HOMETOWN GLORY

How Supporting Local Music Can Drive Economic Growth

UK MUSIC

Sonic Boom Festival 2024 | **Oolay Stone** ©

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Foreword

Tom Kiehl, UK Music Chief Executive

To paraphrase the Specials, when growing up I sometimes felt like I was living in a ghost town. So much so that when studying at college, I undertook a project to assess why the local area I grew up in didn't have a thriving music scene.

As a huge music fan, I was deeply frustrated that more wasn't being done in my local area to support local talent. Why did the artists and musicians that grew up around me have to move away in order to get the opportunities they deserved? Can't more be done to overcome geographical circumstances to stop talented acts from packing it in? Why did I have to travel so far to see the bands I loved? I thoroughly enjoyed this project, and it fuelled a personal passion in me to eradicate any barriers to realising local music potential across our communities.

Fast forward a few decades and welcome to Hometown Glory. This new report from UK Music builds on our previous work looking at regional economic trends, providing new insights and strategies to grow music scenes and industries at a local level across the country. These insights are increasingly shaped and supported by a growing body of evidence, including the groundbreaking Music Fans' Voice survey, which was commissioned and backed by 11 mayoral authorities across the UK and captured the views of over 8,000 respondents.[1]

Many years have passed since I undertook my first regional project, yet Hometown Glory reveals a continued frustration amongst some for more to be done at a local level to improve music in their area. Reassuringly, this report also demonstrates strong evidence of a widespread desire to make this happen, and that we can all play a part.

Hometown Glory is particularly timely as we mark the first anniversary of the election of the Labour government. The Government is rightly looking to achieve growth, and is also embarking on an ambitious programme of local government reorganisation and devolution of powers. The music industry is well placed to deliver on growth, and the Local Music Action Charter, launched in this report, will empower local actors in the face of change and disruption to support this goal, and enable local music industries to truly fulfil their potential.

Two years ago, we published Here, There and Everywhere to celebrate music across the UK, accompanied by a Music Powerhouse Toolkit. Hometown Glory takes things to the next level. We know the tools, but what do we now do to make music at a local level sustainable, and ensure the foundations stay in place for decades to come? As a firm believer that decisions are best taken by those closest to a particular community, this is the question that I hope Hometown Glory answers.

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Introduction

Music has the power to regenerate places, support skilled employment, and promote the UK's global cultural leadership. Despite this, the sector faces significant challenges including a shrinking market share, venue closures, festival cancellations, and pressure on vital infrastructure, such as recording studios and rehearsal spaces

Hometown Glory argues that supporting local music can be a key tool in strengthening communities and driving local and national pride, while simultaneously providing the support the music industry needs to thrive. Local music ecosystems stimulate the economy by boosting footfall, powering the hospitality and retail sectors, and creating vibrant places that attract residents, visitors, and investment.

Beyond explaining why local music is a key growth tool, the report explores four other key areas:

- **Tourism:** UK Music's latest tourism figures for 2024 highlight the powerful national and international appeal of the UK's vibrant music scene. The data reveals the substantial impact of music tourism on local economies, with millions flocking to gigs, festivals, and music-related attractions each year. In total the UK saw 23.5 million music tourists, made up of 21.9 million domestic and 1.6 million international visitors. Total music tourism revenue reached £10 billion, while the music tourism industry supported around 72,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.
- **Public Attitudes:** Shares new polling data that reveals strong public appetite for music experiences within communities, a desire for greater support for local artists, venues, and recording studios, and a widespread recognition of music's value in daily life.
- **How to Grow Local Music:** Tackles the crucial question: who can deliver change - and how? This section sets out the key stakeholders across national and local government, and the music industry who can make change happen. It outlines the practical steps, policy levers, partnerships, and interventions needed to grow local music ecosystems.
- **Local Music Action Charter:** Building on the policies outlined in the previous section, the report concludes with a charter directed at councils and combined authorities. This practical, action-oriented framework provides guiding principles and commitments that local authorities can adopt to support and grow their local music scenes.

As the following chapters show, the benefits of supporting music locally are clear, and so too are the opportunities for action. With targeted policies and the right partnerships, every place can turn its music scene into a driver of growth, identity, and renewal.

StudiOwz in Wales | **Mike Banks www.recordproduction.com ©**

Local Music:
Why is it a Key Growth Tool?

Local music is a powerful, yet underutilised, engine of economic growth. Rooted in communities but with national and global reach, music can turn creativity into jobs, businesses, and investment. Supporting local music ecosystems is essential for regeneration and national prosperity, delivering a broad range of social and economic benefits.

