

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION**

**SCREEN INDUSTRIES – UPDATE**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To provide an update report on the development of screen industries in the city within the context of the North East Screen Industries Partnership.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In early 2021, the BBC published a pan-UK commissioning strategy – ‘The BBC Across the UK’ – and announced its commitment to increasing out-of-London production by 10% by 2028 (a spend value of £700m). This strategy is designed to ensure increased representation of communities throughout the UK across all BBC platforms and increase commissioning spend in the nations and regions.
- 2.2 This resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) being signed by the 12 local authorities and 3 combined authorities across the North East as a whole with the BBC in September 2021.
- 2.3 Figures considered at the time indicated that the UK’s screen industry was flourishing, generating GVA of £6.1 billion in 2016 and representing growth of 140% over the past ten years. Turnover in the industry had also significantly increased over this timeframe growing from just over £6bn in 2008 to over £14bn in 2017. There was huge potential identified to grow the sector locally by capitalising on the rapid expansion of the industry at UK level, with the re-location of Channel 4 to Leeds opening-up new opportunities for North-East-based companies. The growing interaction between film, TV & screen, and gaming & VR was also starting to catalyse new opportunities for UK creative content businesses.
- 2.4 However, the North East as a region is underdeveloped with regard to its screen industries landscape. Unlike competitor regions such as Liverpool, Greater Manchester and Yorkshire, it had not established – through a publicly funded screen agency - a coordinated and strategic approach to unlocking the economic and social development potential of the sector. Over a decade of low or no investment in screen sector support and infrastructure and a lack of a regional production fund to attract new investment, combined with major programming cuts made by broadcasters in 2008 has left the North East as one of the smallest screen sectors in the UK. Less than 2% of content produced in the UK is made in North East and just 0.9% of production and post production industry companies are based here.

- 2.5 It was within this context that the MoU with the BBC was developed, with the BBC committing to invest up to £25m in the region and regional partners seeking to commit £11.4m over the same five year period. A new North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP) was developed. The establishment of NESIP, with the early investment from the BBC and the support of North East Screen (formerly Northern Film and Media), was designed to catalyse the screen industries sector and help to establish a thriving screen industries eco system across the region.
- 2.6 Activity coordinated through North East Screen, reporting to the North East Screen Industries Partnership, is focused around a central production office, alongside business development and skills initiatives. Private sector led investment and future opportunities have also been announced during this period, both within the city and wider region.
- 2.7 This item has been brought to the Committee in view of the significant potential economic and cultural impact for the city.

### **3. Current Position**

- 3.1 Catherine Auld (Assistant Director of Economic Regeneration) will be in attendance to provide a presentation on the nature and level of activity to date.

### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment.

### **5 Background Papers**

None