

Un Dau Tri



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Centre for the
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Canolfan yr
Economi Greadigol

Steps towards developing
a framework to support
regional creative clusters

Jess Mahoney, Dr Máté Fodor,
Professor Sara Pepper and
Professor Justin Lewis



Overview

Creative Industries Cluster Hubs (July 2023 – March 2024) was a £200K pilot project led by Cardiff University's Centre for the Creative Economy via the Creative Cardiff network. The work was funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as part of a £2.6M investment in 'Demonstrator' projects. These were a UK-wide portfolio of eight projects designed to explore the potential of existing creative industries clusters to grow, attract investment and deliver impact.

This report, authored by Cardiff University's Centre for the Creative Economy, explores the impact of Creative Industries Cluster Hubs and makes recommendations for further investment in the framework as an intervention to drive inclusive, democratic sector growth and extend the reach and impact of existing, city-based creative sector clusters.



Forewords

Jess Mahoney
Head of Creative Cardiff

Creative Cardiff was established by Cardiff University's Centre for the Creative Economy, with support from Cardiff Council, BBC Cymru Wales and Wales Millennium Centre, almost a decade ago.



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A model for research,
development and
innovation in the creative
industries. Clwstwr,
Centre for the Creative
Economy Cardiff University
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Cardiff CF24 4HQ www.
clwstwr.org.uk. ISBN: 978-
1-7394553-2-3.

In the time since it has cultivated a network of over 4,000 creatives, helping underpin and leverage creative sector growth in the city by providing insights, opportunities for connection and collaboration, and creating a forum to share ideas, best practice and reciprocal support. And when it comes to creativity, Cardiff is a place that seriously punches above its weight: over 15% of city-based businesses belong to the creative industries (almost double the 8% average for Wales) and one third of Wales' total creative industries turnover is generated in the city.¹

We love Cardiff's thriving creative workforce and take great pride in seeing all that the sector has achieved: bringing communities together to share experiences, driving jobs and growth, realising bold new innovations, and growing in reputation as a globally recognised hub for media and screen. But we also recognise that creativity does not start and end in our cities. There are – to borrow the words of writer and Children's Laureate (2021-23) Connor Allen – 'these pockets of creative tribes' all over Wales who are shifting the dial and pushing the boundaries of creative expression. And it's often the hidden spaces, in the less obvious places, where creatives can

find access to specialist equipment, production spaces, expertise and that magical, intangible sense of community that helps bring new ideas into their fullest expression. Ideas that go on to enrich our cultural lives, feed imaginations and inspire the next generation of makers and do-ers.

As Cardiff's creative cluster grows in scale and renown, it will become increasingly important that we harness the wealth of nascent talent across our wider region to take advantage of emerging opportunities, convene new communities and build thriving, representative new creative places. And in ongoing challenging funding contexts, the power of collaborative, regional approaches in developing holistic, place-based policies to enable this, and in creating additionality, cannot be underestimated.

The contents of this report set out a practical framework for how this might be achieved. By working collaboratively across the region we can build an inclusive, democratic and sustainable future for the sector and go further, together.

Watch our
short film by
Connor Allen.



Professor Sara Pepper

Co-Director of The Centre for the Creative Economy

Creative Industries Cluster Hubs (CICH) was commissioned at the beginning of 2023. It followed rapidly on the heels of our research, development and innovation (R,D&I) programme Clwstwr and presented an opportunity to further expand our research and engagement models across the region.



The objectives for CICH had been with us for some while, i.e. to establish and test an intervention framework that would support a more inclusive and democratic approach to sector growth across the whole of the Cardiff Capital Region. Whilst Clwstwr had made some headway and funded initiatives across the wider region, projects outside the capital city represented only 12% of total funding. This told us that there was an unequal distribution of creative industries growth activities across the region and demonstrated that more work was needed to re-balance sector growth across South East Wales. This would help to cultivate future talent pipelines and ensure that communities across the diverse economic and social geography of the region are enabled to draw tangible benefits from Cardiff's growing status as a capital of culture and creativity.

CICH worked with local authority partners in Monmouthshire, Newport and Rhondda Cynon Taf on an ambitious 9-month pilot project. This work aimed to connect new and existing talent with wider networks, opportunities and collaborators, and better understand the individuals and organisations working in these locations. Despite its relatively short lifecycle and modest investment, CICH delivered a range of proven impacts across key areas, alongside demonstrating the potential for developing the model and building on the foundations of the pilot. It also developed practical experience of the challenges, and resources required, to build effective stakeholder and industry relationships at speed, informing future thinking in this area.

We sincerely hope we can connect with funders, supporters and stakeholders to jointly find a way to continue this work and to ultimately better support, engage and enable the cultural and creative workforce across the entirety of the Cardiff Capital Region.

Project impact

3 local authority partners

7 local sector stakeholder partners



Over **1,000** businesses and individuals engaged



691 creative practitioners / businesses mapped

£230k of additional local revenue



41 public events delivered



Engaged across 18 venues and spaces



9 Creative Cuppas across the region

15 local jobs (FTEs) created



guest speakers, hosts and experts engaged



85,968 social media engagements

Increase in local creative start-up survival rates by

10%

15%

Increase in market exposure and online visibility for local creative businesses by c.