The Government's recent industrial strategy recognises the creative industries as one of eight key sectors driving economic growth, and emphasises the need to harness the economic potential of the UK's cities and regions; a goal that music is uniquely positioned to help realise. From The Reytons in Sheffield and Blossoms in Manchester to Gerry Cinnamon in Scotland, many artists build successful careers by developing strong local followings. Celebrating these regional heroes and the scenes that sustain them is vital to recognising the UK's full creative breadth.

Local Music Boosts Towns and Tourism

In this context, localised policy support for music can boost the economic potential of communities. Live events, grassroots venues, recording studios, and other related creative businesses drive footfall and local economic activity. They help revitalise high streets, strengthen the vibrancy and identity of an area, and generate significant spillover spending in nearby hospitality, retail, and transport sectors. Research with fans and the public, including the Music Fans' Voice Survey and UK Music's commissioned research (on page 18), consistently highlight the critical role that local music plays in strengthening communities and cultural identity.

Music tourism, discussed further in pages 12 to 17 of this report, further amplifies this impact. Research suggests 73% of overseas visitors to the UK identified our "cultural offer" as their main reason for visiting.[2] Strong local music ecosystems attract domestic and international visitors, bringing long-term economic benefits and positioning UK towns and cities as cultural destinations. The success of The Piece Hall in Halifax is a striking example: once a derelict Georgian cloth hall, it is now a thriving open-air music venue attracting major artists from Annie Mac to Michael Kiwanuka and welcoming over 17 million visitors since reopening in 2017.[3] Outside of London, only the Glastonbury festival and Liverpool's Anfield stadium (thanks to Taylor Swift) welcomed more gig-goers in 2024 to outdoor shows than the Piece Hall.

Local Music Powers National Economic Growth

Grassroots music scenes contribute significantly to national economic output, helping the UK music sector generate £7.6 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) and employ 216,000 people - more than the pharmaceutical, steel, and aerospace sectors combined.[4] Productivity in the arts and culture sector is strong, with GVA per job around 30% greater than the national average.[5] In fact, "sound recording and music publishing activities" have the highest GVA per worker of all UK creative sectors, highlighting music's unique economic strength.

Local Music Enhances the Business Environment

Beyond direct economic gains, music enhances the wider business environment. Culturally vibrant places are more attractive to companies and talent alike. Proximity to music venues, events, and cultural infrastructure helps companies to recruit and retain skilled workers by making areas livelier and more attractive, driving further growth.

Local Music Supports Creative Careers and Skills

Thriving local music scenes also support the talent and skills pipeline that underpins the UK's global music success. Local infrastructure is essential to developing "work-ready" industry professionals and giving future artists, songwriters, and producers a place to develop their craft and gain practical experience. The UK's global superstars - such as Charli XCX, who hails from Bishop's Stortford, and Ed Sheeran, who is from Ipswich - began their musical journeys through local grassroots music networks. Their paths are a reminder that international success is built on strong local foundations.

Taken together, these factors show that local music is not just a cultural asset, but a strategic driver of economic growth, regeneration, and global competitiveness. By backing music at the local level, policymakers can unlock wider social and economic value, ensuring the UK's music sector continues to thrive at home and on the world stage.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

Crowded House performing at The Piece Hall, Halifax | **Ellis Robinson - The Piece Hall Trust ©**

Regional and National Data

In 2024, the UK saw 23.5 million music tourists, made up of 21.9 million domestic and 1.6 million international visitors. Total music tourism revenue reached £10 billion, while the music tourism industry supported around 72,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) defines a domestic tourist as someone who has travelled outside of their usual environment. For this report, a domestic music tourist is identified through ticketing postcode data as someone who has travelled at least three times the average commute for their region. A foreign tourist is anyone who has travelled from abroad.

Total music tourism spend includes both direct and indirect spending: ticket sales, food and drink, merchandise, parking, camping, accommodation, travel, and other spending outside venues while visiting the UK for live music. Employment from music tourism is measured in full-time equivalents and includes all jobs sustained by this activity.

Live music, from grassroots gigs to iconic festivals, continues to be a powerful driver of economic and cultural activity. International artists played a significant role in driving music tourism in 2024. Taylor Swift's Eras Tour was a standout, drawing large numbers of overseas visitors, while stadium shows by Bruce Springsteen, Foo Fighters, and Burna Boy also had a major impact. UK festivals performed strongly, with Glastonbury headlined by Dua Lipa and Coldplay, marking Coldplay's record fifth appearance, while Boardmasters hosted headline sets from British fan favourites, Sam Fender and Stormzy.

However, the numbers in this report reflect only one part of a much broader picture. People travel to the UK for a variety of reasons: recording studios, educational institutions, record shops, and the perception of Britain as a major cultural destination. This is often shaped by lyrics that romanticise British cities, neighbourhoods, and ways of life, creating a sense of connection long before a visit and boosting the UK's soft power abroad. While not every facet of the music industry is captured in headline tourism or spending statistics, these examples help explain why so many people journey across the UK to experience its vibrant music scene.

