of clusters and these are considered in more detail below.

The research report on the *Anatomy of a Creative Cluster* (See Appendix 2) looked in more detail at some successful clusters around the world as prototypes, offering clues to the anatomy of successful clusters. Seeing what has worked - and learning from mistakes - is essential to the development plan outlined here. The long-term goal of developing a screen-based cluster or clusters in the West Midlands will come by developing the best ideas from around the world and adapting them to our local market.

Coordination of regional activity is a major part of this plan and co-operation between local clusters is essential. Networks can be physical (see section on Hubs below) or virtual, with ideas exchanged online through networks connected by websites and activities.

The discussions as part of the design labs revealed some scepticism about regional cluster development. Instead, some suggested that clusters should be based around specific areas, such as the major cities, or on the development of specific sector clusters for individual industries. This is the model that has grown successfully in the Leamington Silicon Spa cluster. The experience there is that such a tight agglomeration of businesses, with so many related companies in a single area, can bring considerable benefits. There is a culture of experience and knowledge sharing inside the Silicon Spa cluster, even among companies in direct competition. There are already proposals in

[34] https://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/guide/hubs-clusters-and-regions/

[35] De Propris, L. and Hypponen, L. (2008) *Creative Clusters and Governance*. Quoted in *Anatomy Of A Creative Cluster*. (Zanna Creative, 2019), commissioned by West Midlands Screen Bureau.

place for further developing the Silicon Spa cluster which will support the objectives of this plan. This need for flexibility and different approaches in confirmed in Nesta's 'Creative Nation' report, which explained that not all creative clusters grow in the same way. Instead, the report segmented creative clusters into different development models[36].

The aim is to create an ecosystem in which collective knowledge and actions can help create a critical mass that unlocks business opportunities but where there is dynamic competition between entrepreneurs to make the most of those opportunities.

GBSLEP will shortly be launching a Cluster Excellence Toolkit to explain what they mean, why it matters and what levers of change we can apply to make sector bodies, such as Screen Central, more effective. This will provide an important resource for the future development of clusters.

4.3.1 Networking

Recommendation: Mechanisms should be developed to help industry to work together and create clusters that enable them to develop joint projects and to share ideas and research.

The concept of networking is at the heart of what makes 'clusters' successful. It is the idea that, by coming together, similar businesses can share expertise and work together to learn and grow. This might involve co-location in a building or area, regular meetings or get-togethers or virtual networks.

Nesta's 'Creative Nation' research report has confirmed the importance of networking. They concluded that "networking events provide spaces where businesses, researchers and practitioners can meet, exchange knowledge on a subject and share their ideas. Through this process, new collaborations are formed, some of which lead to innovation. It is important therefore to understand the structure of the networking landscape and examine how the interests of the communities are changing over time."[37]

Networking is closely linked to the work set out below on creating physical or virtual hubs, mapping existing provision and creating a website. These developments will help to form an infrastructure to help create and strengthen networks. Through these mechanisms it will be possible to encourage a range of networking opportunities, from informal get togethers to meetings, seminars or training on particular issues of interest to the sector.

Networking is key to the development of clusters and this plan recommends that the SIB considers mechanisms for encouraging and supporting networking.

Of course, clusters do not operate in isolation and wider networking is also important. In some cases, it may be valuable to create partnerships with organisations that are leaders in other areas. For example, following the unsuccessful bid in 2018 by regional universities to the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Creative Industries Clusters Programme, WMSB and Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEPs started to explore potential partnerships with Royal Holloway's innovative *Story Futures*[38] programme.

4.3.2 Hubs

[36] https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/creative_nation-2018.pdf
[37] https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/creative_nation-2018.pdf
[38] https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/about-us/news/royal-holloway-led-bid-secures-funding-to-support-the-creative-industries/

Recommendation: The SIB should explore the potential to build on and develop a permanent physical hub or hubs to support physical networking. This should be enhanced with the development of virtual hubs.

As noted above, physical proximity, often in the form of hubs, affords some advantages to collaboration between businesses. At least part of the success of Silicon Spa in Warwickshire - the best example of a cluster in the region - is in the regular formal and informal meetings of like-minded people, according to businesses. Evidence suggests that face-to-face meetings build trust and a feeling of community. The idea of mutual benefit is an important motivation and it is easier to encourage on a one-to-one basis.

The *Anatomy of a Creative Cluster* report suggests that successful clusters understand the need for flexible mixed spaces. Physical focal points for meeting, discussion and knowledge sharing are at the heart of even the most high-tech hubs, such as the twofour54 development in Abu Dhabi.[39] Those physical spaces or hubs are often linked to virtual networks.

The business advantages of hubs come in many forms:

- economies of scale in development
- formal and informal contact with colleagues and competitors to discuss areas of mutual interest
- easy identification of talent for recruitment
- attracting other businesses and encouraging ancillary activity along the value chain (such as post-production)
- place-based branding
- a collective voice and influence at local and regional level.