5% increase in sector inclusivity

Potential to create

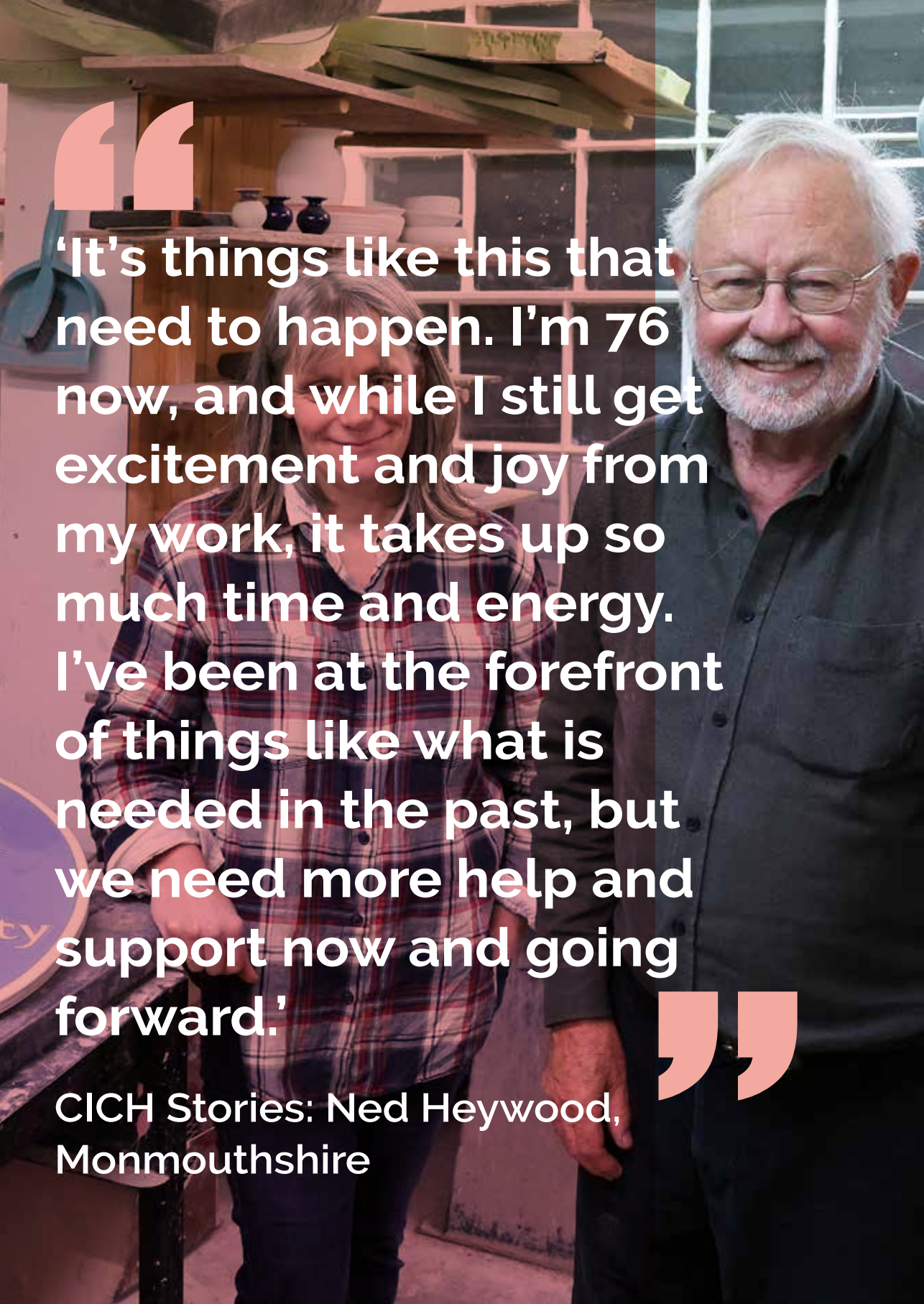
75+

creative start-ups and over 170 new creative jobs (*based on 3 years of further funding)

Projected GVA of **£3.4M**

(*based on 3 years of further funding)

Positively impacting on sense of community, reciprocal support and outlook for local creative practitioners and business owners



“
‘It’s things like this that need to happen. I’m 76 now, and while I still get excitement and joy from my work, it takes up so much time and energy. I’ve been at the forefront of things like what is needed in the past, but we need more help and support now and going forward.’
”

CICH Stories: Ned Heywood,
Monmouthshire

Project objectives

Creative Industries Cluster Hubs (CICH) set out to establish and test an intervention framework that would support a more inclusive and democratic approach to sector growth. It would do this by delivering against key objectives –

- Cultivate nascent local creative sector networks and provide a focal point for local, community-led growth.
- Upskill new partners, stakeholders and sector representatives and build sustainability and legacy planning.
- Initiate a forum of local clusters that work together to share resources, expertise and assets, building a future talent pipeline of creative sector innovators and driving future economic growth and prosperity across the region.
- Democratise and diversify engagement in the creative industries from within under-served communities.
- Share best practice, support fledgling clusters and initiatives and raise confidence and self-determination.
- Build resilience and social capital for creative businesses and individuals by facilitating collaboration, partnership working and sharing resources.
- Further embed research, development and innovation (R,D&I) and commercialisation activity across the region at a grassroots level.
- Support innovation by making resources, expertise and specialised equipment more openly available to beneficiaries from diverse, under-represented and under-served groups.
- Drive beneficiaries to new innovation and sector opportunities.



Findings

Creative Industries Cluster Hubs has been an ambitious pilot project that delivered considerable additionality and achieved notable industry engagement. It has quickly proven effectiveness in a number of key areas:

Driving new partnership models

Leveraging the expertise and social capital of an existing creative industries cluster (via Creative Cardiff), the model provides a supportive framework in which to explore new ways for Higher Education, local governance and industry to work together, developing solutions that amplify the potential of the creative sector to lead new, fair, democratised economic and social growth. This includes capitalising on the role of universities to build on civic engagement, support and amplify local growth opportunities by sharing knowledge, guidance and leadership, providing access to data, evidence and analysis, and helping establish theoretical underpinning for proposed creative industries interventions.

