Creative UK

Policy & Engagement

Weekly Briefing

05 - 09 May 2025

If you do one thing this week:

On Wednesday 23 April, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced that it was extending the deadline for submissions to the independent review of Arts Council England (ACE), led by Baroness Hodge, to **30 June.** Creative UK has previously shared a survey with any members who have engaged with ACE support or funding over the past five years to help inform our submission, ensuring it is as informed, balanced, and representative of our diverse membership as possible.

Instead of reopening the survey, we are inviting any members who did not respond to the survey to get in touch with Harry Gault, Creative UK's Policy & Public Affairs Manager, and share their insights and experiences of engaging with ACE. In particular, we're looking for members to help inform recommendations for the Review team that support sustainability and the use of innovative financial models across the sector, and well as where our final submission can provide clear feedback or recommendations on how ACE's 10-year 'Let's Create' strategy can be enhanced.

Please get in touch with Harry at harry.gault@wearecreative.uk if you or your organisation would like to feed into our draft submission. **We kindly ask that you share your feedback, recommendations, experiences and insights with Harry by Monday 9 June.**

Creative UK's upcoming advocacy activity

On 13 May, Amy Tarr (Creative UK's Head of Policy & Public Affairs), Carol Bell (Creative UK's Regional Associate Director, North), Nick Grimshaw (Creative UK's Regional Associate Director, South) and Harry Gault (Creative UK's Policy & Public Affairs Manager) will meet with officials from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. That day, Harry will attend the Industrial Strategy and Skills Summit, hosted by Pearson and Public First. Separately, Amy will meet with advisors to the Creative Industries Council.

On 14 May, Caroline Norbury (Creative UK's Chief Executive) will meet with Baroness Debbonaire, the former Shadow Secretary of State for DCMS. That

evening, Nick will attend a West Midlands Combined Authority roundtable to discuss the 'West Midlands Futures Green Paper'.

On 15 May, Amy will meet with the National Wealth Fund to discuss financing challenges in the creative industries. That day, Sarah Gregory (Creative UK's Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) will attend a Creative PEC roundtable on 'Skills challenges and priorities for the UK's creative industries. Separately, Nick will attend a London Business Forum meeting with Howard Dawber, Deputy Mayor for Business at City Hall.

Creative UK's last week of advocacy

On 6 May, Amy Tarr (Creative UK's Head of Policy & Public Affairs) met with Adam Small, Senior Parliamentary Assistant to Sir Chris Bryant, Minister for the Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism.

On 7 May, Amy had an introductory meeting with the National Wealth Fund to discuss financing challenges in the creative industries. That day, Amy attended an Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) panel discussion on the gig and platform economy in the Houses of Parliament. Separately, Nick Grimshaw (Creative UK's Regional Associate Director, South) attended a DCMS Cultural Investment Fund catch up.

On 8 May, Harry Gault (Creative UK's Policy & Public Affairs Manager) attended a briefing at the BFI with Sir Chris Bryant, Minister for the Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism, to discuss President Trump's film tariffs announcement.

On 9 May, Amy and Harry attended a meeting of the BFI Screen Sector Taskforce.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

DCMS minister responds to concerns about proposed US film tariffs

On Wednesday 7 May, Sir Chris Bryant MP, Minister for the Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism, responded to an urgent question in the House of Commons regarding the potential impact of the proposed 100% US tariff on foreign-

produced films on the UK film industry. The urgent question was tabled by the Shadow Secretary of State for DCMS, Conservative MP Stuart Andrew.

Sir Chris described it as a “very fluid situation” and said the UK Government would take a “calm and steady approach”. He assured MPs that the UK Government was already in active discussions with those at the top of the Trump administration about the proposed tariffs, adding that the focus was on ensuring the UK’s “world-beating creative industries are protected”.

Separately, echoing much of the commentary since Trump’s announcement, Sir Chris pointed out that the “deep ties between the US and UK film industries provide mutual benefits to both countries”. He added that productions are international partnerships which are often developed and created across different countries, suggesting that US movies are often multinational because they earn more overseas than they do domestically in the US.

The Shadow Secretary of State for DCMS, Stuart Andrew MP, then pressed the Minister on what assessment he had made of the potential impact on the UK film sector and what immediate steps the UK Government was taking to engage with the US to ensure that continued investment in UK facilities by many US businesses was front-and-centre in negotiations. Sir Chris responded by paying credit to the policies adopted by both Conservative and Labour administrations to ensure the UK had a competitive tax relief system. In terms of an assessment of the potential impact, he said it was difficult to answer as no-one yet understood what a tariff relating to a service looks like and how it would work.