Currently there are more than 20 co-working spaces in the region, the majority aimed at the creative sector. Most of these are based in Birmingham with only a few located in the wider region, but very few in close enough proximity to establish any kind of hub.

The Digbeth community is an example of a physical hub, centred around buildings like The Bond, Fazeley Studios and The Custard Factory. It offers a range of offices, studios and event spaces that houses a diverse creative community including freelancers, makers, agencies, start-ups and cultural venues.

One of the pilots in which this project has been engaged is the setting up of a shared central space for screen organisations at Zellig in Digbeth, Birmingham.[40] The space was negotiated for free with Zellig's owners and by the lead partner Screen Central. West Midlands Screen Bureau has been one of the partners, and the space has also been used by individual production companies and partners, such as Creative England and the Film Hub Midlands.

The design labs confirmed the value of simple collaborative spaces for sharing ideas. Independent television producers have lobbied for a single hub building in Birmingham and a cluster of film and television companies is being encouraged to create a mini ecosystem around new studios. This plan suggests looking at what support and incentives would be needed to make spaces more attractive to producers. However, a degree of flexibility needs to be built in. Some of the most effective clusters emerge organically over a period of time, perhaps through a small group of businesses choosing to move in. The development of these spaces should therefore be linked to the mapping work that is recommended below.

[39] Anatomy of a Creative Cluster
[40] https://www.zellig.com

4.3.3 Mapping

Recommendation: The SIB should develop the initial mapping work undertaken by WMSB into a comprehensive mapping project by researching, recording and sharing information about businesses across the screen sectors.

One indication of a fragmented industry – and one of the obstacles to growth – is the difficulty in locating businesses in the region. The reliance on Google searches and word of mouth has been a major issue and one that the WMSB work has started to address. The initial work has been to create a basic database of businesses, mapped onto an online map[41]. This is designed to solve the problem by allowing local businesses to locate one another more effectively. It will be important that the mapping work is kept up to date and its ongoing performance and utility measured to ensure that it continues to be developed in a way that users find most useful, particularly if this facilitates deeper collaboration, for example enabling businesses to become part of broad consortia bidding for specialist work.

Games industry body Ukie worked with innovation agency Nesta to create a map of the UK games industry[42]. This work has suggested that even basic mapping can deliver value, with offers including:

- a means to attract investors, with evidence of growth;
- a means to attract other creative businesses to regional clusters ("creative people go where they think there are other creative people and business develops where creativity gets a foothold" [43]); and
- a tool for lobbying government by creating a granular understanding of the sector and its scale in the region.

Online maps can be developed to permit interaction with real-world business with simple links. For the purposes of sector development, maps can not only create online business links but they can transform them into meetings, either online or physically. That capacity will be particularly relevant as more collaborative and co-working spaces are developed across the region.

4.3.4 Website

Recommendation: The SIB should build on the initial website created by WMSB to share research as part of this project, developing a comprehensive website which creates a network to link all of the work that is going on in the region.

At the moment, the online presence of the sector is fragmented, with many websites by individual organisations but no central point of contact or information. WMSB has built a basic website that has been used to record and share its work over the past year. This needs to be developed, in conjunction with the proposals for cluster development, including networks, hubs and mapping.

The building of a functional website by the SIB will act as both a network resource and a promotional tool.

Given the increasing importance of social media, it should also be a central part of any online strategy. One suggestion was to involve the often-ignored group of online influencers who are successfully operating in the region. These influencers are generally far more representative of the

[41] The map has been transferred to the Screen Industry Body for possible publication

[42] https://gamesmap.uk/#/map

[43] https://www.nesta.org.uk/news/ukie-and-nesta-team-up-to-put-uk-games-industry-on-the-map/

'young, digital and diverse' world to which the region aspires – and are better placed to advise on best practice in social media than policy-makers and business people.

The website will need to be connected to other developments in the region. For example, there is a proposal in the LIS to launch a "region-wide 'Creative Talent Platform' that will discover, develop and provide opportunities for diverse talent through competitions and master classes, unconnected to formal education." Also proposed is a "Regional 'Forum for Creative Talent', focused on emerging and diverse talent, to inform actions around inclusivity"[44].

Connecting Bristol[45] is an example of an active cross-sectoral network and a website for sharing news, case studies and insights into emerging opportunities. Connecting Bristol is the city's digital partnership and is coordinated by Bristol City Council's City Innovation Team. It aims to pilot the potential of the latest smart technologies to ensure that Bristol becomes a resilient, sustainable, prosperous, inclusive and liveable place. It works in partnership with other public-sector agencies, the private sector and community groups.

4.4 Communication

Objective: to engage the whole community in screen sectors that reflect the richness and diversity of the population of the region

4.4.1 Branding

Recommendation: A clearer brand or brands needs to be developed for West Midlands screen, based on the strengths and unique qualities of the region. This should build on the work of the Channel 4 bid and broader plans for Coventry City of Culture and the Commonwealth Games.