National Figures

Visitors

23.5 Million

Domestic **21.9 Million**

Foreign **1.6 Million**

Jobs

72,000

Direct **43,000**

Indirect **29,000**

Revenue

£10 Billion

Direct **£5.1 Billion**

Indirect **£4.9 Billion**

Regional Data

East of England

Visitors

764,000

Jobs

3,620

Revenue

£519 Million

East Midlands

Visitors

789,000

Jobs

4,470

Revenue

£558 Million

London

Visitors

7.5 Million

Jobs

15,250

Revenue

£2.7 Billion

North East

Visitors

714,000

Jobs

3,080

Revenue

£364 Million

North West

Visitors

3.3 Million

Jobs

9,250

Revenue

£1.2 Billion

Northern Ireland

Visitors

556,000

Jobs

2,020

Revenue

£266 Million

Scotland

Visitors

2.3 Million

Jobs

7,160

Revenue

£857 Million

South East

Visitors

1.6 Million

Jobs

6,210

Revenue

£1.1 Billion

South West

Visitors

2.5 Million

Jobs

8,160

Revenue

£1.1 Billion

Wales

Visitors

834,000

Jobs

3,650

Revenue

£384 Million

West Midlands

Visitors

1.4 Million

Jobs

4,550

Revenue

£550 Million

Yorkshire & the Humber

Visitors

1.3 Million

Jobs

4,330

Revenue

£550 Million

Polling Results:

How Music Shapes Local Life

22 MILLION

UK adults say it's important to have access to music events within **reasonable distance** of where they live

6 IN 10

adults feel that local music should be **better supported** by the council

HALF

of UK adults are more likely to spend money in a venue that has **high quality live music**

62%

of UK adults agree **music, nightlife, and music spaces** should be part of how we bring life back to the high street

HALF

of UK adults say that they would be more likely to go to music events if **public transport matched event times** better

7 IN 10

agree **builders should manage noise** when homes are built near venues, not the venues

Polling was commissioned by UK Music and conducted by Whitestone Insight. Whitestone Insight surveyed 2,112 adults in the UK online between 6th and 8th June 2025. Data were weighted to be representative of all UK adults. Whitestone Insight is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

†Full tables can be found on the Whitestone Insights website.

FOCUS Wales 2025 | **Alexandra Durrant** ©

How to Grow Local Music
Local Authorities

Local authorities possess some of the most powerful levers to support music and cultural infrastructure. Beyond their regulatory role in planning and licensing (discussed on pages 28 and 29), councils act as budget-holders, landlords, and local conveners. They manage public assets, allocate funding, and shape local investment priorities - all of which can be utilised to create thriving music ecosystems. Their pivotal role extends to forging strategic partnerships with industry - the likes of which led to the BRIT Awards moving to Manchester and the Mercury Prize to Newcastle.

While cultural spend is a small part of overall local budgets, councils are the biggest public funders of culture nationally, spending over £1 billion a year on cultural services.[6] Yet councils are facing difficult budgetary choices. According to the Local Government Association (LGA), three-quarters of councils report that setting a balanced budget for the next year will be difficult, with cuts to cultural services likely to deliver this.[7] While long-term increases in local authority funding remain essential, this context makes it even more vital that councils use the full range of policy levers, physical assets, and partnerships at their disposal to support local music and creative activity. Crucially, there are many practical ways local authorities can use their existing powers and resources to strengthen local music scenes, even within tight budgets.

Develop Or Update a Local Cultural Strategy with Music at Its Heart

The first step for any local authority looking to grow its creative economy is to develop or update a cultural strategy. These policy documents set out the council's long-term vision for culture - including priorities for investment, infrastructure, and education, with music often playing a central role. Councils across the country are beginning to see the value in these, with Manchester, Hull and Surrey all launching strategies within the last year. A five-year music plan is embedded within Hull's strategy, which includes a commitment to bid to be a UNESCO Creative City of Music.[8] A strong cultural strategy demonstrates strategic commitment to cultural development and helps embed culture across other local plans. It also boosts the chances of attracting both private investment and public funding, such as from Arts Council England (ACE), Creative Scotland, and the National Lottery. This is exemplified by the BPI's decision to open a new specialist creative college in Bradford modelled on the successful Brit School in Croydon and driven by the city's 10year cultural strategy, "Culture is Our Plan", and strong local leadership from Bradford Council and Mayor Tracy Brabin.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

Identify and Regenerate Empty or Underused Spaces for Music

Local authorities creating an inventory of existing music spaces, venues, businesses, along with vacant premises with potential for music or cultural use can help match space providers with those in need. Southwark's register proved so effective that the Greater London Authority (GLA) rolled out a space register for those looking to open their own cultural spaces in the capital.[9] Disused or underutilised spaces have huge potential for music-related regeneration. In Ipswich, for example, St Stephen's Church - a former parish church later used as a tourist information centre - was transformed in 2023 into a music venue, café, and record shop. A third of the funding for this regeneration came directly from Ipswich Borough Council. Meanwhile Use Schemes can support similar projects by enabling temporary cultural activity in vacant spaces, helping to revitalise high streets and assess the longer-term potential of these spaces.