Once opened to other MPs, Labour MP Dame Meg Hillier asked for assurances that the UK Government’s negotiators would champion high-end television as well as film. Sir Chris didn’t respond directly, but said there was little difference in making a programme like ‘Bridgerton’ and making a film – both rely on international collaboration as they are intended for international audiences.

Another Labour MP, Joe Morris who represents Hexham in the North East, asked the Minister to use this opportunity to consider how the UK bolsters its home-made film and TV production sector as part of the soon-to-be-published Creative Industries Sector Plan. Morris cited the wonderful filming backdrops and landscapes in Northumbria, but said too often young people were having to leave the North East to pursue creative opportunities elsewhere in the UK. In response, Sir Chris outlined his ambition for a “mixed economy” in the British film industry. This meant sometimes

making films for other markets and sometimes making films that tell “predominantly British stories” and selling them around the world, but ensuring the intellectual property remains with British production companies.

The Chair of the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and Conservative MP, Dame Caroline Dinenage, asked when the Minister would “show some grit and action on behalf of [the UK’s] world-leading creative industries, in particular [the UK’s] screen sector”. This was made in reference to DCMS asking for an extension to the window in which it needs to respond to the Committee’s recent report into ‘British Film and High-End Television’ and amid rumours about the future of the department and its plans to amend the copyright regime. Sir Chris was particularly evasive, saying he did not realise DCMS had even asked for an extension, but said his priority was to work on skills in the UK screen industry. He said he wanted every child to have a chance to work in the creative industries, which meant that transforming the pathway through which those industry skills are developed.

Crossbench peer backs Freelance Commissioner

On Thursday 8 May, the Employment Rights Bill had its second day of Committee Stage debate. During the debate a Crossbench peer, Lord Londesborough, threw his support behind the establishment of a Freelance Commissioner.

While amendments in the Employment Rights Bill relating to the appointment of a Freelance Commissioner are yet to be debated, Lord Londesborough mentioned the proposal for a Freelance Commissioner in the context of concerns that the legislation would cause businesses to reduce their plans to hire permanent staff.

Lord Londesborough said this would have acute implications for those working in the creative industries and gig economy. He suggested that if these concerns were realised, then employees would come off the payroll and go into freelance and self-employed roles instead. As such, Lord Londesborough said the UK Government might have “very little choice” but the set up a Freelance Commissioner office.

Referencing the need for a Freelance Commissioner, Lord Londesborough said: “I think the Government may have very little choice on this, because the demands for the services of that office are going to go up exponentially, partly because of this Bill and also because of the National Insurance Contributions Bill.”

He mentioned that the amendments relating to the proposal for a Freelance Commissioner were being spearheaded by Crossbench and Liberal Democrat peers, some of which Creative UK are in active dialogue with and briefing ahead of the amendments being debated later in Committee Stage.

Campaign for the Arts analysis reveals a 6% cut to DCMS budgets for the current financial year

On Tuesday 6 May, the Campaign for the Arts (CFTA) launched a national petition calling on the UK Government to ensure the arts and culture sector can play a full part in its promised "decade of national renewal". It comes as newly published analysis revealed a 6% cut in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) budget for this financial year.

Analysis conducted by CFTA has found the UK Government budget allocated to DCMS – known as its Departmental Expenditure Limit – is £2.29bn for the current financial year (2025/26) – 3.4% down on the £2.37bn in 2024/25. However, the real terms figure for 2025/26, once inflation is taken into account, is £2.23bn – which is 5.9% down on last year. The analysis reveals that funding per citizen since 2010 has fallen in real terms by almost a third. The CFTA argues this threatens "vital cultural institutions like the British Film Institute, the British Library, Historic England, the 15 DCMS-sponsored national museums and galleries, Arts Council England and the nearly 1,000 organisations it funds – as well as the wider cultural ecology."

Through the national petition, the CFTA are making three asks of the Chancellor ahead of the Spending Review on the 11 June: to restore the funding removed from the DCMS budget this year by 2026/27; to sustain real-terms growth in DCMS budgets in each year of the Spending Review period, as is planned for departmental spending; and to extend the UK Government's commitment to growing funding for schools and local councils, both of which are vital for public access to the arts.

Data (Use and Access) Bill amendment to enforce copyright on tech companies defeated in the Commons

On Wednesday 7 May, the Data (Use and Access) Bill had its Third Reading in the House of Commons. An amendment, originally tabled by Crossbench peer Baroness Kidron and reintroduced by Liberal Democrat MP Victoria Collins, which aimed to ensure AI companies obey copyright law, was voted down as the Bill entered its final stages.