The West Midlands needs to become a clearer 'brand' if it aspires to a regional narrative that is not simply a collection of individual places. The 'Branding in the Screen Sector' report suggests that a clear brand can help to build the reputation and narrative that is so essential to development. The report points out that other regions at home and abroad have better understood the "central role played by the screen sector in developing and communicating a place brand."

The value of place branding is that it can:

- attract inward investment and inflow of workforce;
- gain the advantage of critical mass when promoting work from the region nationally and internationally;
- establish the region as a location for production; and
- demonstrate the importance of the screen industries in expressing and communicating a strong regional brand which is of benefit to the region as a whole.

However, the report warns that an effective brand needs to grow from the region and not be artificial or imposed:

"It is evident that top down approaches, where a brand is imposed on a region and this process is centrally managed, does not work. Models which provide the opportunity for key stakeholders to contribute to the place brand work best, as do those which celebrate and allow for diverse viewpoints. When translating this onto the screen sector, this implies the need to support the

[44] https://gbslep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/West-Midlands-Creative-Industries-LIS-FULL-VERSION-2Apr19.pdf
[45] https://www.connectingbristol.org

multiple voices within the region, encourage the development of storytelling routed regionally but connecting to global audiences and backed up by strong commercial support."

The report looks at the case study of Denmark and Scandi-noir projects and how they have contributed to the development of a regional brand. It points out the cultural, economic and brand value of developing work that can help shape the perception of a region. Although not filmed in the city, this phenomenon was seen in the global success of *Peaky Blinders*, which is thought to have been partly responsible for the 26% increase in visitors to Birmingham between 2013 and 2018.[46]

The Be More Birmingham event earlier this year brought together SMEs, policy makers, broadcasters and talent within the creative industries for the day. Keynote speeches and discussions celebrated the city and region's creativity and aimed to shine a light on the film, television, technology, digital and games sectors. This celebration of Birmingham's creative industries was an initial step in building a brand. The Get Closer campaign for Channel 4 was also a powerful model, using social media to support the building of the brand and increase audience engagement.

Upcoming events, including Coventry City of Culture 2021 and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games should be seized as major opportunities for showcasing the sector and building a regional brand and the screen industries need an active voice at the table.

The decision to focus on the West Midlands as a core brand comes with challenges. The region lacks the clear identity of the UK constituent nations, or some other regions, such as Yorkshire. The West Midlands is essentially a political construct and public identification has traditionally been more with cities or well-established areas, such as the Black Country.

There are good reasons, however, for building a screen sector brand around the West Midlands, including simple economies of scale. The region has a population of 5.9 million[47] – more than Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and more than 12 EU countries.[48]. The region includes the UK's second city and both Coventry (13th) and Wolverhampton (23th) are amongst the top-25 UK cities.[49]

There other vital considerations:

- The West Midlands exists as a political entity with its own Mayor and a clear place in national political structures. Investment in the sector from regional public funds will be seen in terms of benefits to the region.
- The *Anatomy of a Creative Cluster* report, commissioned by the West Midlands Screen Bureau, showed how clusters can work in successful regions around the world. Ontario in Canada, for example, has been developed as a recognisable global brand with a reputation for innovation, which has helped enhance rather than detract from the appeal of its biggest city, Toronto.
- International promotion can benefit from a clear brand and an engaging story to support that identity.

[46] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/02/peaky-blinders-mania-birmingham-screen-tourism-boom
[47] Office of National Statistics, 2017
[48] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_European_Union_member_states_by_population
[49] http://www.ukcities.co.uk/populations/

The potential value of a regional brand seems clear. However, it is not something that should be rushed into. A brand needs to grow and develop and cannot be imposed from above. This does not mean that there are not opportunities to build on other existing or emerging 'sub-brands' that have the potential to create a strong story for particular sectors or areas. For example, the 'Blueprint for Growth' for the games industry suggested the need specifically to promote the heritage and culture of 'Silicon Spa' as a source of regional competitive advantage[50]. By identifying games as a key 'digital manufacturing' sector within the Midlands Engine, it should be possible to differentiate the games industry in Coventry & Warwickshire from other UK clusters. It should be seen as a 'beacon' sector: high value, IP-creating, export focused, knowledge intensive, high skill and high growth.

4.4.2 Events

Recommendation: Consideration should be given to the potential to develop events as a way to strengthen networks and enhance the profile of the region, building on existing festivals or events and highlighting areas of strengths within the sectors. This should be done in an incremental way, through existing festivals and pop-up events.

Festivals and events are at the heart of screen-sector development elsewhere in the UK and the world. They can transform perceptions, making a place more attractive to both investors and new talents, which is why developing events is a central part of these proposals. The 'Anatomy' report (see Appendix 2) recommended funding and promoting local, regional, national and international events and festivals to showcase talent, promote product sales, enable networking and collaboration, stretch local ambition, feed innovation and bolster tourism.

The main driver for events is often to develop market activity because they bring a range of producers, investors, commissioners and distributors to the event. Events are also a dynamic means of communication to the local community, industry and the world. They can inspire the next generation to take up careers; they can engage communities; and they can create a spotlight on the area's ambitions that can attract investment and encourage new businesses to set up shop. Events can offer a good return on investment, with high levels of secondary value, such as hotel booking, food and retail and potentially capital investment (such as new buildings and equipment).