Introduce an Asset of Cultural Value Designation (ACuV)

The existing Asset of Community Value (ACV) initiative has helped protect some music venues from closure by enabling community-led bids for these premises. However, its focus on community use over broader cultural significance, means many other music spaces struggle to receive the designation. Culturally important music infrastructure - such as some recording studios - are excluded because they operate as commercial enterprises rather than community hubs. Even some venues, such the legendary Moles in Bath, have failed to meet the criteria for ACV status and subsequently closed.[10] A new Asset of Cultural Value (ACuV) designation would complement the ACV framework, recognising the cultural importance of such spaces and giving stakeholders the opportunity to step in and protect them from redevelopment or closure.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

How to Grow Local Music
Local Leadership

As outlined in the English Devolution White Paper, political power is increasingly shifting from Westminster to regional authorities. With this change, devolved leaders – including MPs, metro mayors or council leaders - are gaining a crucial role in shaping cultural and economic outcomes. These leaders are uniquely positioned to integrate music into local growth strategies by acting as conveners between local government, businesses, education, and the creative sector. With the right knowledge, devolved leaders can connect local needs with targeted policies that help music scenes grow and succeed.

However, greater autonomy requires clear purpose and accountability. Devolved powers are most effective when shaped by local voices and aligned with long-term goals. Political leaders must collaborate with the creative leaders who push the music industry forward, such as those behind Generator in Newcastle and the Oh Yeah Centre in Belfast. Music policy should not just be reactive; it must be proactively integrated in economic growth plans from the start. Simple actions can make a big difference, such as appointing a local Music Champion within the council to lead and coordinate music policy. That means investing in the infrastructure, businesses, and people that allow music to thrive year-round.

Establish Representative, Well-Resourced Regional Music Boards

A recurring theme across regional music scenes is the need for greater coordination and connectivity. Regional music boards can address this and give the sector a direct voice in policymaking. Devolved leaders should provide these boards with a clear remit, dedicated funding, and a formal role in shaping cultural and economic policies.

These boards must be inclusive and accountable, representing towns, rural communities, and underrepresented genres. Established music boards should extend their remit to mapping venues and tracking openings and closures across the area. Boards must make sure they represent a wide mix of music genres and a diverse range of professions, including freelancers. Music managers, for example, are often key connectors in local ecosystems and help grow artists from grassroots to professional success. Their expertise has positioned them as essential contributors to music boards in cities like Leicester and Manchester. Local authorities should ensure they engage with this wide cross-section of music roles when shaping regional strategies.

They should also act as role models and advisors for other areas, sharing best practice through mechanisms such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Council of the Nations and Regions.

Work with transport operators to establish more late-night travel options

Outside London, transport is often a major barrier to accessing music and cultural events. In many towns and cities, public transport stops running before the audience can even shout for an encore. This makes it difficult for fans to attend live music and return home safely, especially those relying on low-cost travel options. According to the Music Fans' Voice survey, 53% of respondents said they would attend more music events with better transportation options.[11] Lack of public transport also limits early-career music professionals from taking up opportunities. Moreover, audience travel is often the largest contributor to the carbon emissions of live music events.[12] MPs and metro mayors have increasing influence over transport policies that affect live music. Interventions such as extended public transport hours that match gig schedules, or extra services, can dramatically improve the operating environment for music. During the Edinburgh Festival, for example, additional trams help visitors and residents to make the most of citywide events. Local leaders should work with transport operators to highlight the benefits of extended services and ensure accessible, affordable travel supports broader participation in culture.