The model fostered revived relationships across, and within, the partner local authorities, creating a forum to bring together multi and interdisciplinary portfolio holders – for example representation from Planning, Economy, Business, Regeneration and Skills teams – to develop creative industries interventions. This is supporting a shift in thinking away from the creative and cultural industries (CCIs) as consumptive, subsidised 'Arts' provision and towards a powerful lever for unlocking economic growth and driving regeneration.

'The engagement events and discussions held as part of the project have helped us and our partners to gain an insight into the challenges faced by those in the sector and will enable us to provide better support and build better networks going forward.'

– Adrian Williams, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council





Community-convening and enhancing social capital

'People need to get together, cooperate and collaborate. I think the establishment of, say, a visual arts studio trail or an exhibition centre would be really good.'

– (CICH Stories: Ned Heywood, Monmouthshire)

Throughout the project's events and engagement activity, many participants spoke of feeling 'isolated' or that 'being a creative or an artist can be quite lonely and repetitive' (Attendee, Rhondda Cynon Taf event). In total, the model brought over 1000 diverse creative practitioners and businesses together, often across distributed geographies. By creating a focal point for unlocking new creative narratives and feeding into future CCI interventions, it has supported relationship building, new partnership formation and reciprocal support, and opened-up space for local governance to infiltrate their creative ecosystem. This has helped convene creative communities and sow the seeds for future collaboration, and is shaping new, shared creative futures for artists and creative practitioners across the region.

'Putting on an event for us local creatives has been described as herding cats, but this was a fresh approach to understanding, untangling and including the creative web of talent in the South Wales Valleys. This event brought us together in an interesting and engaging way and I look forward to it being a part of our creative future.'

– (Sion Tomos Owen, Visual Artist and Writer, Rhondda Cynon Taf)

'I definitely think there's a need for what CICH Newport is providing. While I'm quite well-networked in the community arts sector, I'm less so with my personal studio practice. It can feel isolating in my studio on my own, so the chance to find a few more artists that work in that area is brilliant, and so important for our wellbeing.'

– (CICH Stories: Heidi Mehta, Newport)

Generating new place-based insights, intelligence and understanding on the needs of local CCIs

The model responds to policy objectives for place-based re-balancing through increasing social capital, building resilience and developing practical new provision to amplify nascent creative talent. By working closely and intentionally with local authority areas to deliver work that enhances understanding about local creative economies and workforce, the model is a place-based methodology in which local knowledge and data informs a holistic regional approach. This includes working directly with creative communities to understand place-specific challenges and opportunities and, in the longer-term, is an opportunity to co-create strategic solutions.

'Music and performing arts are strong here, though it needs somewhere to coalesce... a directory of events would be a good start.'

– (Attendee, Rhondda Cynon Taf event)

'I feel very isolated as an artist here and find I have to travel to Cardiff to use facilities such as printers or find community spaces.'

– (Survey response, Monmouthshire)

For example, in Monmouthshire, it was discovered that the region experiences particular issues around lack of exhibition spaces and gallery provision. This inhibits capacity of its rich visual artist and maker community to drive visitor footfall, bolster the local economy and positively impact on 'place'. In 'CICH Stories: Will Davies', a photographer from Monmouthshire (now based in the United States) who was awarded 'Landscape Photographer of the Year 2022' for an image taken in Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) shared that he could not secure local exhibition space, despite this being the first time an image from Wales had received this accolade. In

Will's words 'it's not that we need space or equipment, necessarily; it's support with the promotional side of things – securing exhibitions, networking and forming bonds amongst industry'.

'I don't know where to go to find exhibition spaces or to connect to other artists.'

– (Attendee, Newport event)

The project has increased understanding about local creative economies, strengths and opportunities, as well as identified challenges and barriers to growth. Through bringing the creative sector together with policymakers, it creates the opportunity to build place-specific strategies that amplify local strengths, co-created with communities. In the longer-term, this new intelligence will inform local planning and interventions, unlocking potential for hardwired, future-proofed sector growth. At an event held in April to celebrate grassroots creativity, Leader of Monmouthshire County Council, Cllr Brocklesby, spoke of the work as 'a stepping stone in our commitment to a new cultural strategy that will belong to everyone and provide a focal point for networking, support, and inclusion across all our communities'.

Data-mapping exercises have been an additional dimension to this output, plugging gaps in intelligence, understanding and evidence, and underpinning new interventions. This was achieved through the creation of a 'first' census-style report presenting data on the composition and clustering of the local regional creative economy in the partner localities and mapping a total of 691 creative businesses and practitioners.

A cost-effective solution in a challenging funding context

Delivered in the context of a challenging financial outlook for local authorities (in which 'non-essential' services such as leisure, culture and heritage can typically bear the brunt of the shortfall) the project can be positioned as a cost-effective methodology to amplify the creative sector opportunity across the region. The model creates efficiencies by supporting collaboration, developing mutually beneficial solutions and building capacity around shared responses to regional and national strategic priorities, e.g. through addressing The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015).

'There is a question of 'how do we market what is already there – who is in the middle to collate all this information?' People are not aware of what we have got and what we are already doing across the local area, and wider Wales.'

– (Attendee, Rhondda Cynon Taf event)



Recommendations

“

Imagine if we could have permanent local hubs where you could go to talk to other creatives and have opportunities for regular training in and around your creative business. It'd be really good for the sector and the individuals within it; people could have regular opportunities to learn, to continue their development and to nurture new talent. It'd be a game changer, and I'd love to see it happen.

”

(CICH Stories:
Heidi Mehta, Newport)

Need for further investment

➤ In the context of an accelerated delivery timeframe which has yielded positive impact, the key recommendation of this report is that the framework secures follow-on investment to enable the learnings from the pilot phase to be built on and embedded. The project has laid a robust foundation for further stages of creative sector support across the Cardiff Capital Region, with insights gained providing valuable blueprints for further scaling the model in the region, to other regions and nationwide.