The second design lab considered the potential for an event that expressed a unique brand for the West Midlands. Delegates recognised the valuable global profile that came with major hit events, such as the Edinburgh Television Festival and Sheffield Doc/Fest and the Manchester International Festival. However, such major events bring a high risk. Delegates considered the potential for an event that expressed a unique brand for the West Midlands. One idea that was discussed was, for example, an international 'Ideas to IP' event. This was pitched as a cross-sectoral event, taking developing content for the converged era and that would be less about finished stories and ideas and more about turning the West Midlands into a recognised global centre for creative ideas development. This plan recommends an incremental approach, building on existing events and creating pop-ups that allow concepts to be tested and enable successful events to grow and develop.

The West Midlands has become a leader in events such as eSports. Insomnia, billed as the UK's biggest gaming festival, is held twice yearly over 4 days at the NEC. This year saw almost 120,000 people attending the two events, which included eSports tournaments, gaming activities, exhibitions and Q&A sessions and attracted visitors from all over the world. Arena Birmingham has hosted global multi-player role-playing battle events with hundreds of thousands of pounds in

[50] http://www.cwlep.com/sites/default/files/games_industry_-_blueprint_for_growth.pdf

prizes.[51] More than 24,000 people visited (Electronic Sports League) One Birmingham and it was watched online for more than 7.6 million hours online over the course of the weekend.

Simple pop-up events can have a significant impact. The games industry around Leamington Spa has been particularly active in event creation, recognising it as an opportunity to build links with a community that did not necessarily recognise the contribution it was making or the opportunities for employment it represented. 2019 saw the launch of the first Interactive Futures games festival in Leamington.[52] It brought together the UK games community, including professionals, industry experts, journalists, students and players to Silicon Spa. The event explored games culture, enhanced skills, supported career development and offered insight into some of the latest developments within the sector.

There are, already significant local festivals in the sector, including Flatpack[53] and a host of important but smaller festivals that need greater promotion and co-ordination. Beatfreeks[54], for example, has a dynamic website and social media presence that it uses to promote events like its multi-disciplinary 'Festival of Audacity'.

Many successful local or pop-up events include a strong outreach programme, creating links with diverse communities and ensuring the event or festival belongs to all. As well as being a showcase for local talent, festivals can attract the best in their fields from around the world, including success stories from the region, who may have left the region. The ambitions of a growing screen sector could be expressed by a coordinated, planned and branded series of pop-up events in communities.

[51] https://www.eslgaming.com/press/esl-one-birmingham-return-2019-thanks-incredible-support-uk-esports-community

[52] https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/news/article/266/silicon_spa_set_to_welcome_its_first_ever_international_games_festival

[53] https://flatpackfestival.org.uk

[54] https://www.beatfreeks.com

Appendix 1

Background

West Midlands screen bodies

Film Birmingham

Film Birmingham is Birmingham City Council's dedicated film & TV office. It provides a 'one-stop shop' for all filming and photography in the city and West Midlands region, offering a comprehensive range of production services including issuing filming permits, finding locations, sourcing local crew, traffic management solutions and any other logistical challenges. It liaises on behalf of production companies with council departments, stakeholders, West Midlands Police, local and national organisations to ensure filming is easy and efficient in the region. It promotes the city and region as a destination for film & TV production and provides a free service to film makers including an online resource of locations, crew and facilities.

Film Birmingham is currently leading an eighteen-month pilot project (funded by GBSLEP) with the local authorities within WMCA & GBSLEP area to explore and develop a regional film office.

Screen Central

Screen Central is an independent membership organisation serving the screen sector in the West Midlands. It supports all screen creatives making all types of artistic content from film, TV and short form, to animation and games and members include producers, writers, editors, art directors, composers and others. With over 120 members, Screen Central is the largest screen sector membership organisation in the West Midlands. Its three main activities are training, lobbying and connecting people.

Film Hub Midlands

Film Hub Midlands is one of eight Film Hubs around the UK that are part of the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), an initiative to enable organisations and film experts to work in partnership to boost film audiences across the UK, particularly for specialised and independent British film. It is run as a partnership between Flatpack in Birmingham and Broadway in Nottingham, with activity including the monthly Filmwire email newsletter and regular preview screenings for those working in the sector.

West Midlands wider landscape

Population

The West Midlands has an inclusive and diverse population. The 2011 census showed that 42% of the population of Birmingham and 35% in Wolverhampton identify as non-white. Birmingham is also the youngest major city in Europe. The West Midlands is therefore ideally placed to be at the centre of work to build a more diverse screen industry and film culture.

West Midlands Combined Authority

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) comprises 18 local authorities and four Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) working collaboratively on projects to deliver a more prosperous West Midlands. The WMCA Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets out priorities including investment in the creative industries, innovation in other sectors and the creation of transferable skills. It also includes plans for investment in region-wide broadband connectivity and encourages the development of sectoral clusters for the region's businesses.