Develop Place-Based Cultural Programmes to Drive Tourism

Music should be central to local tourism strategies, as it can offer authentic, memorable experiences that attract visitors and celebrate local identity. Devolved leaders should champion local music scenes on national and international stages through trade missions and export offices, as well as using music in tourism campaigns to help regions punch above their weight culturally and economically. Areas could launch a local "Year of Music", adopt a model like the London Borough of Culture, or highlight cultural heritage through initiatives like blue plaques on iconic studios and venues where seminal artists have performed. Lewisham's 2022 programme generated over £4 million in inward investment,[13] highlighting how targeted, culture-led initiatives can deliver real economic value while boosting local pride and participation. Cities and regions could adopt a Neighbourhood of Culture model, spotlighting local districts through year-long programmes that celebrate community identity and attract visitors. Rural regions could adapt this as Creative County or Cultural Parish initiatives, preserving local traditions while boosting tourism and regional pride. These could provide platforms for communities to celebrate their creative strengths, attract visitors, and build lasting cultural legacies.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

Prioritise Working with Diverse Representatives to Ensure Accessibility and Diversity Are at the Heart of Local Decision-Making

For devolution to deliver truly inclusive outcomes, it must reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. Devolved leaders should work with a broad spectrum of voices. This may include disabled people, those from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ communities, and people from low-income households to help shape music policy that is truly representative. This could involve consulting specialist organisations or the voluntary sector to embed new voices in funding panels, cultural planning processes and research opportunities. For example, the University of Liverpool's Institute of Popular Music (LIPA) collaborated with the Liverpool City Region Music Board to release ground-breaking new research into the experiences of Black music makers and practitioners.[14] Partnerships will be key to making this a reality. Only through diverse representation can local decision-making support the full social and economic potential of music.

4 IN 10

UK adults are more likely go out in the evening if there are live music events **in the area**

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

Sam Fender performing at The Great Escape Festival in Brighton in 2018 | **PRS Foundation - Mike Massaro ©**

How to Grow Local Music
Planning and Licensing

Planning and licensing are two of the most powerful tools available to the Government and local authorities to shape the cultural and economic vibrancy of areas. By determining what can be built, where, and when businesses can operate, planning and licensing can lay the groundwork for growth in the music sector. Where planning and licensing enable it, creative spaces and businesses cluster, forming areas that support a diverse and growing mix of enterprises. These can include recording studios, record labels, live venues, education providers, independent record stores, rehearsal spaces, a new generation of music technology startups, and a vibrant street music scene.

Thriving live music scenes deliver significant economic benefits, supporting local supply chains and providing jobs for freelance crew, security staff, artists, caterers, and event organisers. They also boost footfall and revenue for local hospitality businesses. Some live music events held in public parks generate vital income for local authorities. For example, Tower Hamlets said in 2023 that it anticipated £1.6 million from events at Victoria Park, including major festivals like All Points East and Field Day, which attract tens of thousands of visitors and showcase both international headliners and local talent.[15]

Yet too often, excessive bureaucracy, planning restrictions and over-burdensome licensing rules make it hard for music events, spaces, and businesses to establish, operate, and thrive. This is especially challenging for Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse promoters and artists, who face additional systemic barriers, as highlighted by initiatives like REMEL (Race Equality in Music Event Licensing), which works to tackle racial inequalities in live music licensing in London. Similarly, busking - a vital artist development path and catalyst for footfall and spending - is often undermined by overly stringent or unlawfully enforced Public Space Protection Orders and

6 IN 10

UK adults agree that empty or underused spaces in their town should be **opened up for music and cultural use**

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

a lack of understanding of appropriate licensing. If the Government and local authorities are serious about driving creative growth, then planning and licensing policies must be enablers, not barriers, to success.

Enshrine *Agent of Change* in Law

Many music venues are threatened by planning disputes, often triggered by new developments and subsequent noise complaints from residents. Recording studios also face similar challenges, often forced to close early due to potential noise complaints despite being in areas with latenight venues. The Agent of Change principle places responsibility on new developments to mitigate noise issues when located near existing music spaces. While this principle has been incorporated into the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) since 2018, its status as guidance rather than law leaves venues vulnerable to inconsistent application from local authorities and protracted legal battles - for example, the case of Manchester's Night & Day Café. For many venues, these disputes are existentially expensive, as highlighted by Rebellion in Manchester.[16] They also result in a serious waste of public resources, with Manchester City Council reportedly spending over £60,000 on its noise dispute with Night & Day Café.[17] To ensure reliable protections for venues, it is essential to enshrine Agent of Change in law, giving it statutory force beyond its current implementation through guidance. This will help safeguard live music infrastructure and streamline future administrative processes by addressing these issues at the planning stage.