Further investment could deliver against two immediate priorities. Firstly, developing the work undertaken in the pilot to build on learning and new relationships; and secondly, extending the benefits of the intervention to other local authority areas across the region.

A framework delivered over the longer term could also drive outputs in culture-led placemaking, helping to foster vibrant places that reflect local skills, embed community convening and connectivity, better represent lived experiences of residents and help drive regional tourist footfall.

This represents a significant return on investment.

Further investment in the framework is also an opportunity to support the creation of an extended regional creative economy that draws on, and is informed by, the strengths, experience and expertise of the established city-based creative cluster whilst keenly reflecting place-specific conditions and opportunities.

Projected figures indicate that a further investment of just c.£500K-£600K per local authority over a three-year period would generate over 170 full time sector jobs and 75 new creative start-ups and create additional revenue generation of over £3 million.



In addition, further investment could result in a 35% increase in start-up survival times, 50% increase in market exposure for local creative businesses and an increase in 'outlook optimism' for local businesses of over a third.

More comprehensive data mapping

➤ The delivery of a sector mapping exercise has been a critical part of increasing local authorities' understanding of the local creative and cultural industries (CCIs). It has plugged gaps in data, provided evidence of the scale of the creative industries local opportunity, and highlighted distinct local challenges and 'not-spots' in a cost-effective way. Longer-term, it has potential to inform and underpin emerging strategic priorities and pro-CCIs plans across portfolio areas such as Economy, Regeneration, Planning and Skills.

For these reasons, it is a recommendation that more comprehensive data mapping be undertaken across the nine local authority areas in the wider region. This would help to provide granular understanding of the creative sector and feed into new strategic approaches to extending the reach and impact of Cardiff's creative cluster across the entirety of the Cardiff Capital Region in ways that meaningfully reflect local conditions.

This would complement and enrich the progress made in other mapping exercises led by the Centre for the Creative Economy, including the Creative Economy Atlas Cymru.

Centralised strategic framework to support local Creative and Cultural Industries growth and ambitions

➤ In support of the above, the region would strongly benefit from the creation of a dedicated strategic approach to the CCIs opportunity. None of the partner localities in the project had a live strategy for the cultural and creative industries at the outset of the project, meaning access to data and broader strategic contexts has been limited. Whilst (and partly due to the activities delivered through the project) thinking around local CCIs strategies is coalescing across all three local authorities, this work lacks the overarching framework of a regional strategy. This is exacerbated by the lack of a current live culture

strategy for Wales (draft pending at time of report). However, even when such a strategy is published, a regional strategy would offer additional clarity, specificity and ambition in responding to the place-based opportunities and unique assets, history and contexts of the region. As such it could create a roadmap for ensuring that the Cardiff Capital Region's diverse communities draw tangible benefit from their proximity to one of the UK's leading, and fastest-growing, creative clusters.

Provision of dedicated, local Creative and Cultural Industries resource and facilitation

- In a challenging financial context, with cuts to staff across all local authority portfolios, a dedicated resource for CCIs engagement is a rarity. The project demonstrated the necessity of such a role in building relationships, convening local opportunities, shaping a narrative about local creative industries strengths and opportunities, and making connections both across the local authority and with industry. To build on the learnings and progress of the pilot phase, resourcing such a role – a conduit between local governance and industry – is to be seen as an integral part of leveraging economic and social benefits and harnessing growth opportunities.

Continued delivery of a cross-sector forum for Creative and Cultural Industries in the region

- The project brought together key stakeholders at regular 'Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange' (CAKE) meetings. As a relatively low-resource intervention, the CAKE meetings created additionality through relationship-building, shared solutions and resources, and fostering a cross-portfolio approach to the CCIs opportunity. The benefits of the framework could continue to be harnessed through the creation of a forum within the Cardiff Capital Region that brings together interdisciplinary policy makers and stakeholders to leverage the power of the creative industries, drive positive change and work collaboratively to seize opportunities. Such a forum could be expanded to include representation from local authorities that were not part of the pilot. This would also bring benefits in supporting longer-term relationship building, in turn enabling better agility in responding to, and activating around, further and future opportunities.



Case Study 1:

Creative Industries Cluster Hub – Monmouthshire

In Monmouthshire, a semi-rural county situated to the east of the Cardiff Capital Region where a dispersed rural population has established strengths in visual arts, crafts and making, the Creative Industries Cluster Hub sought to deliver a co-located hub across multiple community-accessible sites in the borough including community hubs and libraries, galleries and museums and theatre spaces.

Key outputs included:

- Mapping artists and artist studios
- Delivering local networking events
- Creation of a steering board to inform project delivery and future strategy
- Commitment to the creation of a new culture strategy for the borough
- Delivery of signature events to convene existing creative networks

'Working with Creative Cardiff on the project has benefitted Monmouthshire in so many ways. Without doubt we are in a better position to promote the importance of the creative industries to Monmouthshire.

We have the data to show clearly what the economic and employment contributions are of the many artists in the county. Our understanding of Monmouthshire's rich creative landscape has increased, with a brand identity. We have a better sense of the sector strengths, who the many creatives are and by working with them are building a collective understanding of what kind of support is needed for the sector to thrive. The whole experience has been enriching for the council.'

– **(Councillor Brocklesby,
Leader of Monmouthshire
County Council)**



267 creative practitioners / businesses mapped

8 events delivered

144 event attendees

62 one-to-one meetings with creatives

100% support for establishing a local creative hub amongst survey respondents

63 survey responses

60%

would prefer to commit to their creative practice full-time if that were possible.

57% said they would volunteer to support the development of a creative network.