Higher Education

The West Midlands region has many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which support the development of skills in the screen sectors. Birmingham City University runs a wide range of undergraduate, MA, postgraduate and professional courses in film, performance, games and digital media and technologies. Its New Technologies Institute (NTI) has £62m media facilities and the Parkside Mediahouse has five TV and radio studios. It has drawn together these activities as B-Film, the Birmingham Centre for Film Studies, an interdisciplinary research Centre.

Birmingham City University (BCU) runs undergraduate, MA, postgraduate and professional courses in film, performance, games and digital media and technologies. The University invested £62m into its media facilities, housing five TV studios and six radio studios. BCU's Gamer Camp has bespoke studio facilities and offers courses that allow games programmers, artists and producers to build real games for PC, smartphone and consoles.

The University of Wolverhampton provides both undergraduate and postgraduate film and related courses. The University of Birmingham's Department of Film and Creative Media offers an MA in Film and TV and the Media Centre has studio facilities.

In Coventry, the Serious Games Institute, a spin out of the School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics at Coventry University, is an internationally recognised centre of excellence in the application of games technologies in learning, professional development and applied research. Coventry University's School of Media and Performing Arts runs BA and MA courses in Media Production and Digital Media. There are also courses in Games Technology and Games Art.

Both Coventry University and the University of Warwick provide a pipeline of skilled individuals to the games industry in a range of technical and creative disciplines. Warwick University's Department of Film and Television Studies also offers both BA and MA Film courses and a new collaboration with the London Film Institute will include investment in digital production facilities.

An application led by Coventry University, Staffordshire University, University of Birmingham and BCU, failed to win support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council Creative Industries Clusters programme in 2018, in which £80m investment in eight clusters programmes had the potential to kickstart the next stage of regional development.

The BFI Film Academy aims to help train the next generation of UK filmmakers. It trains young people aged 16-19 and offers course for every film industry role, from writing to production, sound design, editing and camera. It is run in partnership with Midlands Arts Centre, The Company and the BFI.

Arts and Culture

The West Midlands Region includes world-class arts, cultural and media facilities, including household names such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. There are 38 National Portfolio Organisations funded by Arts Council England, including theatre, orchestras, opera, dance, museums and art galleries, as well as a host of non-revenue funded arts organisations. There is great potential for these cultural organisations to work together to develop new content and use new digital technologies, for example, the RSC's major investments in immersive technologies through the Audiences of the Future programme[55].

[55] https://www.immerseuk.org/demonstrator-beneficiaries/

Areas of strength in the West Midlands screen sectors

Silicon Spa Games Cluster

The video games sector in the region, based around Leamington Spa, is an example of a highly successful cluster. The cluster businesses, nicknamed 'Silicon Spa', generated an estimated £188m in GVA in 2015, creating between 2,000 and 2,500 jobs. Other parts of the region are also strong, with up to 1,000 more jobs and around £36m in GVA in 2015. Around 15% of UK games development roles are based in Coventry and Warwickshire (predominantly Leamington Spa)[56].

The video games industry in the region is already a global force[57] with companies producing major international games, including PC, mobile and console games. Ukie and Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) have already come together to create a set of proposals, the 'Blueprint for Growth', to further develop the games industry in the West Midlands[58]. Their plan addresses the following areas:

- promoting the local games industry by celebrating its economic and cultural impact;
- affordable workspace and network support;
- building the talent pipeline, improving skills and inspiring the next generation, including a Digital Schoolhouse Initiative;
- developing business skills amongst games companies; and
- export and investment support.

Although the games industry cluster is at a different stage of growth, the challenges it faces and the proposals to address these needs bear a close similarity to the issues faced by the wider screen sector, as set out in this plan – the need for better leadership, infrastructure, networking and communications. The wider West Midlands screen sectors needs to build on and learn from this success by creating other successful screen clusters in the region. The games industry has proved itself capable of adapting to change and has become a mixed economy where smart, agile teams have found space to develop worldwide successes in an industry that has been through a long period of change.

Factual television

High-end drama has enjoyed much success in recent years but factual content also has routes to international markets, with the potential for export and franchising.

Factual television is a traditional strength in the region. Some of the most iconic factual television has been produced in the region over the years, from *Gardeners' Word*, *Top Gear* and *Countryfile* to more recent productions including *The Gadget Show, Embarrassing Bodies* and the *Great British Menu*.

Factual has been a mainstay of the production sector in the region, through companies, such as 7 Wonder, Maverick Television, Full Fat TV, North One and Optomen Television. The economics of the factual sector are relatively strong with the global 'superindies' particularly active in the region. Maverick, North One and Optomen are now all part of All3Media.

Factual television formats travel well. For example, FirstLookTV has found ready markets in the US for the true crime programming at the heart of his company.

Leading independent producers have lobbied for an 'indie hub' for the region, which would give the main local production companies a strong, sustainable base and potentially attract more.