Extend Time-Limits for Temporary Structures Allowed Under Permitted Development Rights

Under Permitted Development Rights (PDR), festivals taking place on private land or public parks do not require planning permission if temporary structures remain for less than 28 days - including build and breakdown time. This limit means many festivals face logistical and f inancial pressure to compress operations or seek full planning permission, which adds cost, delays, and potential legal disputes - as recently seen in Brockwell Park. A modest extension to 40 days would ease strain on event organisers, reduce the administrative burden on local authorities and the planning system, and accommodate growing demand for live events. Councils would still retain control through licensing and local event policies to ensure festivals are safe, sustainable, and respectful of local communities, while unlocking further cultural and economic benefits.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

Use Zoning to Support the Night-Time Economy and Creative Businesses

Designated creative and late-night zones can drive local growth by aligning planning, licensing, and economic policy. Late-night zones, for example, can offer simplified and extended licensing hours to reduce regulatory friction, supporting live music venues and boosting high street activity after 6pm. Similarly, local areas could follow the example of London's Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZs) to support music businesses and startups. CEZs provide access to affordable workspace at well below market rents, facilitate skills and business support, offers business rates relief, and attract further investment through their status.[18] Croydon's music, performance and visual arts sector grew twice as much in the zone than across the wider London. Smart zoning like this unlocks economic potential and makes it easier for music and creativity to thrive.

Allocate a Portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Creative Infrastructure

Local authorities play a key role in deciding how Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds are allocated. While CIL is collected from new developments to support infrastructure needs, the levy is typically used to invest in transport, schools, and green spaces - often overlooking cultural infrastructure, including music spaces. The City of London is currently using around £450,000 of CIL funding to improve facilities for the London Symphony Orchestra at St Luke's. The improvements to St Luke's will improve accessibility, provide new flexible spaces, and enhance the community impact of the facilities. However, this kind of cultural investment is the exception, not the rule. Allocating a portion of CIL for creative and cultural infrastructure, would enable councils to provide more consistent, strategic support for their local cultural ecosystems.

Amita Ravikiran performing at the Oh Yeah Centre in Belfast | **James Ward** ©

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

How to Grow Local Music
Businesses and Investors

Local businesses, both within the music industry and those that benefit from it, play a vital role in driving local growth. When music scenes flourish, so do music-focused businesses like record shops, venues, and small businesses from across the music economy. From publishers to promoters, music tech firms to recording studios, freelancers and microbusinesses including music managers, producers and live crew play a vital role in this ecosystem, sustaining artist development and contributing to local economic resilience. When music scenes flourish, so do music-focused enterprises like record shops, venues, and startups across the music economy, from publishers to promoters, from music tech firms to studios, alongside hospitality, retail, and other sectors that thrive on the increased footfall, vibrancy, and cultural activity music generates.

However, many music businesses operate without access to traditional forms of business support or scale-up capital. Councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and growth hubs should recognise music entrepreneurs as highpotential SMEs and ensure they have access to advice, workspace, and startup grants. Tailored accelerator programmes, sector-specific advisory panels, or creative enterprise zones can help nurture this often-overlooked segment of the local economy.

To harness this potential, local governments must work together with public, philanthropic and private sector partners to encourage investment and promote sustainable growth across the sector. Arts Council and Creative Scotland funding plays a critical role in this mix, often acting as a catalyst for creative enterprise, enabling grassroots venues, festivals and artists to build momentum and drive wider economic and cultural impact.

Provide Targeted Business Rates Relief for Music Venues and Studios

Recording studios and music venues are essential for supporting talent and generating wider economic benefits to towns and cities across the UK. Larger London studios spend over £500,000 annually in local cafes and businesses, while smaller regional studios contribute around £75,000. For every 10,000 people who attend a gig, £1 million is spent in the local economy.[19] Studios and venues generate significant footfall through tourism and spillover spend on hotels, dinners, and transport. Many have become cultural landmarks in their own right, drawing visitors and international bookings that feed into wider economic and reputational gains for the UK. Despite being vital creative spaces and key contributors to local economies, they are penalised under current business rates assessments. The Government should introduce targeted business rates relief for music venues and studios. This would help sustain a vital layer of the creative economy, especially in towns and regions where they enable significant cultural opportunities.

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Unlock Investment Through Co-Financing Opportunities Such as Local Music Funds

There is growing appetite for place-based investment models that deliver economic and social returns tailored to local areas. The Harmony Works Trust in Sheffield, which secured £8.2 million to transform Canada House into a music education hub, shows what is possible when multiple funders, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, collaborate.[20] In Bristol, the proposed Bristol Music Fund - led by Bristol Nights with venues, promoters, and sector bodies - represents a bold new model. It aims to create a self-sustaining investment mechanism for the city's music scene, creating long-term value by reinvesting in local talent, spaces, and infrastructure.[21] A similar model exists in Austin, Texas, where Rally Austin, a non-profit real estate organisation, helps to create and protect affordable, culturally rooted spaces through public-private partnerships.[22] Local authorities should explore ways to de-risk private or philanthropic investment in music infrastructure through matched grants, seed funding, or planning incentives. Their support can also unlock new funding through tools like a ticket levy on large-scale events, redistributing value across the wider music ecosystem. across the wider music ecosystem.