Sector strengths in Digital, Film & TV and Visual Arts / Photography

C.5% of total LCI business turnover across the Cardiff Capital Region

£164m Creative business turnover of

1924 creative employees across

513 businesses

CICH Stories: Ned Heywood, Monmouthshire-based ceramicist

Ned Heywood, a ceramicist based in Chepstow, has been part of the Monmouthshire arts scene for over 40 years. He works in his gallery and workshop, a converted pub from the 1700s, with his work partner Julia Land, where they predominantly make plaques including the blue plaque for English Heritage, the new scheme for Historic England, City of London, Brighton and Hove and the Purple Plaques scheme for women in Wales. Ned believes that people need to 'get together, cooperate and collaborate' to drive success for the creative sector and open up new opportunities.



Scan the QR code to read more about Ned's story.



Case Study 2:

Creative Industries Cluster

Hub – Newport

In Newport, an established city along the M4 corridor with a pre-existing rich music heritage and an emerging high-growth potential digital cluster, the focus was to co-locate a cluster hub across two Newport city centre anchor locations: Startup Stiwdio in the Newport Campus of the University of South Wales, and the Riverfront Theatre. This would provide a focal point to reconnect dispersed local creative communities with the Newport city economy, driving and re-establishing a strong creative industries cluster narrative and identity across the county and capitalising on the area's existing strengths in creative enterprise.

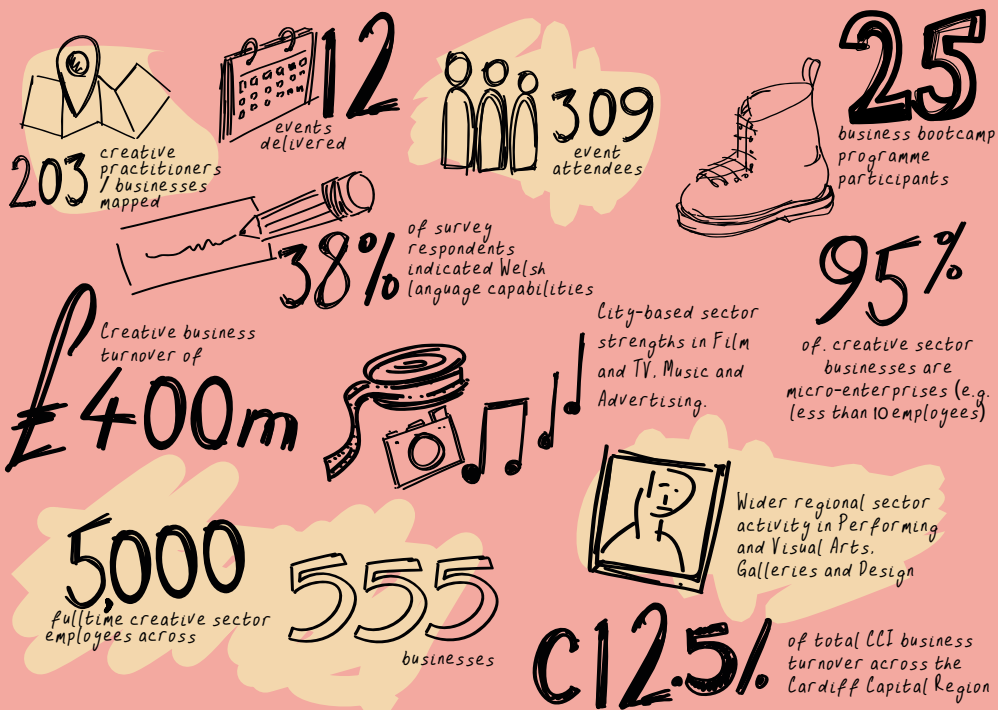
Key outputs included:

- Delivering a business bootcamp for aspiring creative entrepreneurs
- Targeted outreach and engagement events
- Developing a database of creative industries companies and freelancers
- Establishing a steering board comprised of key local public sector and industry stakeholders
- Disseminating project activity and outcomes to influence the refresh of Newport City Council's City Centre masterplan, and specifically the articles related to place and place-making initiatives

'Newport is a city with creativity at its core; a creativity which has shaped our history and drives our future ambitions, so it really comes as no surprise that this report has confirmed that we have a wealth of talent that can contribute hugely to the future growth of both the city and region. As this report shows, targeted investment can produce results. More jobs, more revenue generated, and a stronger cultural offer across the city, so it is key that we put the right support structures in place that allow strong, local networks of creative activity to flourish. Given this we call on all stakeholders in the sector to embrace the lessons highlighted in the report to come together to support the creative talent that exists outside the capital; talent that is both diverse and uniquely Welsh in nature.'

**– Councillor Emma Stowell-Corten,
Cabinet Member for Culture and
Communications, Newport City
Council**





CICH Stories: Heidi Mehta, a creative practitioner and community workshop facilitator

As a freelance artist and creative practitioner, Heidi Mehta works across Newport, Cardiff, Swansea and the surrounding areas. She regularly facilitates workshops in schools, community centres and arts spaces, the latter of which was where she came to hear about CICH Newport. Heidi attended training courses delivered through the project which helped her develop new insight into understanding her creative thought processes and valuing her time and expertise.

Scan the QR code to read more about Heidi's story.



Case Study 3:

Creative Industries Cluster Hub – Rhondda Cynon Taf

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, a large, densely populated and geographically challenging post-industrial valleys community towards the north of the Cardiff Capital Region, the ambition was for a hub co-located with the University of South Wales, that would open-up specialist university and academic resources to the wider community. This would augment and enlarge the creative and cultural industries developments already underway in Pontypridd, the principal town in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The emerging cluster hub supports innovation by making resources, expertise, and specialised equipment available to creative businesses and freelancers within the sector and helps to build resilience and social capital by facilitating collaboration, partnership working, and resource-sharing.

