

Inquiry and Purpose:

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the West Midlands is launching a review into the current provision for Culture, Place and Liveability across the region.

This review will explore how cultural policy, investment, and practice contribute to the region's identity, wellbeing, and economic vitality, and assess how effectively current national and regional frameworks support sustainable, inclusive growth.

The inquiry will conclude with a comprehensive report containing recommendations to the Government on how to transform the West Midlands into a place where culture, creativity and liveability sit at the heart of thriving, healthy communities.

Background and Context:

70% of people in the West Midlands consider themselves to be a creative person and 55% of people in the region want more opportunities to be creative. This effectively means that 3 million people in the West Midlands want more creative and cultural opportunities.

In contrast, the West Midlands cultural sector is currently in a precarious place financially, with [Culture Central's 2024 regional growth enquiry](#) showing that public investment in culture in the region has fallen significantly below 2016 levels and is forecast to fall further.

Funding in 2024 was 33% below the level it would be, had it kept up with inflation. This impacts not only the potential economic growth of the region, but the value culture brings to the vitality and wellbeing of the people and places of the region.

The West Midlands stands at a critical juncture. Despite a wealth of creative talent, world-class institutions and diverse communities, the region's cultural and creative sectors face sustained financial pressures, rising inequalities in access and participation, and a need for stronger cross-sector alignment in planning and public health.

The region's post-pandemic recovery, the national Levelling Up agenda, and increasing demand for place-based wellbeing interventions underscore the importance of embedding culture and creativity within the fabric of local development and civic life.

This review will provide a timely opportunity to assess the current landscape, identify best practice, and recommend strategic interventions to strengthen the role of culture in building liveable, equitable and prosperous communities across the West Midlands.

Aims:

- Understand the Impact of financial precarity on the creative and cultural life of the people and places of the region and the future viability and capacity of the cultural sector
- Understand and advocate for the role culture has in fostering pride of place, wellbeing and community cohesion and demonstrate the social value impact of culture in the West Midlands
- Understand the impact of the reduction in formal cultural and creative education and the uptake of creative qualifications on the future workforce (both creative and non-creative jobs)

Outputs:

1. Unlock and Direct Investment

Financial Innovations

Recommendations to strengthen financial support and investment in the cultural sector, including:

- Tax reliefs and incentives to encourage individual and corporate giving.
- The case for recognising culture as a statutory local service.
- Embedding culture within planning and development policy, including the use of Section 106 (S106) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) mechanisms.
- The potential of Tourism Levies to support cultural development.
- Opportunities for endowment funding to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

2. Broaden Access and Participation

Social Value, Access, and Equity

Recommendations for sustaining and expanding cultural provision across the region to strengthen local cultural infrastructure, build social value, and enhance pride of place and community vitality. This may include:

- The role of culture in fostering pride of place, wellbeing, and community cohesion.
- Addressing challenges and opportunities related to local cultural infrastructure, ensuring it is well-resourced and accessible to all communities.
- Strategies to improve access and participation, enabling everyone in the West Midlands to engage creatively and benefit from abundant cultural opportunities.
- Methods for evidencing and articulating the social value of culture as a driver of regeneration, economic growth, and place vitality.

3. Build Skills and Engage Youth

Education and Skills

Recommendations for a creative and cultural education and skills strategy for the West Midlands. This may include:

- How national curriculum review processes can prioritise arts and cultural education.
- Addressing the impact of reductions in university arts and cultural courses on the regional skills pipeline and workforce diversity, and exploring incentives for creative course provision.
- Identifying support needed to expand apprenticeships, vocational training, and non-traditional pathways into cultural and creative industries.

Scope and Methodology:

The review will be informed by:

- A call for evidence, open to organisations and individuals across the region and nationally.
- A programme of hearings and stakeholder roundtables, engaging cultural leaders, policymakers, academics, and community representatives.
- Desk-based research and data analysis undertaken by the APPG Secretariat.

Evidence Gathering Objectives:

The Review will:

- Analyse the current policy and funding landscape for culture, place and liveability across the West Midlands.
- Assess the integration of cultural policy within planning, education, public health, and local economic development frameworks.
 - Evaluate examples of best practice in embedding culture and liveability into regional planning and regeneration strategies.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen devolved powers and partnerships to support sustainable cultural ecosystems.
- Consider the role of cultural and creative industries, local and mayoral authorities in enabling equitable access to culture.

Call for Evidence:

The APPG invites written evidence from a wide range of contributors, including but not limited to:

- Cultural organisations and practitioners

Terms of reference: Review into Culture, Place & Liveability in the West Midlands

- Local authorities and combined authority representatives
- Academics and researchers
- Education providers
- Health and wellbeing organisations
- Community and voluntary sector bodies
- Developers and planning professionals
- Business and creative industry representatives
- Funders, trusts and foundations
- Members of the public with lived experience or regional expertise

Submission Guidance

- *Word limit: Maximum of 1,000 words.*
- *Deadline: 5:00 PM (BST) on 31st January 2026.*
- *Email submissions to: james@calcomms.co.uk*

Please clearly state:

- Whether your submission is made in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation.
- The name and brief description of any organisation represented.
- Sources or references for any data or research included.

Governance & Secretariat:

The Review will be overseen by the APPG for the West Midlands, with support from the Secretariat (CalComms).

The Advisory Board's workstream on culture (Chaired by Erica Love) will guide the inquiry's thematic focus and ensure a balanced and representative approach to evidence gathering.

Outputs:

The inquiry will produce:

1. A final report with recommendations for Government and regional partners.
2. A summary of evidence received through hearings and written submissions.
3. Policy proposals for embedding culture, place and liveability into future regional and national frameworks.

Contact:

For further information regarding the call for evidence or the review process, please contact: james@calcomms.co.uk