

HERE, THERE AND
EVERYWHERE

2023

MUSIC POWERHOUSE TOOLKIT:

A GUIDE FOR TOWNS, CITIES AND REGIONS



The UK has an ability to captivate audiences worldwide, but we must nurture the talent that supports its profile on a global scale, especially against an increasingly competitive market. Local music ecosystems are key to this as they are critical to the talent pipeline.

UK Music's 2022 Power of Music report documented the health and community benefits of music, highlighting how music can be a cost-effective and accessible tool to forge community and boost wellbeing. This is just the very start of the benefits.

A strong local music scene can bring new visitors and funds to an area. It can put places on the cultural map and encourage long-term growth. As this section of the report will show, local government, council, regions, and cities have the power to make it happen.

Music impacts a wide range of areas for local government – planning, licensing, regeneration, health, housing, arts and culture, sustainability, tourism, and economic growth, among others. By uncovering best practices in each and measuring how they impact each other, we can see that investment is only one part of a thriving music ecosystem. A robust policy framework with music incorporated into performance indicators is key.

Luckily, any city, town or place can capitalise on all the opportunities music can deliver. From our experience working around the UK with our partner the **Center for Music Ecosystems** here are four core lessons for local government, split into policy areas. These policy areas have direct links with the goals used at local government level to unlock funding opportunities. In each example we have outlined what could be implemented locally and where this has been done successfully.

We hope this helps towns, cities and regions become music powerhouses.

What is the Center for Music Ecosystems?

The Center for Music Ecosystems is a non-profit organisation with a mission to conduct globally relevant research that demonstrates how music can be a catalyst for social change and support communities to use music to foster sustainable development at a local, national and global level.

Their mission is to ensure communities, policymakers and leaders use music to its fullest extent to make places better, through high quality research exploring how music impacts communities and how communities impact music.



Freddie McGregor performing at The Jam House, Birmingham | Nikki Riggon ©

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Use data to ensure music is at the heart of planning and licensing policy.

POLICY AREA:

Strategic Planning

To create sustainable, growth in communities it is integral that music features in long-term strategic planning consultations. Planning and licensing officials should work together to establish a joined-up decision-making process. This is important for both long-term strategic planning and scheme-by-scheme regeneration and should include, considering the impact music can have on the local high-street, community centres and building density.

One simple change to help create places where both residential developments and entertainment can co-exist is to include licensing colleagues in master planning discussions at the pre-application stage, which can reassert compliance with the Agent of Change provision in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).¹

Key to this process is good data. Local leaders need strong data, so they know they are making the best, most accurate decisions possible, based on clear evidence.

PLACE:

Cardiff

What is Agent of Change?

Since 2015, UK Music has been campaigning for the Agent of Change principle. This places the responsibility for mitigating impacts from existing noise-generating activities or uses on the proposed new noise-sensitive development. That could mean, for example, the developer of new flats takes responsibility for soundproofing to avoid the risk of new neighbours complaining about noise from a music venue.

In 2018, the Government included the Agent of Change principle in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to protect venues from developers. Planning authorities are required to consider the NPPF when determining applications. Campaigns to strengthen the Agent of Change principle in law continue.”

WHAT HAPPENED:

In 2019, Cardiff published a music strategy,² which compiled data inventorying the state of the city’s music industry and ecosystem. This was aimed to inform the city’s long-term strategy and provide a data baseline that could be incorporated, where appropriate, into strategic decisions city-wide. The recommendations, adopted by Cardiff City Council, placed the responsibility of its implementation on the local authority.

While the pandemic slowed progress, this data set has underpinned a number of positive changes, including one related to how regeneration schemes are evaluated. To support the plan, the city convenes a Music Board³ and it partners with planning and licensing colleagues to ensure there is board consultation if any new residential or change-of-use applications are submitted within earshot of an existing music venue or business.

