
Report to: Employment and Skills Panel

Date: 12 September 2019

Subject: **Channel 4 and Digital Sector Support**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the Employment and Skills Panel with a progress report on the Channel 4 project and subsequent delivery, and to outline the Combined Authority and LEP's increased support for the creative and digital sector through both the Creative Industries Opportunity Programme and the Digital Inward Investment Fund.

2. Information

2.1 Channel 4 National HQ – Delivery Update

Background

Since the relocation decision on 31 October 2018, Channel 4 has shown a strong commitment to its Nations and Region strategy, particularly with regards to its investment in Leeds City Region. Currently based in Platform, the team is expanding across a number of roles and currently recruitment of local talent into its Technology team is well underway.

Alongside this, a number of other companies within the sector have made investments in the region. These include:

- Pact (Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television)
- UKTV
- Workerbee (Endemol Shine North)
- The Garden
- NFTS (National Film and Television School)
- Wise Owl Films (Lime Pictures)

The Channel 4 Partnership Board has also been established, with representatives in attendance from across Leeds City Region and Channel 4. The board oversees the delivery of our commitments to growing the TV production sector and wider creative industries across the City Region, which have so far encompassed the following activities;

Sector Growth

Post-Channel 4 announcement, a number of activities have taken place to maximise the benefits.

- Redefining criteria of our existing schemes in order to make them more accessible to the creative industries (further outlined in section 2.3)
- Increasing knowledge of our business support schemes to the sector through our recent 'Let's Talk...Production' campaign
- Developing a number of bespoke initiatives under the 'Creative Industries Opportunity Programme' (further outlined in section 2.2)
- Ongoing engagement and account management with companies within this sector
- Communications with Growth Managers across the City Region to increase awareness of the needs of this sector and various support schemes available, both through the LEP and external organisations such as Universities, Screen Yorkshire and Creative England

Skills Development

Post-Channel 4 announcement, a number of activities have taken place to coordinate the skills ecosystem and address the anticipated needs of the sector.

- A number of sub-groups involving industry and education providers have been formed to ensure productive discussions are taking place. These groups are as follows:
 - Skills Working Group: comprised of local authority and Combined Authority skills representatives and Screen Yorkshire
 - TV Indies Panel: a formal group of independent production companies that help steer and shape the required interventions
 - Broadcaster Collaboration: a group of major broadcasters who convene to ensure the collective needs of the sector are understood and economies of scale are achieved
- Screen Yorkshire continues to be a key partner in the delivery of a range of initiatives including the successful Beyond Brontes programme, developed in partnership with Bradford Council, which offers targeted support to young talent from underrepresented communities looking to enter the screen industries. They are also continuing to enhance their Connected Campus initiative, which aims to create a network between universities and the screen industries.
- Existing city regional activity that contributes to addressing the skills issues and employment opportunities associated with the relocation of Channel 4's headquarters include:

- The FutureGoals careers campaign, and activity to showcase creative careers, in partnership with the Burberry Foundation <https://futuregoals.co.uk/creative/>
- Fully funded training through [re]boot for career changers and underemployed graduates to re-train and access employment in skills shortage occupations including digital and production skills
- Employment and apprenticeship brokerage for 15-24 year olds through the Employment Hub
- The Skills Service is exploring the opportunity to support Assistant Editor training to address an acute skills shortage area
- A series of programmes and events have been identified that provide opportunities to develop a collaborative approach between Channel 4, Creative and Cultural Skills, Screenskills and local authorities. These will inform and enthuse the next generation of talent through the provision of Channel 4 open days, Discover! Creative Careers week, industry-led apprenticeship seminars and 'Open Doors'

Infrastructure

- Established the Engine House as a post-production opportunity. The Expressions of Interest process is now complete and Leeds City Council are liaising with companies to seek a tenant. Completion is expected from Autumn 2019 as part of the wider Southbank regeneration
- A major TV and Film studio space in Leeds has now been announced. Negotiations are expected to be finalised later in the year, following which fit-out works will commence

2.2 **Creative Industries Opportunity Programme**

Overview

The Creative Industries Opportunity Programme has been created to maximise upon Channel 4's decision to open its National HQ in Leeds. The scheme will encompass a range of bespoke initiatives that were identified as critical during the bid to attract Channel 4 and designed to facilitate the growth of the sector and mitigate any concerns caused by its rapid expansion in the region. The initiatives will have a strong inclusivity focus and will encompass three main objectives;

- To support our region's young talent and diverse communities to benefit from the Channel 4 investment, leading to the development of the region's talent base. It is anticipated that this could be done through mentoring schemes, coordinated work placement schemes, specialised bootcamps and enhanced training provision delivered with steer from relevant industry bodies;
- To support the regional ecosystem of creative, digital and production companies to benefit from the Channel 4 investment, at pace, leading to the expansion of the production sector;

- To support Channel 4 to successfully relocate to Leeds City Region, to establish operations in the region, build networks with industry and key stakeholders – meeting their timescales and deadlines;

It is anticipated that the Opportunity Programme will progress through the Combined Authority's assurance process throughout Q4 2019 and the initiatives will run until December 2022.

2.3 **Digital Inward Investment Fund (DIIF)**

#Welcome & #Grow

The Digital Inward Investment Fund consists of two branded grant schemes – these are #Welcome (for new to region businesses) and #Grow (for indigenous businesses wishing to grow).

Both grant schemes assist and incentivise digital and creative companies to invest in Leeds City Region, offering grants of between £10k to £50k to eligible businesses. The aim of this fund is to create jobs and increase the number of businesses operating in this key growth sector.

Recently the Digital Inward Investment Fund criteria has been expanded to include companies already based within Leeds City Region, in order to capitalise on the anticipated growth of the digital sector and subsequent supply chain benefits of the Channel 4 investment. Potential demand for this support has already become apparent, with over 30 enquiries received by the LEP since April 2019 from SMEs seeking investment and support to achieve business growth. 94% of creative sector businesses in the City Region are micro-businesses and therefore often fall below the threshold of our existing support schemes.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5. Staffing Implications

5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

6. External Consultees

6.1 Extensive consultations have taken place with key organisations in the sector and relevant industry bodies to inform the expansion of our creative industry support, alongside steer from the Channel 4 Partnership Board.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Panel notes progress on delivery following the Channel 4 investment decision.
- 7.2 That the Panel notes progress on the Digital Inward Investment Fund and the increased support it will provide in expanding the digital and creative industries.

8. Background Documents

None.

9. Appendices

None.