Acknowledge Music Businesses in Planning and Resource Allocation

Organisations such as the Entertainment Retailers Association (ERA) highlight the continued importance of record shops, not just as retail outlets but as cultural hubs, event spaces, and points of connection between music and community. Similarly, new listening cafes such as Paradise Garden in Cardiff and Holding Patterns in Leeds offer unique spaces where people gather to hear curated vinyl records in a social, high-quality sound environment. Inspired by Japanese *Ongaku Kissa*, these cafes reflect the growing demand for hybrid cultural-retail experiences. Local authorities should support such businesses as part of high street recovery plans, offering visibility and incentives alongside other hospitality, retail, and leisure sectors. Simple interventions can help, such as inclusion in Business Improvement District (BID) planning. BIDs are partnerships between local businesses and authorities that pool funds to improve a defined commercial area. Ensuring music venues, record shops, and other music businesses are part of BID governance and funding decisions, can help them benefit from shared marketing, infrastructure upgrades, and footfall-boosting events.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

How to Grow Local Music
Skills and Education

Investing in music education and creative skills is not a cultural luxury - it is an economic necessity. As the Government seeks to unlock regional growth and boost productivity through the creative industries, music education must be central to national and local growth strategies. Access to high-quality music education is vital for securing our talent pipeline and nurturing the next generation of performers, songwriters, producers, and music businesses. Supporting the professional development of music managers – including through programmes like the MMF Accelerator, where over half of participants are based outside London – is critical to this pipeline. In addition to supporting skills development, engagement with music has been shown to improve mental health, emotional wellbeing, and social inclusion, particularly for young people.

The benefits extend far beyond the cultural economy. Research from McKinsey highlights a strong link between creativity and business performance: "creativity is at the heart of business innovation, and innovation is the engine of growth." Yet, increasing shortages in creative skills pose a significant barrier to this growth. Declining access to music education is limiting the emergence of future talent. Between 2019 and 2022, music, performing and visual arts saw a 17.4% increase in unfilled roles due to skills gaps. This hinders the ability of music businesses to scale, innovate, and contribute to wider economic growth.

Please see page 43 for a full list of references.

To unlock the full potential of the UK music sector and ensure its economic impact is felt in every region, stronger investment in local music education infrastructure is essential. This means ensuring young people nationwide have the resources, pathways, and support to develop their creative potential. The Government holds key levers to achieve this, especially by strengthening delivery networks like Music Hubs, supporting diverse qualification routes, and developing more flexible systems for skills training and apprenticeships.

Boost Funding and Reduce Burdens on Music Hubs

Music Hubs are central to local music provision, bringing together music services, schools, venues, local authorities, and other organisations. However, they face a £161.4 million shortfall (£32.3 million annually) driven by inflation and new costs associated with delivering the updated National Plan for Music Education.[23] The Government must increase Hub funding to cover this shortfall. Just 0.03% of the total UK education budget would be enough to do so. Alongside funding, Hub reporting requirements must be streamlined to reduce administrative burdens and free up resources. The Capital Grant for instruments and equipment also needs expanding, as Hubs currently cannot use it for essential expenses such as storage costs, instrument repairs and training for adaptive instruments.

Retain and Promote Non-Examination and Vocational-Based Qualifications as Pathways into the Music Industry

Vocational qualifications (such as BTECs) provide an industry-informed perspective on music and support a wide range of learning styles, including students who struggle with traditional exams. Widely available across the country, these qualifications offer young people, especially those outside major cities, more equitable access to music education. They are also critical for specialist creative schools, including the BRIT School and East London Arts and Music (ELAM), which play a key role in nurturing future talent. There are currently damaging plans to remove Government funding from existing vocational music qualifications without adequate alternatives. If the Government continues with Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs), which require 40% examination-based assessment, they should prioritise internal, non-exam assessments to match the flexibility and industry-relevance of existing vocational qualifications.

Ensure the New Growth and Skills Levy is Flexible, Locally Responsive, and Works for the Music Industry

The Government's decision to replace the Apprenticeship Levy with the more flexible *Growth and Skills Levy* is welcome, given the original levy's incompatibility with the freelance and project-based nature of work in the music industry. As the new levy is rolled out, creative businesses must help shape it further to ensure it allows adequate flexibility in course length and the types of training that can be funded. Government must provide clear guidance, conduct proactive outreach, and work with industry bodies and local partners to ensure small music businesses are accessing the Levy's funds. Crucially, the levy must be locally responsive - aligning with local growth plans and capable of meeting regional skills needs.