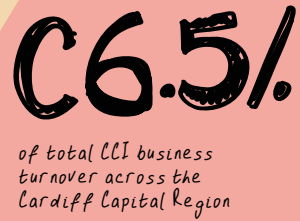
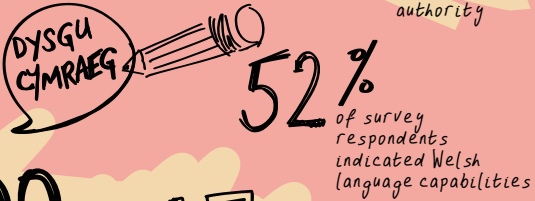
Key outputs included:

- Targeted engagement activities across the region at key locations
- Establishing a partnership with University of South Wales Startup Stiwdio to provide specialise creative business support
- Delivering a business bootcamp for creative freelancers and aspiring entrepreneurs
- Undertaking research and strategy development activities focussed on a) understanding the current and future skills and development needs for the sector, and b) exploring the role of the creative sector towards the reactivation of town centres across the local authority

'The Creative Industries Cluster Hubs project has been instrumental in helping to build and strengthen effective relationships between the council and the creative sector within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The creative sector traditionally falls between portfolios within the local authority and this project has enabled diverse council service areas to work together to support and advocate for the value and importance of the sector with senior officers, cabinet members and within wider business and educational partnerships.'

– **(Councillor Bob Harris, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, Rhondda Cynon Taf)**





CICH Stories: Bridie Doyle-Roberts, a multidisciplinary artist based in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Bridie hosted an event as part of the project. It gave her the chance to research and develop an idea she'd had for a while: the concept of an 'art rave'. She says that 'as well as being a research conversation, in a way, the event was an opportunity to gather people together in a room, get to know each other a bit and just enjoy being in the room exploring creatively together.'



Scan the QR code to read more about Bridie's story.



Key achievements

Creative Industries Cluster Hubs leveraged the expertise and social capital of an existing creative industries cluster and network (Creative Cardiff, established 2015).

Creative Cardiff provided a model of a supportive framework for Higher Education, local leadership and governance, and industry to work together developing solutions that amplify the potential of the creative sector to lead new, fair, democratised economic and social growth. This includes: capitalising on the role of universities to support and leverage local opportunities, sharing knowledge, guidance and leadership, providing access to data, evidence and analysis, and helping develop theoretical and practical underpinning for proposed interventions in the CCIs.

The CICH framework responds to current economic challenges for local governance and public sector, offering a cost-effective methodology for gaining understanding and insight into creative and cultural industries. This creates efficiencies by fostering collaboration and developing shared solutions.

Creative Industries Cluster Hubs also aligns with policy objectives for place-based economic and social re-balancing through increasing social capital, building resilience and developing practical new provision to amplify nascent creative talent. By enhancing our understanding of local CCIs activity (with data to evidence), as well as building local relationships and connectivity between policymakers and industry, it has unlocked opportunities to start building place-specific strategies which can amplify local activities, co-created with communities. In the longer-term, this new intelligence will inform local planning and interventions, unlocking potential for new creative industries growth.

Moreover, by balancing place-specific approaches and interventions alongside bringing local authorities together for collaboration and intelligence sharing, the model is supporting shared strategic visioning for expanded, regional, place-based approaches to building prosperity. With further development, this offers an opportunity for local authorities across the Cardiff Capital Region to work together to extend the impact of Cardiff's creative cluster in ways that are both bespoke and cohesive. As a future objective, providing strategic oversight of this work through the creation of a regional strategy for the creative and cultural industries would only enhance this approach.

Projected economic data shows that with further investment of c. £2M over 3 years, the work could achieve up to £2.5M of additional revenue, create 135 employment opportunities (FTEs) and 60 new start-ups. It could also increase the average survival time of creative start-ups by over a year and lead to significant increases in outlook optimism and sector workforce wellbeing, both through improving market awareness, and building connectivity and reciprocal support. A framework delivered over the longer term could drive outputs in culture-led place-making, helping to foster vibrant places that reflect local skills, embed community convening and connectivity, and facilitate regional tourist footfall.

It is therefore a key recommendation of this report that the framework secures follow-on investment to enable the learnings from the pilot phase to be built on and embedded. Such investment could support the creation of an extended regional creative economy that draws on, and is informed by, the strengths, experience and expertise of the established city-based creative cluster.



There is a lot of potential here to show off and grow the incredible talent we have in the Cardiff Capital Region; we just need the right support in place to help make that happen.

CICH Stories: Will Davies,
Monmouthshire



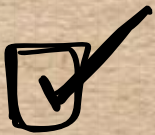
Key Performance Indicators



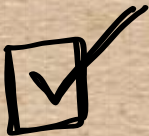
Establish three new local creative clusters pilots in the Cardiff Capital Region



Establish and activate a regional creative sector forum



Deliver a mapping exercise based on sector data from the pilot clusters



Publish an evidence-based plan and narrative report that captures lessons learnt and recommendations with the aim of application of the model to future creative industries investment on a national scale