1 <https://www.shoosmiths.co.uk/insights/articles/nppf-the-agent-of-change-principle-14454>

2 <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Business/Support-and-Finance-for-Business/cardiff-mu-sic-board/Documents/Cardiff%20Music%20Ecosystem%20Study%20and%20Strategic%20Rec-ommendations%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

3 <https://www.cardiffnewsroom.co.uk/releases/c25/22650.html>

This places licensing at the front end of the planning process, which can reduce unanticipated burdens later on, while fostering more dialogue, community partnership and protection of grassroots music venues and spaces.

The city has unveiled plans to hire a full-time music officer, a first for Wales, who will serve as a liaison to ensure music is represented across the city's wider local plan.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN:

Cardiff Council has placed great importance on its music economy, which has increased scrutiny, but also created stronger partnerships.

But it began with a data baseline - to understand where everyone and everything was, how much it was worth, how it fit together and who needed to be at the table so collective decisions could be made.

While the pandemic and financial circumstances continue to challenge progress, the city continues to take music and culture as seriously as any other sector, and with it, can better manage growth, convene parties and build partnerships.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

1. The first step is to commission or deliver a music audit. This is the data baseline that's needed to better understand the role of music and the associated night-time economy across the wider plan. A council representative must then lead the audit and be responsible for its comprehensiveness. The data is best presented in the same manner as all other datasets.
2. Next, a framework can be developed where the cabinet members for planning and licensing agree to collaborate intentionally to ensure any scheme brought forward involving both portfolios is assessed by licensing in the pre-application stage, and that, where required, the data from the music audit is incorporated.
3. Following on, a music board or commission can help steward the process or update the data. To learn more, read the Cardiff Music Strategy.⁴

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

Regenerate empty spaces as hubs for music, culture and community.

POLICY AREA:

High Streets and Towns and Wider Regeneration

Creating an inventory of music spaces, places and businesses, plus empty premises that could be used for music and culture, can help match providers with needed space or regenerate disused or empty stock. Making it easy and safe to access space responsively through an inventory or register can speed up approvals and increase the number of visitors to a town or city.

Also, this mapping can be overlaid on wider land-use planning assessments to better highlight cultural deserts and areas of need.

PLACE:

Sunderland and Southwark, South London

WHAT HAPPENED:

Across the UK, councils are struggling with reimagining empty department stores.⁵

In Sunderland a model emerged that all communities could adopt. In 2021, the council-owned Binns Department Store was converted into a music-led creative hub by local music shop, record label and social enterprise, Pop Recs.⁶

The complex includes a skills hub for the wider creative arts, a cafe and a music venue. The £1m transformation was part of Sunderland's Historic High Streets Heritage Action Zone,⁷ to repurpose existing stock for community benefit.

Further culture-led redevelopment has occurred, including creative co-working and the reopening of The Fire Station,⁸ voted one of the UK's best new venues.

This is all supported by local, intentional music and cultural policy. Sunderland maintains a robust music, arts, and culture office, which brings together stakeholders to help populate spaces, address gaps, and measure success and was instrumental in identifying sources of funding - most tangential to music and culture - with investment opportunities, such as Pop Recs.

In Southwark, a register of empty and available spaces and places for arts, music and culture are maintained, complete with relevant info for a prospective tenant or arts organisation - including cost, space, time available and other terms.⁹ This Cultural Spaces register has since been adopted across the Greater London Authority, with the GLA offering its own across Greater London.¹⁰

5 <https://www.mirror.co.uk/money/237-department-stores-still-vacant-24852435>

6 <https://twitter.com/poprecsltd?lang=en>

7 <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/in-your-area/north-east/celebrating-sunderland-her-itage-action-zone/>

8 <https://sunderlandculture.org.uk/our-venues/the-fire-station/>

9 https://forms.southwark.gov.uk/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=1055

10 <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/cultural-infrastructure-toolbox/finding-building-or-land/sign-cultural-infrastructure-register>

WHAT CAN WE LEARN:

A joined-up approach that explored how to redevelop disused council-owned assets was deployed by the local authority through a culture and music-first approach.