Baroness Kidron's original amendment would have ensured tech and AI companies comply with current copyright law and disclose information about which text and data they scrape. It was passed by peers in the Lords but was removed when the Bill entered the Commons. The amendment was then reintroduced last week by Liberal Democrat MP Victoria Collins, but it was voted against by 287 to 88.

The UK Government has attempted to offer concessions to concerned parliamentarians, including an economic impact assessment of its copyright proposals. Speaking to *The Bookseller*, Baroness Kidron argued that the UK Government's "concessions" should have been delivered as part of the original consultation process, adding that creatives will not feel reassured until the UK Government comes forward with "granular transparency" measures and a "short timetable to improve enforcement of copyright law".

ScreenSkills and 4Skills publish first-of-its-kind study of UK screen industry workforce

At the end of April, ScreenSkills and 4Skills announced that they'd partnered on a new pilot study, conducted by Ampere Analysis, to provide a first-of-its-kind study of the UK screen industry's off-screen workforce. The study is intended to enable ScreenSkills to develop the talent and expertise required to build a "world-leading, inclusive, and adaptable workforce for the UK screen industry, now and for the future."

The pilot study forms part of ScreenSkills' five-year strategic plan, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the behind-the-camera talent working across animation, children's programming, film, television (excluding broadcast news and sport), VFX and post-production in the UK. For the first time, the research estimates the size of the UK screen industry's off-screen workforce at between 183,000 and 194,000 people.

Some of the report's key findings include: 65% of freelancers have found it hard to find work in the past year; skills gaps are most common in mid-to-senior roles; over half of the workforce want to transition to a similar role in a different production sub-sector, genre or format, or to a new production role; and that the workforce has become more diverse, though challenges persist, particularly around social mobility.

ScreenSkills has responded to the report's main findings by setting out four main recommendations:

- Strengthen in-work support by expanding the reach of the ScreenSkills Training Passport, to help create a standardised framework for training and development across the screen sector
- Reform the growth and skills levy to support shorter, modular, work-based training that enables people to move into new roles without the need for a full apprenticeship
- Invest in better workforce data including regional crew tracking and additional research commissions from local screen bodies, to help highlight and respond to regional skills needs
- Improve socio-economic diversity by collaborating across the industry to develop initiatives that open up more opportunities for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. 31 per cent of respondents come from low or working-class backgrounds, compared to a national benchmark of 39% - highlighting a need to identify and remove industry barriers for this demographic.

A press release from ScreenSkills which provides a summary of the study can be found here and the full report can be accessed here.

Publishers Association launches report on UK publishing's impact on tourism, international reputation and more

Last week, Creative UK member the Publishers Association released a new report – 'Publishing and soft power: Our contribution to knowledge exchange and cultural collaboration' – with polling from Public First.

The report explores UK publishing's role in advancing and supporting the UK's global soft power from attracting people to work, study or visit the UK, to helping generate positive public perceptions of the country, both within the UK and internationally.

Among its key findings are: the UK publishing sector generated over £6.5bn in GVA in from exports in 2023, with international demand expected to grow by 20% by 2033; 80% of international adults who participated in the survey believe that British literature positively contributes towards the country's international reputation (compared to 80% who said the same about British academic research, 73% about British music, 72% about sports and athletics and 57% about British business or economic influence); the UK's literary tourism market is projected to rise from £1.7bn in 2024 to £2.1bn by 2030, with 51% of UK adults and 54% of international adults surveyed reporting that they had felt inspired to visit UK locations because of their

connection to literature; UK-made educational resources play a key role in drawing global talent, with 61% of international adults that participated in the study reporting they used UK textbooks growing up, and 63% saying this influenced their decision to study or work in the UK; and finally, 83% of UK adults see British literature as integral to national identity, while 77% take pride in the fact that the UK is one of the largest exports of books and journals worldwide.

British Academy publishes report urging policymakers to recognise cultural infrastructure as 'essential' to economic growth and social conclusion

On the 29 April, the Bennett Institute for Public Policy at the University of Cambridge published a new report – 'Measuring Social and Cultural Infrastructure' – funded by the British Academy. The report urges policymakers to recognise social and cultural spaces as essential infrastructure for economic growth and social inclusion.

The report is the result of a year-long research initiative that focuses on the best ways to measure social and cultural infrastructure, through first identifying this infrastructure and then developing an appropriate framework for assessing its role and impact in communities.