Dutch band Loupe performing in Liverpool | **Robin Clewley** ©

Local Music Action Charter:
Practical Steps for Local Councils

Music is a proven driver of local growth, skills, and tourism. However, with tightening budgets, it can be hard to know where to start. Building on the recommendations outlined throughout the report, this Charter helps councils and combined authorities create locally tailored music strategies aligned with their specific priorities.

Policymakers can use the Charter to select a strategic priority (e.g. growth, skills, high street, tourism, or inclusion) and explore relevant policy actions. These actions can then be embedded into existing local plans and strategies. As priorities evolve, the Charter allows for flexibility, enabling local authorities to update and expand their approach to music policy over time.

We encourage all local authorities to commit to at least one priority area and harness the social and economic power of music in their communities. Sign up to the Local Music Action Charter by following *this link*.

Build Inclusive Community Access

Ensure all residents can access and participate in music, regardless of background or income.

Strengthen Local Identity and Culture-Led Tourism

Put your area on the cultural map and celebrate local talent.

Revitalise the Local Economy

Use music to support growth, drive footfall, and attract business.

Support Skills and Inclusive Talent Pipelines

Build pathways into music careers for young people, freelancers, and underrepresented groups.

Revitalise the Town Centre and Night-Time Economy

Use music to boost high street activity and support vibrant night-time culture.

Revitalise the Local Economy

Use music to support growth, drive footfall, and attract business.

- ☑ Develop or update a cultural strategy with music embedded in economic and place-shaping goals.
- ☑ Support a ticket levy on large-scale events to reinvest in grassroots venues, festivals, and performers.
- ☑ Create a register of empty or underused spaces and repurpose them for music use through planning tools or Meanwhile Use schemes.
- ☑ Establish Creative Enterprise Zones, Late-Night Zones, or local Music Investment Funds to support music businesses and attract co-investment.

Support Skills and Inclusive Talent Pipelines

Build pathways into music careers for young people, freelancers, and underrepresented groups.

- ☑ Strengthen support for your local Music Hub and advocate for national funding increases.
- ☑ Include music and creative sector roles in local skills and employment strategies.
- ☑ Advocate for the continued recognition of vocational qualifications such as BTECs as essential pathways into music careers.
- ☑ Engage with Government to ensure the Growth and Skills Levy is flexible and supports small music businesses.

Revitalise the Town Centre and Night-Time Economy

Use music to boost high street activity and support vibrant night-time culture.

- ☑ Apply and enforce the Agent of Change principle in local planning policy to protect existing venues.
- ☑ Use zoning powers to designate Late-Night Zones or Night-Time Economy corridors.
- ☑ Lobby for extensions to temporary structure allowances under Permitted Development Rights to support outdoor music events and festivals.
- ☑ Work with transport operators to align late-night public transport with event schedules and audience needs.

Strengthen Local Identity and Culture-Led Tourism

Put your area on the cultural map and celebrate local talent.

- ☑ Appoint a local Music Champion within the council to lead and coordinate music policy.
- ☑ Launch a local "Year of Music" or adopt a Neighbourhood or County of Culture model; and consider applying for recognised schemes such as City of Culture and UNESCO music city status.
- ☑ Develop tourism strategies that include live music, festivals, and cultural experiences as key draws.
- ☑ Highlight local music success stories and cultural assets in place marketing campaigns.

Build Inclusive Community Access

Ensure all residents can access and participate in music, regardless of background or income.

- ☑ Provide funding and in-kind support for community-based and grassroots music programmes across neighbourhoods.
- ☑ Campaign for the introduction of an Asset of Cultural Value (ACuV) designation to protect significant but commercially vulnerable music spaces.
- ☑ Allocate a portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to creative and cultural infrastructure.
- ☑ Embed diverse community partnerships into cultural planning and governance to ensure access and inclusion are central to local music policy.

Authorities Who Sign Up for the Local Music Action Charter Will...

- ☑ Receive UK Music Policy briefings on charter commitments and relevant issues.
- ☑ Book a 6 month check-in with a member of the UK Music Policy and Public Affairs team to check progress and talk through any issues.
- ☑ Feature in UK Music's newsletter and social media channels.
- ☑ Have an opportunity to take part in forums convened by UK Music to share best practice with industry and other LA's.

Music in the City | **Antony Burdett-Clark ©**

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UK MUSIC

This report on the music industry has been created on behalf of UK Music and its members to highlight the contribution of the music industry to the UK economy.

UK Music is the collective voice of the UK's world-leading music industry. We represent all sectors of our industry – bringing them together to collaborate, campaign, and champion music. The members of UK Music are: AIM, BPI, FAC, The Ivors Academy, MMF, MPA, MPG, MU, PPL, *PRS for Music*. UK Music also has an informal association with LIVE (Live music Industry Venues & Entertainment).