This enabled local music and cultural professionals to address a number of challenges at once - including animating the high street, increasing footfall, combating antisocial behaviour in empty town centres, house more rate paying businesses and improve public perception and talent retention.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

1. The first step is to map all available space that could be used for music and culture and make it available to community members online. Ensuring it is updated regularly is key, to avoid disappointment or mixed messaging, such as a property being shown as available that isn't.
2. At the same time, creating a register of funding and investment to regenerate buildings and improve high streets and towns, can help match ideas and organisations with space - and the investment to regenerate - as Sunderland's arts and culture work shows. The money to support Binns regeneration in Sunderland was not earmarked for music specifically, it was part of a pot dedicated to preserving heritage.

Connecting these dots does not need to be over-complicated. Councils instruct agents and other consultants to support retail and commercial regeneration - the same can be applied for music, arts and culture.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

Enshrine music and the local community in regeneration and partnership plans.

POLICY AREA:

Skills, education and community development

The best time to incorporate music and culture into wider civic priorities is when discussing opportunities with investors, from early-stage conversation all the way to the bidding process to acquire land. Music and culture can be a key tool to market new areas to potential buyers.

However, this needs to be front and centre from the start, in bidding assessment and planning negotiations. Decisions made at the front end should ensure provision for a community recording studio or cultural workspace are built into the scheme rather than bolted on. This could be managed through a Section 106 agreement (where planning obligations become legal obligations) or through tailored partnerships.

A joined-up approach that recognises and protects existing arts and culture actors can create more specific and substantive agreements, which include music provision and foster better, more community-friendly investment.

But this isn't necessarily a one size fits all approach – local decisions need to be made with the local community in mind.

PLACE:

Bradford and London City Island

WHAT HAPPENED:

As part of Bradford's wider town and city-centre regeneration strategy and its awarding of UK City of Culture status in 2025, it has taken a deliberate approach to incorporate music into its economic, social, and community strategy. 'Culture is our Plan' is Bradford's 10-year strategy that ties the prioritisation of culture to their economic growth. With clear targets and big ambitions, the aim is to prove the positive impact of culture in everyone's lives. It helps to provide a strong blueprint for other cities looking for guidance on where to start.

Music has intentionally featured heavily in all of this. Bradford Live, a 4,000-capacity theatre, is due to open in 2024 as part of the City Park redevelopment, which includes housing, community-focused retail and a new public realm. Additionally, the city has delivered a night-time economy roadmap focused on

What are Section 106 agreements?

Section 106 (S106) agreements are legal agreements between Local Authorities and developers; these are linked to planning permissions and can also be known as planning obligations.

Section 106 agreements are drafted when it is considered that a development will have significant impacts on the local area that cannot be moderated by means of conditions attached to a planning decision.

expanding the city's music and cultural offering tailored to those who use it by avoiding relying on alcohol, pubs and bars.

Another example, London City Island, has been transformed in recent years from a disused industrial site into a thriving, fine-grained, arts inspired riverside community. The area has been the permanent home of the English National Ballet (ENB) since 2018. Key to this development is the balance between residential, retail and workspaces alongside fresh cultural institutions that have brought a range of independent makers and artists to the Island.

A major factor in the success of this project was the partnership between property developer Ballymore, Glenn Howells Architects and the ENB, who ensured the space was tailored and permeable to the unique needs of the ENB and the firm belief from the developers in bringing art to a new audience. In doing so they have found they are able to enhance unit values in areas when there is cultural space in the development. This highlights the cultural, social and commercial benefit to developing these sorts of partnership.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN:

These examples highlight the importance of a cohesive approach. From creating a diverse night-time economy offer, to redeveloping an iconic building or expanding and diversifying cultural opportunities, music, art and culture should be a core tenet for any long-term growth

What is an LEP?