It concludes that investing in existing social and cultural infrastructure – including leisure centres, libraries, concert halls and galleries – can offer "significant and immediate returns, delivering better outcomes for citizens and enabling government objectives". As such, it argues that infrastructure of this sort should be treated with the "same seriousness" as given to traditionally recognised forms of infrastructure, such as transport or communications networks.

The new framework identified in the report broadens the definition of social and cultural infrastructure beyond "specific asset types", moving away from rigid definitions that "may overlook emerging or unconventional forms".

As the funder behind this new research, the British Academy says it hopes the new framework will help underscore the "crucial role" of this infrastructure in "supporting thriving communities, improving wellbeing and resilience, and addressing policy challenges such as regional inequalities".

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Common Wealth and Media Reform Coalition set out vision for the future of the BBC ahead of its upcoming Charter Review

On Thursday 8 May, Common Wealth and the Media Reform Coalition published a new report – 'Our Mutual Friend: The BBC in the Digital Age' – which sets out a vision for the BBC as a "public service mutual" ahead of its upcoming Charter Review.

The report argues that the BBC's future should be grounded in a genuinely democratic relationship with the public, rather than the current model where politicians exert excessive influence. It warns that without "radical reforms," the BBC will face a "bleak future of dwindling audiences and the loss of public trust" as it struggles to compete with streaming services and social media platforms.

The UK Government is required to renew the BBC's Royal Charter by the end of 2027. In an introduction to the report, it says that the Secretary of State for DCMS, Lisa Nandy MP, has expressed her support for mutualising the BBC, with new structures for "genuine public representation and participation".

The report builds on the idea of mutualising the BBC, proposing that members of the public become members of the BBC, in other words "active and direct participants in its mission to inform, educate, entertain and connect". It proposes that all BBC members are given two new powers to secure public representation and participation: the right to serve on member-led panels appointed by random selection, which will shape the BBC's activities in partnership with BBC staff; and the right to allocate a share of the BBC's budget to support independent public purpose content.

The vision set out in the report is best summarised as an attempt make members of the public more than just audiences and licence fee payers, but participants in how the BBC is governed, what decisions it makes and how it serves the public interest.

Next week in UK Parliament (correct at the time of issuing)

Monday 12 May

House of Lords: Legislation – Data (Use and Access) Bill – Consideration of Commons amendments

House of Lords: Urgent Question Repeat – Trade Negotiations (led by Labour peer Baroness Gustafsson)

House of Lords: Oral questions – Protecting and increasing trade between the UK and the USA (led by Conservative peer Lord Lamont of Lerwick)

Tuesday 13 May

House of Lords: Legislation – Employment Rights Bill (Committee Stage)

House of Commons: Westminster Hall debate – Access to venture capital for people from ethnic minority and other underrepresented backgrounds (led by Liberal Democrat MP Sarah Olney)

House of Lords: Urgent Question Repeat – Trade Negotiations (led by Labour peer Baroness Jones of Whitchurch)

Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee: Oral evidence – Grassroots music venues
Witnesses include representatives from Globe Town Records, Music Venue Trust, Featured Artists Coalition, LIVE, Concert Promoters Association; and Sir Chris Bryant, Minister for the Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism, and Alastair Jones, Deputy Director for the Creative Industries at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Commons Business and Trade Select Committee: Oral evidence – Industrial Strategy
Witnesses include Andrew Forzani, Chief Commercial Officer at the Cabinet Office; Andrew New, Chief Executive at NHS Supply Chain; Lord Livermore, Financial Secretary to the Treasury at HM Treasury; Baroness Gustafsson, Minister for Investment at HM Treasury and the Department for Business and Trade; Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister for Skills and Women and Equalities at the Department for Education; and Jonathan Reynolds MP, Secretary of State for DBT

Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee: Oral evidence – Media literacy
Witnesses include representatives from Liverpool John Moores University, The Guardian Foundation and Public Interest News Foundation

Wednesday 14 May

House of Commons: Oral questions – The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Relevant questions include steps being taken to improve digital inclusion; steps being taken to support innovation; the potential impact of AI on the environment; steps being taken to ensure the adequate regulation of digital services in the context of the UK-US trade

agreement; steps being taken to help protect children online; and steps being taken to support innovation in areas without mayoral devolution agreements

House of Commons: Westminster Hall debate – Future of public libraries (led by Labour MP Jonathan Davies)

House of Lords: Oral questions – BBC's decision to deny access to BBC Sounds for people travelling or living abroad (led by Labour peer Lord Blunkett)

Thursday 15 May

House of Lords: Oral questions – Potential value of the global market for creative content from the UK for use in training artificial intelligence models (led by Conservative peer Lord Black of Brentwood)