[56] CWLEP Figures
[57] https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/17-video-games-made-warwickshire-15646391
[58] http://www.cwlep.com/sites/default/files/games_industry_-_blueprint_for_growth.pdf

Young content

The West Midlands has a small but well-connected and relatively buoyant cluster of producers working with children's and young people's content. It is a sector that traditionally attracts financial support from a variety of public sector and broadcast sources, keen to nurture a new 'media literate' generation.

It has been further boosted by the recent launch of the £57m BFI Young Audience Content Fund.[59] The fund can cover up to 50% of the production budget of projects aimed at under-18s, which have secured a broadcast commitment from a free-to-access, Ofcom regulated service with significant UK-wide audience reach. Potential eligible broadcasters include but are not limited to STV, S4C, ITV, CITV, Channel 5, Channel 4, E4 and BBC Alba. Launching the fund in April 2019, BFI Deputy CEO Ben Roberts said: "The content we consume in our youth can have an enduring impact and contribute to shaping who we become." That could be very significant news for a relatively mature regional sector that is already fairly adept at working across platform

Company	Location
Big Tooth Studios	Wolverhampton
Brothers McLeod	Stratford Upon Avon
Carse and Waterman	Stoke On Trent
The Character Shop	Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham
Dice Productions	Digbeth, Birmingham
Infinite Wisdom Studios	Birmingham
Alex Joleaf	Birmingham
Ragdoll Productions	Stratford Upon Avon
Second Home Studios	Birmingham
7 Wonder	Birmingham
Mark Silk	Birmingham
Yamination Studios	Birmingham

The region has a strong track record in this area. Ragdoll Productions in Stratford Upon Avon created some of the biggest and most iconic UK series, including *Teletubbies, Rosie & Jim, In The Night Garden,* and *Brum*.[60] And other companies have been enjoying success and exploring the multi-platform potential of work. 7 Wonder's *Maddie's Do You Know?* CBeebies series is a strong example, while Drew Roper at Yamination has had close associations with the work of Roald Dahl.

Producers believe there is high potential for short-term success and long-term growth that might stretch across the sector.

Recent developments and activity

Infrastructure improvements

This is a time of optimism for the West Midlands. The redevelopment of New Street Station was intended as a precursor to new jobs and investment around the development of HS2 (currently under review). Recent figures show that Greater Birmingham is the 'favourite destination' for people moving away from London. Thirty-something professionals are attracted by affordable housing, employment opportunities and a quality of life that takes in both a vibrant night-time economy and surrounding countryside. The picture for the

[59] https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/announcements/young-audiences-content-fund-applications

[60] http://www.ragdoll.co.uk

wider West Midlands looks bright, with Coventry and Warwickshire showing the fourth-fastest rate of post-recession growth of all 39 LEP areas. With excellent broadband, excellent road and rail links and its own international airport, the West Midlands region is ripe for development. The WMCA Strategic Economic Plan aims to improve broadband connectivity in urban and rural areas with 100% of premises having superfast broadband (currently 88%) by 2030. Coventry and Warwickshire have been announced as one of six areas to pilot the UK's fastest broadband with connection speeds of 1,000 megabits per second. Birmingham Airport is a base for long haul flights, offering connections including New York, Delhi, and Beijing with plans for the further development of long-haul services.

Birmingham was recently ranked 31st among the world's most sustainable cities, alongside Toronto, Tokyo and San Francisco. This sympathetic, people-centred regeneration can be most clearly seen in major regeneration projects including: the renovation of New Street Station, the new Library of Birmingham, HS2, the re-creation of the industrial and shopping areas around the Bull Ring and the Smithfield Market areas, Digbeth and Eastside, the relocation of the HSBC HQ, and the new tram network.

There are also wider developments that are of interest. The selection of the West Midlands to be the home of the UK's first large-scale 5G test bed is a great boost to the region and will bring great potential benefits to the screen sectors. The West Midlands is also due to host important events that will shine a spotlight on the region – including Coventry, UK City of Culture 2021 and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

New Studios

Peaky Blinders' creator Stephen Knight originally announced his vision for the development of the 'Mercian Studios' on a 20-acre site near the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham. The latest plans are for a new studio development in central Birmingham.

Appendix 2

Reports

THE ANATOMY OF A CREATIVE CLUSTER - INSPIRATION FROM GLOBAL CREATIVE INITIATIVES

Report by Zanna Creative

This international survey looked at best practice in some of the world's most successful creative clusters. These cluster represent five global regions: Asia Pacific, North America, Latin America, Europe and Africa & Middle East, focusing on Abu Dhabi, Bangalore, Berlin-Brandenburg, Mexico City and Ontario. These thriving creative economies represent different stages of growth and socio-economic, political and environmental contexts. By analysing these models, the report created a framework to help support the development of a thriving screen cluster in the West Midlands.

Summary of case studies

Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi's creative cluster is an emergent but rapidly expanding ecosystem. The city's ambitious plans are unprecedented in scale and scope, driven by the film and TV sectors and focusing on international partnership and franchising, and it will be the first cluster of its kind in the United Arab Emirates.

