

# Museums, Growth, and the Creative Industries

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## Background and objectives

Art Fund, Association of Independent Museums (AIM) and The National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC), commissioned a report on the role of museums in the creative industries in early 2025, following the Government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper and Creative Industries Growth Summit. The phase one report delivers an advocacy narrative drawing together insights and discussions about this topic, as the basis for a potential further piece of work developing and executing an economic methodology quantifying the contributions of museums, helping make the case for the return on investment from museums within the UK's globally leading creative industries.

## Key findings

The report 'Beyond the Gift Shop: Museums as Engines of Innovation and Growth' was finalised in May 2025. Drawing on interviews with more than twenty museum, culture and heritage leaders, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, it identified four cross-cutting themes encompassing museums' contributions to the creative industries: innovation, R&D and digital production; skills and talent development; placemaking and re-imagining; creative and regenerative ecosystems.

Engaging examples emerged of ways in which our creative industries benefit from the contributions, collections, and competencies of museums and their workers. The report highlights case studies including Charleston in East Sussex, Derby's Museum of Making, Amgueddfa Cymru-Museum Wales and Dundee Contemporary Arts to demonstrate how museums are working with higher education providers, creative businesses and charities to provide opportunities including co-working spaces, education, training and support for families as well attracting tourists from around the world.

The report identifies five strategic priorities to better understand and promote the role of museums in delivering growth as a foundational sector for the creative industries:

- Develop robust, shared metrics to capture museums' contributions to innovation, skills development, and ecosystem health.
- Ensure museums are represented in national economic and creative policy discussions.
- Invest in digital infrastructure and capacity to enable museums to thrive in the innovation economy, including providing high-value public data sets as part of the National AI Strategy.
- Build long-term partnerships with creative industries, universities, and local government.
- Leverage soft power and international influence by intentionally deploying museums' narrative, convening and diplomatic capabilities.

## Key advocacy messages

1. Museums play a major role in the creative industries through innovation, skills, placemaking, creative ecosystems, and global pull: we can describe and evidence their contributions and impact although we can't yet economically quantify it.
2. Museums should be represented and included in national economic and creative policy discussions and part of long-term national and local partnerships around the creative industries.
3. Museums have significant potential in the innovation economy but require investment in digital infrastructure and capacity.