Increase take-up of Media Cymru opportunities outside Cardiff by 10%

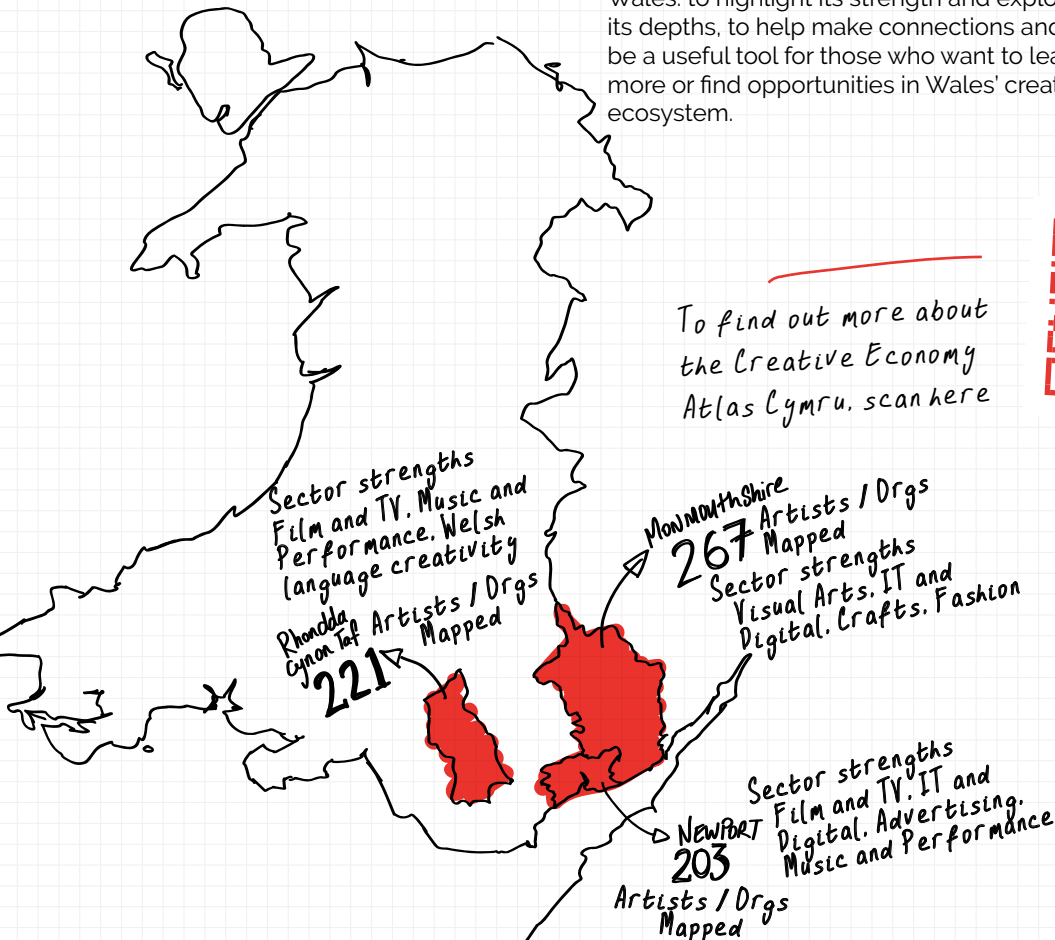
WATCH THIS SPACE

Sector mapping

The Centre for the Creative Economy has worked over the past decade in developing mapping techniques and visualisation aids which convey the size and scale of the creative economy in the region. The partner localities in Creative Industries Cluster Hubs used the opportunity and resource created by the framework to undertake mapping exercises of their local creative practitioners and businesses. This was done through primary (e.g. surveys, newsletter sign-ups and face-to-face interviews) and secondary (e.g. data scraping of registered information) methodologies.

The mapping work undertaken through the project is helping to paint a picture of creativity across the wider Cardiff Capital Region. It is generating insights, deepening understanding and building new connectivity with emerging pockets of creative activities. This information will help inform place-specific local policy and supportive initiatives for local sector growth, creating a foundation for more detailed future analysis of creative activity across the region.

This work is also informing and deepening the Centre's large-scale mapping exercise on the Creative Economy Atlas Cymru. This is a platform to showcase the creative might of Wales: to highlight its strength and explore its depths, to help make connections and to be a useful tool for those who want to learn more or find opportunities in Wales' creative ecosystem.



To find out more about the Creative Economy Atlas Cymru, scan here



Creative Industries Cluster

Hubs Artist Commissions

The project revealed a need to raise the profile of existing creative practitioners in the partner localities and spotlight emerging local talent. In particular, it was observed that grassroots creativity would benefit from being brought into a more visible, public sphere, for example through cultural placemaking and public art initiatives.

To address this need, the Creative Industries Cluster Hubs Artist Commissions delivered 12 place-specific commissions (each of £1,000) across the three partner localities.

'All 12 commissioned artists had a unique story about their connection to place, their community and how they work as a creative in their area. It's been a joy to see them bring their ideas to life in illustration, sculpture, poetry, video and sound and to see their deep connection to Monmouthshire, Newport and Rhondda Cynon Taf come through in their work.'

– **Carys Bradley-Roberts**
Creative Cardiff Engagement and Operations Manager

Artists and creative practitioners were invited to submit proposals which celebrated local creativity and community by responding to thematic prompts for new work that:

- Actively and meaningfully conveyed the creative life and heritage of the local authority, and the people who live within it
- Reflected the 'look and feel' and unique identity of the local authority's diverse communities
- Gave a sense of a future vision for CCIs within the local community
- Celebrated the variety of creative sector activity in the area
- Showed what being a creative 'means', either as a local resident or someone who works within the area
- Linked to an overarching theme of 'innovation' in the creative sector

The project also worked with local videographers REDBRCK to produce content focussed on the creative and development processes behind the work.

The commissions, which include: 3 illustration-based pieces, 2 works of poetry, 1 '360-degree soundscape', 2 sculptures, 1 spoken/performance piece, 1 film, 1 papercut display and 1 public installation piece re-purposing second hand furniture. Can be viewed here



These artworks are helping create a focal point through which to leverage the ongoing impact of the project amongst local communities and deliver continuing awareness-raising and engagement activities.

Limitations

Whilst outcomes and learning from the pilot phase have been encouraging, it's important to note that limitations for impact to date are created through the finite nature of the intervention and restricted timelines for delivery. The positive indicators of delivery are all the more encouraging in this context, further demonstrating the value of additional resource to continue the work. Whilst current impact and engagement does show additionality relative to investment, it is very likely that some of this impact could have doubled or even tripled over an extended delivery phase, which would have enabled additional relationship and network building to take place.