Bangalore

This cluster in India's "digital capital" has developed organically over twenty years, catalysed by the millennium IT boom and sustained policy and government investment. India has one of the world's fastest growing digital audiences and Bangalore is capitalising on this with a highly educated population of young professionals, cross-pollination between science, technology and the arts, and a politically progressive reputation.

Berlin

A global destination housing over 20,000 artists and creative businesses, Berlin is building on a rich history of counter-cultural activity. It shares an innovation strategy (InnoBB) with its neighbour state Brandenburg, which supports the creative industries alongside energy, healthcare and future mobility clusters, through an urban-rural, cross-sector "super-cluster".

Mexico City

The Mexican capital's creative cluster centres on a world-class design sector, an established film industry and rapidly growing R&D and innovation sectors, underpinned by a strong indigenous identity and a strong emphasis on social and environmental impact in a polarised city where 43% still live in poverty.

Ontario

One of the most advanced creative clusters in the world, with thriving film, TV, interactive digital media, music, publishing, events and theatre industries, Ontario has achieved consistent investment and support over 20-30 years through solid policymaking, a probusiness environment and world-class research and educational institutions.

Findings

The report identified ten key 'Anatomy' elements that made a successful creative cluster:

1. International recognition – supporting companies to develop the size and capacity to compete in relevant international markets through underwriting the risk of R&D and providing grant financing as well as promoting local talent at international events and platforms (physical and digital) in-country and abroad to market products and brokering new relationships.

2. Economic support – relevant financial mechanisms to support different elements of the creative ecology, for example tax credits, grant funding, accelerator funding, early-stage and commercialisation equity investment, funded participation at international events, infrastructural funding (workspaces, research institutes, business parks, industry-specific production facilities), and training and professional development.

3. Community engagement – creating the conditions for communities to benefit from and collaborate with creative clusters in their locale on mutually-beneficial initiatives, celebrating diversity and legitimising local culture, and creating opportunities for local people to access creative education and employment.

4. Festivals and events – funding and promoting local, regional, national and international events and festivals to showcase talent, promote product sales, enable networking and collaboration, stretch local ambition, feed innovation and bolster tourism.

5. Cross-sector collaboration – knowledge sharing, creating meet-ups, events, conferences, cross-sector workspaces, and innovation competitions to support regular networking and nurture fruitful collaborations through space, funding and shared vision and purpose.

6. Urban-rural connectivity – reframing the rural as a place of creative possibility by repurposing ex-industrial and farming infrastructure as creative workspace and facilities, providing cheaper workspace for both SMEs and large companies, and facilitating activities to connect people across locations.

7. Individual leadership – key individuals who are critical to the strategic vision, drive, identity and international influence of a cluster, and leadership development infrastructure to invest in emerging leaders.

8. Physical hubs – spaces that provide offices, creative facilities and equipment, alongside networking, education, capacity building, investment and profile to individuals and creative companies.

9. Virtual networks – online networks supporting networking and collaboration locally and internationally, complimentary to in-person opportunities.

10. Artists and industry together – creating resilience through the provision of space and funding for and cross-pollination between individual artists and collectives with strong relationships to community, arts and crafts, talent development, sustainable development and artistic markets, and commercial businesses seeking these skills.

In addition to these elements, there is "enabling" infrastructure which is critical to the health of a cluster's anatomy:

- R&D partnerships – bringing academia and industry together
- communications and branding

- IP Development – legal frameworks and implementation
- consistent and committed policymaking.

These ten Anatomy elements and the enabling infrastructure comprise a development framework for new and existing clusters, and an ongoing "health-check" for cluster growth.

BRANDING IN THE SCREEN INDUSTRIES

Report by Dr Finola Kerrigan and Katharina Stolley

The study had the following terms of reference:

- To undertake research on the development of regional screen brands and the linked topic of place branding through screen.

- To produce a report identifying key examples of successful development of regional screen brands and place brands through the use of screen industries.

The report looked at how to define, understand and develop a West Midland Screen Brand and report outlined some key trends in place branding, specifically in relation to brands developed through a strong screen presence.

The report includes a number of short case studies to illustrate key learning of relevance to the region. These include Screen Yorkshire, Doha Film Institute, Korean Wave and Denmark. The report also considered the role of successful events such as South By Southwest and Sheffield International Documentary Festival and the potential role of Storytelling in building a brand.

In an industry where clusters of excellence have been shown to benefit a strong screen sector, there is a need to understand the role of place in the definition, understanding and development of a West Midland Screen Brand. The report outlines some key trends in place branding, specifically in relation to brands developed through a strong screen presence.

Screen-based brands have generally developed as a result of high levels of film and television production from the region and/or films and television shows which have contributed to the establishment of a regional brand through showcasing regional assets. In this case, it has been less about volume of production and more about how the region has been able to leverage its assets through showcasing them.

Benefits

The report suggested the following general benefits of developing a strong regional (screen based) brand:

1. attract inward investment and inflow of workforce;
2. gain the advantage of critical mass when promoting work from the region nationally and internationally;
3. establish the region as a location for production; and
4. demonstrate the importance of the screen industries in expressing and communicating a strong regional brand which is of benefit to the region as a whole.

DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Report by Lara Ratnajara and Helga Henry

This research identified leadership development pathways to support diverse and thriving creative screen businesses. The report was based on the following research:

- Research and evaluation of relevant initiatives and policy thinking in diversity and the class ceiling taking place across the region and nationally.

- An Open Space event which consulted with a number of regional initiatives supporting the development of diverse creative.

- Research and evaluation of 3 UK case studies of relevant initiatives in other regions, for example SharpFutures in Manchester.

- Assessment of the HE offer supporting diversity into the screen sector from institutions in the region (including BCU, Warwick, Coventry, Wolverhampton, UoB)

- Consideration of current national quotas for diversity in leadership within the creative industries (BFI, Screen Skills and Games)

Recommendations

This research and evaluation of relevant initiatives and policy and discussions with sector professionals suggested some of the key issues regarding the lack of diversity in the sector.

One key idea was that it is audience diversification which will drive future content creation. Foundations need to be built to inform future programmes to connect diverse creative talent to the screen sector supply chain.

The next stage of the report made a number of recommendations. The report also showcased some case study models that have application in the West Midlands.

The report recommends that the new screen body could champion the following issues to promote and champion diversity:

- Leadership development
- Models for making it happen
- Advocacy
- Opportunities for synergy
- Meeting the needs of a global audience.

Appendix 3

West Midlands Screen Bureau Consultees

NAME	SURNAME	ORGANISATION
Daniel	Alexander	Daniel Alexander Films
Frances	Anderson	VWV
Paul	Ashton	Creative England
Debbie	Aston	Line Producer
Chris	Barrow	The Lampworks
Daniel	Blyden	Impact Hub
Paul	Bramwell	MediaCom
Pauline	Burt	Ffilm Cymru Wales
Gail	Caig	Creative England
Sindy	Campbell	Film Birmingham
Neil	Cocker	Entrepreneur and Network builder
John	Davies	Black Fire Films
Caren	Davies	BBC
Ryan	Davis	Independent writer and Filmmaker
Matt	Desmier	Silicon Beach, Bournemouth
Noel	Dunne	Creative Alliance
Natalie	Edwards	Birmingham Entrepreneur and Influencer
Sarah	Ellis	RSC
Gareth	Ellis-Unwin	ScreenSkills
Sabrina	Ferro	Youngest Media
Harriet	Finney	BFI
Michael	Ford	Infinite Wisdom Productions
Colette	Foster	Full Fat TV
Ian	Francis	Flatpack
Fiona	Francombe	BottleYard Studios Bristol
David	Furmage	Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP
Sarah	Gee	Bid Writer and Fundraiser
Joe	Godwin	BBC Academy
Julia	Goldsworthy	WMCA
Martin	Green	Birmingham 2022
Michael	Gubbins	WMSS
Tony	Guillan	Coventry City of Culture 2021
Zac	Hancock	Social Chain
Will	Hanrahan	First Look TV
Nick	Harper	Exient
John	Holmes	Advantage Creative
Sam	Hope	Wolverhampton University
Jeremy	Howe	BBC
Mark	Hughes	Webb, Space 2
Lee	Kemp	Vermillion Films
Dr Finola	Kerrigan	University of Birmingham

Julia	Lamaison	BFI
Fiona	Latter	WMCA
Alex	Lockwood	Lockwood Films
Jason	Lowther	WMCA
Anna	Mansi	British Film Institute
Laura	McMillan	Coventry City of Culture
John	McVay	PACT
Simeon	Moore	(Zimbo Freemind) DATS TV
Nathan	Moore	Actor and producer
Natalie	Moore	Bristol Film Office
Suzie	Norton	Zanna Creative
Stacy	O’Connor	CWLEP
Louise	Osbourne	Actor/Scriptwriter
Sol	Papadopolous	Hurricane Films
Tris	Payne	PACT
Dick	Penny	The WaterShed Bristol
Caroline	Percy	Ingenious Media
Jack	Powell	BFI
Mahesh	Ramachandra	Azoomee
Andy	Richardson	BBC Drama Village
Rachel	Robey	Wellington Films
Drew	Roper	Yamination Studios
Harinder	Sangha	Sumo Digital
Will	Saunders	Royal Holloway Storyfutures
Marc	Silk	VO Artist
Martin	Simms	WMSB
Amrit	Singh	Creative designer
Chris	Southall	Sumo Digital
Katharina	Stolley	Birmingham Business School
Steve	Stopps	Games Sector Expert
Andy	Street	Mayor of the West Midlands
Ammo	Talwar	Punch
Leanne	Tattum	Method in Motion
Matt	Taylor	Method in Motion
Samantha	Thodhlana	WMSB
Will	Trotter	BBC Drama Village
John	Walbeoffe	Coach House Studios
John	White	The Space
Rose	Wilde	Crew Birmingham
Drew	Wilkins	Fish in a bottle
Carl	Withers	Bluewater Capital