



**CULTURAL  
MANIFESTO**

**2017**

**TO CREATE**

**HEALTHY & VIBRANT**  
**ECONOMIES & COMMUNITIES**

# FOREWORD

**THE MIDLANDS TUC CREATIVE & LEISURE INDUSTRY COMMITTEE IS MADE UP OF UNIONS FROM ACROSS THE MIDLAND'S CULTURAL SECTOR INCLUDING BECTU, EQUITY, MU, NUJ, PCS, UNISON, NUT, UCU AND WGGB. OUR PURPOSE IS TO CAMPAIGN IN SUPPORT OF ARTS AND CULTURAL PROVISION ACROSS THE REGION AND FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF WORKERS IN THE SECTOR.**

The creative industries have always been notorious for the precarious 'gig economy' that leaves cultural workers with almost no security of employment and minimal rights in the workplace. Yet despite this the 'star system' and 'celebrity culture,' that rewards a few individuals in the creative industries with extraordinary wealth and opportunity, continues to attract millions of young people to these industries every year.

In the last 30 years this distortion of supply versus demand has grown exponentially leading to an unsustainable gap between the pay and conditions of 'stars' and of ordinary cultural workers. Today working musicians, writers and actors, of all ages and levels of experience, are expected as a matter of course to work for nothing in order to 'advance their careers. Equity, the Writers Guild and the MU all have similar campaigns on this kind of direct exploitation indulged in by both public and commercial organisations.

In this inaugural Cultural Manifesto, we argue that the arts and culture are a crucial part of our region's physical and civic infrastructure and as such cannot be sustained by a precarious, part-time, semi-professional work force. In order for our cultural infrastructure to thrive, local government, charities, national portfolio organisations, other NGOs and commercial companies must recognise the interests of cultural workers alongside the interests of service users and customers.

Lee Barron, Midlands TUC Regional Secretary  
Chris Jury, Chair, Creative & Leisure Industry Committee

ARTICLE 27. DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.  
RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN CULTURAL LIFE:

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which they are the author.



**AT THE HEART  
OF ANY CITY...**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**THERE ARE SIX PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERWRITE THIS MANIFESTO BUT THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE FROM WHICH THEY ARE ALL DERIVED IS THAT WHILE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ARTS PROVIDERS HAVE A DUTY OF CARE TO SERVICE USERS AND CUSTOMERS, THEY ALSO HAVE A DUTY OF CARE TO BOTH PERMANENT AND FREELANCE EMPLOYEES.**

A vibrant cultural sector is central to the 'quality of life' of any town, city or region. In turn, the quality of life arising from this cultural infrastructure is crucial to attracting both businesses and workers to an area, and equally importantly, in keeping them there.

The cultural infrastructure of any town, city or region, is as vital to financial and civic success as any part of the physical infrastructure including roads, water supply and telecommunications. But this integral cultural infrastructure cannot be sustained by a precarious cultural work-force, living hand-to-mouth on scraps of public spending.

THUS WE CALL ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE NEW WEST MIDLANDS MAYOR, LOCAL AND NATIONAL NGOS AND COMMERCIAL COMPANIES TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING POLICY ASPIRATIONS:

- (i) A Midlands film and television studio facility.
- (ii) Trade union recognition and implementation of negotiated agreements as a condition of public funding.
- (iii) An integrated local government policy framework to support live venues, festivals and street performers. (including infrastructure, public transport, regulatory framework etc)
- (iv) An increase in public spending on the arts in the Midlands until per capita regional arts spending is on a par with London.
- (v) Secure, properly paid, professional employment for cultural workers and arts educators
- (vi) Local control of all arts spending in the region (Including ACE).

# INTRODUCTION



**IN THIS DOCUMENT THE WORD 'CULTURE' IS BEING USED TO INCLUDE BOTH 'POPULAR' AND 'HIGH' CULTURE, PUBLICLY FUNDED AND COMMERCIAL CULTURE AND BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY ARTS.**

The forms of this cultural activity might include, but not be limited to, theatre, film, television, music, dance, cabaret and comedy; and also includes cultural institutions such as universities, museums, galleries and libraries.