'I felt like there should be places that promote Wales and its creatives in a positive light, but I couldn't find them. There were a couple of photography societies in Chepstow and Hay on Wye, but no real networks that could help me.'

– (CICH Stories: Will Davies, Monmouthshire)

A further factor is that the finite timeframe for delivery has meant that interventions are ceasing at a point when expectations have been raised with the community and engagement was starting to achieve critical mass. Efforts have been made to limit the negative impact of this (for example through continuing a 'lighter touch' engagement approach in partner localities) but a longer-term solution is needed to retain and build momentum.

Unfortunately, the complexity of the current funding landscape makes the possibility of direct investment from local authorities unlikely.

'It has been great seeing what's been happening with Visual Arts Mapping Monmouthshire, and I'd love for something like it to continue. It would bring together visual artists to share their experiences and marketing opportunities, and we could increase public awareness of the industry by generating articles in the media and online content. I also think having one central person or a group to call on for support would make a huge difference.'

– (CICH Stories: Ned Heywood, Monmouthshire)



Methodological notes

Methodology for determining the impact of the framework intervention was based on three main pillars:

1. In partnership with local authorities, we undertook an economic mapping exercise of the partner localities, using firm-level data to carry out an economic analysis of current CCI activity in the areas. This included: business turnover, gross value add (GVA) and employment capacities.
2. Establishing a set of engagement metrics and testimonials. This included both the number of activities, and measuring the reach and subjective impact of those activities.

3. Using the measurable impact of Clwstwr – as published in the Clwstwr final report² (2023) – to create a baseline for an economic estimation exercise, we scaled the impact relative to the economic geographies of the partner localities, the scale and scope of their interventions and the size of their engagement metrics. This scaling also accounts for differences in delivery timeframes and divergence of audiences and objectives (e.g. with respect to Monmouthshire which had a predominance of visual artists over other sub-sectors).

² Professor Justin Lewis
Dr Marlen Komorowski Dr
Máté Fodor Dr Ruxandra
Lupu Professor Sara
Pepper Lee Walters
Kayleigh McLeod MCIPR:
A model for research,
development and
innovation in the creative
industries. Clwstwr,
Centre for the Creative
Economy Cardiff University
sbarclspark, Maindy Road,
Cardiff CF24 4HQ www.
clwstwr.org.uk, ISBN: 978-
1-7394553-2-3.

Learning from best practice

The Creative Industries Cluster Hubs model has been developed, and informed, by the Centre for the Creative Economy team's experience and expertise, which, apart from delivering Clwstwr (2019-2022), includes:

- Developing and growing Creative Cardiff to a leading city-based creative network of 4,000+ individuals and businesses.
- Building an effective and mutually beneficial relationship with the Cardiff Capital Region, as evidenced by their investment in Media Cymru.
- Developing connections with the 10 local authorities that comprise the Cardiff Capital Region, working in partnership to deliver Clwstwr and Media Cymru, as well as the 'Our Creative Place' commissioning project in partnership with Arts Council Wales (2021).
- Undertaking mapping and data gathering work to demonstrate the value generation of creative sector clusters, including the 'Joining The Dots' report (2021) and ongoing work on the Creative Economy Atlas Cymru (2024).



Photo: James O Jenkins
for the Creative Enterprise
Zones initiative

Building on the identified need to work closely with local authorities, the framework was also informed by other sector-wide CCIs interventions that worked in partnership with local governance structures and had proven efficacy in respect of progressive creative sector development and outcomes. Namely, this included:

Creative Enterprise Zones (2016 – PRESENT)

A flagship Mayor of London initiative that works in partnership with London boroughs to put culture at the heart of local regeneration across the city. The programme designates areas of the city where artists and creative businesses can access permanent, affordable space to work and are supported to start-up and grow, and where local people are helped to learn creative sector skills and access pathways to employment. Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZs) support the development of pro-cultural policies that hardwire the needs of the creative economy into communities for the long term, enabling the growth opportunity of London's thriving creative industries – which comprise over 50% of total UK sector GVA – to be democratically and inclusively extended to the benefit of communities across the city. In 2023, the Creative Enterprise Zones Impact Report (2018-2021)³ was published, which demonstrated the effectiveness of the model at driving creative sector jobs growth of 14.2% (vs 7.5% outside of CEZs), increasing creative business start-up rates (7% in CEZs, vs 0.4% outside) and increasing resilience to the sectoral challenges created by Covid-19.

³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/space-culture/explore-creative-enterprise-zones/about-creative-enterprise-zones>

British Library Business and IP Centre National Network (2012 – PRESENT)

A national initiative to drive inclusive growth by co-locating business start-up and scale-up services in local communities through the UK library network. Supported by Treasury (£13M) the network has grown from a pilot with Newcastle Library in 2013 to 21 established regional hubs across England and Scotland. A report published in 2023 (Democratising Entrepreneurship 2.0) demonstrated that the network had achieved £6.63 return for every £1 of public investment, and in a three-year period (2018-2021) supported over 62,000 people to create 18,175 new businesses, 6,124 new jobs and £168m in GVA.

British Library Start-ups in London Libraries (2017 – 2021)

An ERDF and UK Government Libraries Taskforce funded 'sister programme' to the British Library's National Network that worked with local authorities within London to invest in the creation of ten 'hyper-local' business start-up centres in existing high street library infrastructure. The project created a thriving network of local business champions who drove grassroots users to new service interventions to support early-stage businesses, resulting in the creation of over 2,000 new local small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The model was also successful in establishing a forum for cross-portfolio local business support, embedded within the partner local authorities.

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