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are business led partnerships between local authorities and local private sector businesses. They play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and job creation, improve infrastructure, and raise workforce skills within the local area. LEP boards are led by a business Chair and board members are local leaders of industry (including SMEs), educational institutions and the public sector.

plan. In Bradford, this proved them to be the most attractive candidate as the UK's 2025 City of Culture. While London City Island has won prestigious awards, including best new place to live at the London planning awards.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Partnerships and community involvement are key. In Bradford, its strategic lead for culture and policy has developed a framework to engage both with other policymakers and the wider community, through a series of public events related to what kinds of culture, music and nighttime economy Bradford wants.

Local authorities must also have the autonomy to allocate financial resources in line with their specific needs and priorities when for the benefit of the wider community. It's necessary to focus on a broader concept of infrastructure, encompassing not only essential public services like roads and schools but also cultural opportunities, like music. This notion aligns with the principles outlined in the 2022 Government Levelling Up white paper, which emphasised the importance of promoting cultural accessibility and inclusivity as integral components of regional development strategies.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR:

Create a music advisory commission with local business leaders, stakeholders and tourism boards.

POLICY AREA:

Economic development and tourism.

PLACE:

Liverpool, Cardiff, Sheffield, Manchester, and the West Midlands

Many communities across the UK have established music boards and commissions. We believe this can be further improved by ensuring representatives from ancillary organisations are included - LEPs, BIDs, tourism boards, NHS Trusts, and social enterprises. Setting up committees that align with local priorities - such as one dedicated to planning and another to LEP initiatives - can create stronger partnerships and better integrate the skills and economic benefit music and cultural businesses can deliver to the wider community.

WHAT HAPPENED:

Music boards allow for effective engagement with bodies outside their membership, such as local enterprise partnerships and tourism organisations.

While not all music boards contain members from local enterprise partnerships or tourism, it is actively engaged in discussions with those organisations. This benefitted the Music Board in Liverpool, where they ended up playing a significant role in winning the bid to host Eurovision*.

Similar boards exist in Cardiff, Sheffield, Manchester and the West Midlands, with each serving different roles in fostering stronger engagement in the music industry but importantly, providing a framework for music to engage with the wider community. Liverpool, along with Birmingham and Manchester, has mapped local venues and music infrastructure, while in Sheffield the Board launched a hub to support local talent.¹¹ Each offers lessons that can be utilised in communities across the country.

* Please see case study on page 24 of our Here, There and Everywhere report.

¹¹ <https://unltdbusiness.com/sheffield-city-region-music-board-launches-new-hub-for-industry-to-find-support/>

What is a BID?

Business Improvement Districts (BID) are business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses.

They can be a powerful tool for directly involving local businesses in local activities and allow the business community and local authorities to work together to improve the local trading environment.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN:

A music board serves two functions. The first is to elevate the economic and social value of the local music industry. The second is to improve and expand the role of music across the community. There are many strong examples to take forward, from Liverpool's engagement in marketing the city to Cardiff and Manchester's role in strategic planning.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Start a Music Board. Engage representatives from your LEP, local health trust, BID, city council and arts organisations and set up a structured and formal framework where the board can advise those it needs to - such as a city or district council - while maintaining independence.

Select a few priority areas such as education, tourism or skills and outline the key policy discussions locally where music can play a positive role. Establish a simple charter and membership structure - and publish everything online that happens. No community is too small to take advantage of music and become more music friendly!

For those cities that already have a Music Board in place, think about what comes next. Goals around sustainability, transport and international reach may be part of the longer-term planning that comes with being a well-established Music Board. Share best practice with others and keep growing partnerships with new parts of the industry.

And finally...

Engage with the music industry to establish partnerships and spur local investment.

UK Music, alongside the Center for Music Ecosystems, can provide support, best practice examples, and a national network to ensure music is adding value to your local community plus supporting regeneration and development. If you would like to expand the benefits that music can bring locally - from events to education, regeneration to social inclusion and wellbeing, please get in touch.