We also include education and skills training, both for proto-professionals (schools, colleges and universities), and for committed amateurs (adult education dance classes, painting classes, peripatetic music classes and so forth).

The Midlands is as important to British cultural history as any other region in the country - including London. The Midlands is home to Shakespeare, Dr Samuel Johnson, Sir Issac Newton, Jerome K Jerome, George Eliot, J R R Tolkein, The RSC, The Coventry Mystery Plays, Coventry Cathedral, Philip Larkin, Tony Hancock, Nottingham Playhouse, Sir Edward Elgar, Ozzy Osbourne, Robert Plant, The Birmingham Rep, Two Tone, UB40, Robbie Williams, David Edgar, Tony Garnett, Lenny Henry, Julie Walters,

Trevor Eve, Clive Owen, the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, a world class symphony orchestra celebrating it's 100 birthday in 2020. The list goes on and on.

The total Arts Council investment in the Midlands in 2015/18 stands at £184.4 million, funding 84 National Portfolio Organisations, four Major Partner Museums and two Bridge Organisations. However, over 50% of the Arts Council spend still goes to London and Londoners get £69 per head in arts funding compared with £4.58 in the Midlands.

Year on year tens of thousands move to London from all over the UK and indeed the world, and they do so despite the challenges of living in London such as over-crowded transport, onerous housing costs and high rates of street crime and burglary. And they do so not just for the economic opportunities provided by the biggest market in the UK, but also because of the dynamic, exciting, cultural 'vibe' of the place.

It's also worth noting that the public perceptions of Manchester and Cardiff have been transformed over the last 20 years by significant investments in cultural infrastructure; these formerly industrial cities have become 'trendy' go-to destinations. Manchester, in particular, is perceived and promoted as an originating centre of creative



Image: Jonathan Stewart

products and content, rather than merely a regional follower of the innovation of London.

We believe that a sustainable, innovative and vibrant cultural infrastructure in the Midlands is central to not only the quality of life of those of us who live and work here, but also to the future economic prosperity of the entire region.

The benefits of non-professional 'participation' in the arts for individuals and communities is well documented and we believe the Midlands cultural sector must encourage and facilitate citizens to participate in non-commercial, participatory and community based cultural activity, but that this unpaid participatory cultural activity must not be allowed to undermine the pay and conditions of professional cultural workers.

Similarly the use of unpaid trainee's, interns, apprentices and volunteers must not be used to undermine the pay and conditions of professional cultural workers or to displace paid employees. The creative and cultural industries are perhaps unique in the expectation that people will 'work' for nothing. No one would seriously expect a plumber or an electrician to fit a boiler or rewire a house on the basis they are 'establishing their reputation'. The idea that young adults working unpaid for months and even years, on the vague promise of future

work, is an 'opportunity', has to be challenged. Exploitation of the young is not acceptable whether by a commercial company or a not-for-profit organisation. Local government, charities, NGOs, and commercial companies obviously have a duty a care to service users and customers, However, they also have a duty of care to employees and to the wider community.

A diverse, innovative and vibrant cultural sector provides obvious benefits for the 'quality of life' of audiences/consumers and for community participants, but these benefits must not be allowed to accrue on the basis of a diminished 'quality of life' for professional cultural workers.

There need to be good reasons for artists and cultural workers to come, to stay, and to live and work in the Midlands, and a sustainable, secure, professional employment infrastructure is key to the cultural survival and expansion of the city as a 'go to' place for artists, citizens, visitors, businesses and inward capital investment.



# 6 PRINCIPLES

## FROM THE ABOVE WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- 1. Public Funding:** (local, regional & national) As a prerequisite for a successful cultural sector. All public funding has to be contingent upon all client organisations becoming accredited Living Wage employers and formally recognising the appropriate trade union(s), entering into collective bargaining in good faith and adhering to national and local trade union agreements, including health and safety.
- 2. Equality of Access:** For audiences and consumers - including
  - (i) continued/increasing subsidy of ticket prices to live performances such as theatre, music & dance
  - (ii) continued 'free' access to libraries and museums.
- 3. Equality Of Opportunity:** To reverse the growing economic exclusion of the poor and middle-income earners from the professional cultural industries and from participatory arts projects.
- 4. Diversity:** To encourage the broadest possible range of creative voices, venues and forms.
- 5. Localism:** To ensure that wherever possible local public investment in the arts is spent locally, benefits local workers and local communities and provides for local needs and wants. For example, that local workers are employed in the construction, development and maintenance of the cultural infrastructure and that local artists are employed in our publicly funded theatres and concert halls.
- 6. Professional Status:** All professional cultural workers to receive professional pay and conditions. Negotiated union minimums are just that minimums, they are not meant to be norms. We are committed to,
  - (i) an improvement in terms and conditions over time
  - (ii) secure, long-term, employment for artists and technicians as well as administrators in all publicly funded buildings, companies and institutions.
  - (iii) Professional fees for all professionals engaged in publicly funded participatory community arts activity.



# 2017 POLICY PRIORITIES

**BASED ON THE SIX PRINCIPLES ABOVE, THE MIDLANDS TUC CREATIVE & LEISURE INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE WILL WORK WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE NEW WEST MIDLANDS MAYOR, LOCAL AND NATIONAL NGOS AND COMMERCIAL COMPANIES TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING:**

1. The development and implementation of a sustainable, funded plan for a Midlands film and television studio facility.<sup>1</sup>
2. A local government arts investment policy that makes all local public funding contingent upon recipients of funding recognising the appropriate trade union(s) and abiding by national, regional and local union agreements.
3. An integrated local government policy framework that pro-actively supports live performance including the night-time economy, live venues, festivals and street performers.<sup>2</sup>
4. The maintenance of at least the current levels of public funding for the arts, arts education, museums and galleries in all imminent funding cycle(s).<sup>3</sup>
5. To secure as soon as is practically possible, levels of public funding of the arts and culture in the Midlands region that are on a par with London.
6. The development of an arts employment policy that maintains and enhances secure employment for cultural workers and arts educators,<sup>4</sup> and maintains the regional professional employment 'circuits' that underpin the region's cultural economy.<sup>5</sup>
7. To secure from national government as soon as is practically possible, control over all cultural and arts education spending in the region.<sup>6</sup>

## APPENDIX

- 1 The loss of the BBC and ITV studios in Birmingham has had a catastrophic impact on creative and cultural investment in the city. A new studio complex would help to remedy this by providing facilities for radio, film and television production and for the studio recording of music including orchestral recordings. This would provide a sustainable base for producers, crews, artists, technicians, production companies and audio-video businesses based in the region.
- 2 Live performance can be supported by local government through the sympathetic planning of public spaces and public/transport links and the minimising of bureaucratic regulation in order to encourage an innovative, spontaneous arts culture. As an example of best practice see the Street Performance (Busking) Policy developed by the MU and adopted by Birmingham City Council.
- 3 In a prosperous, innovative and dynamic Midlands, publicly funded theatres, concert halls, libraries, museums and galleries are not an 'optional extra' to be discarded as soon as money gets tight. Without them what does the civic identity of the region entail? The statutory provision of essential services must not be used as a reason to cut cultural services; it is only our shared cultural experiences that give the pragmatic day-to-day realities of life meaning.
- 4 Across the region cultural workers and arts educators are being moved from secure, permanent, employment, into casualised, 'freelance' self-employment and/or zero hour contracts. In arts education this 'self-employment' status is often little more than an 'Uber' style fabrication that externalises the costs of employment from the employer to the employee. Local Authorities could for example support worker co-operatives as an alternative by providing start-up capital and long-term contracts.
- 5 The casualisation of formerly permanent positions often results in locally based cultural workers (technicians, crews, actors, musicians, dancers etc) being forced to move to London and the South East in order to source enough freelance work to make a living. In turn this means that arts and cultural work which was previously undertaken by people living in the Midlands region is increasingly being taken up by 'freelancers' based in London. This sets up a cycle of decline as the number of locally based cultural workers drops to a level where locally based arts and cultural production is no longer sustainable.
- 6 The profound emasculation of local government since 1979 is the unspoken political scandal of the last 30 years. We believe local government has to fight to reverse this ongoing and fatal subversion of local democracy in order to achieve cohesive and sustainable local and regional policies that can be developed according to local priorities and approved through accountable, democratic oversight.



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