

# Developing the Screen Industries in North Staffordshire

A Research and Strategy Paper for the  
North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership

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## Executive Summary

The objective of this research was to deliver a report that informs future strategic development in the North Staffordshire Region by increasing the knowledge base of the opportunities, gaps in provision and need within the Screen Industries.

The geographical focus for the work is the local authority areas as identified by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership for North Staffordshire.

Within the report we propose to:

- Map film activities and film support services taking place across the region. This may include University spin out companies or support programmes funded through the Public sector. Highlight additional film support services that are required.
- Identify key players, organisations, companies and agencies active in the development of film in the region. This would include Advantage West Midlands, Screen West Midlands, locally based Universities and Colleges.
- To identify the key products from the region such as Souled Out and The Card which increase 'brand awareness' of the regions potential as a film production choice.
- To identify potential screen venues in both conventional and unconventional settings which may be used for performances. These might for example, include retail units in Hanley or Newcastle City Centres or an empty industrial unit.
- To identify potential venues, locations and areas of interest to film makers within the region such as the diverse offerings from the wildness of the Staffordshire Moorlands to old heritage buildings in Burslem such as the Wedgwood Institute.
- Outline regional, national and international opportunities for funding and investment in the region's film infrastructure. This would provide a snapshot of the current opportunities and identify potential areas to explore in the future.

- Identify methods of best practice within the industry and the characteristics required of a successful film office, drawn from experience of visits to centres in Turin and Paris and recent developments in Ireland.
- Identify desired requirements for the film and production industries to develop and prosper in the North Staffordshire Region.
- Undertake a short case study of the Souled Out production filmed during 2008, focusing on the partnership working between the production and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.
- Identify the future aspirations of local filmmakers relating to promotion and support activity such as festivals, networking, training and mentoring, access to funding opportunities.
- Highlight the wider implications and impact of regional film development and the potential of increased cultural activity on the economic and social regeneration of the area, by influencing the perception of place, cultural tourism and inward investment.

## **Methodology**

This report has been created by carrying out an extensive programme of field research complemented by a thorough survey of existing recent publications by Skillset, the UK Film Council and local and national Government.

It was crucial to talk to filmmakers working in the North Staffordshire region and the detail and conclusions of this report have been based upon their invaluable contributions.

## Key Findings

This research has brought to light a number of issues that need action or further investigation.

- The filmmaking community in North Staffordshire is relatively small but active in the area of corporate and advertising production.
- There is certainly ambition on the part of these filmmakers to be more creative and to look at making short and feature drama.
- However, apart from one or two individuals, there is little in the way of activity in feature development.
- There is a perception in the community that the Regional Screen Agency – Screen West Midlands – does not see North Staffordshire as having any activity of worth and consequently, there is a real lack of engagement with the agency's activities. This is backed up by data from Screen West Midlands' monitoring.
- Many filmmakers feel disconnected from others in the region and there was a consensus that, while there are a number of creative network initiatives in the area, there was nothing aimed at, or suitable for filmmakers. This is something they feel need to be addressed.
- Many interviewees felt that North Staffordshire needed a media 'hub', similar in a way to the Electricworks in Sheffield. This should consist of office space, meetings rooms, possibly studio space and be a networking centre for the region.
- Better quality screening facilities were seen as something that should be a priority in terms of film development.
- North Staffordshire has a remarkable variety of locations within a relatively small area that makes it ideal for drawing a wealth of film and television productions into the area. It also has excellent road and rail communications and provides excellent value in terms of cost of living, accommodation and office space.
- The *Soul Boy* production of 2008 showed that the region could add considerable extra value to a production through the partnerships with Staffordshire University and Stoke on Trent City Council.
- The region produces a wealth of graduates with high-level skills in film and television production. However, retaining these graduates is a problem, with a migration of the most able to the larger and more traditional production centres of London and Manchester.
- The lack of support services for film production in North Staffordshire needs to be addressed if the region is to develop a strong indigenous filmmaking community as well as drawing larger productions into the area.

One important point that has come out of the case study on *SoulBoy*, is the important role played by the Cultural Development team at Stoke City Council. The commitment and enthusiasm of that small team were vital in making the production work in Stoke on Trent and it is exactly this kind of approach that is needed if the North Staffordshire film office is to succeed.

# 1. Introduction

British films grossed £2.3bn at the international box office last year and box-office takings in this country are up 46% on the turn of the millennium. Almost one-sixth of all the films shown around the world last year were British and there were more than 164m visits to the cinema in this country, 22m more than in 2000. The UK Film Council says box-office takings in this country stand at a record £850m.<sup>1</sup>

Half of the world's population - that's three billion people - have seen a *James Bond* film.

These are films made by a UK company, using UK creativity and ingenuity. Hundreds of millions more have seen British films - from *Chariots of Fire* to *The Full Monty*, from *Notting Hill* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

The audience for film, in virtually every country in the world, continues to grow - at the cinema, on television, and on DVD. Over the last 20 years cinema admissions in the UK have almost doubled.

Last year, at the height of the recession, UK cinema admissions were over 164 million, and in May of 2009 over 15 million cinema tickets were sold, suggesting that 2009 would see a substantial increase over last year.

The screen industries have long been seen as a valuable part of the commercial and cultural economy of the UK.

Film and moving images are the single most important source of education, information and culture in the world today. They also represent a central part of the UK's creative industries. Skills and talent generate wealth and jobs through the creation and exploitation of intellectual property.

## 1.1 Industry Employment

The core UK film industry directly employed around 33,500 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in 2006 (including those self-employed). It means that the core UK film industry is of similar size to, for example, the book publishing industry and larger than the IT hardware consultancy sector.

While around three-quarters of the jobs in the core UK film industry are based in London and the South East, there are significant numbers of employees throughout the UK. For example, the industry directly supports around 1,800 jobs in the South West and 1,600 jobs in the North West, and supports well over 3,000 in each of these two regions overall taking into account multiplier impacts.

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<sup>1</sup> Low and Micro-Budget Film Production in the UK. (2008) UK Film Council

There are around 18,200 people working in creative media industries in the West Midlands, representing 4% of the industries' UK workforce. In terms of the make-up of the region's workforce, women represent around 34% of the workforce, compared to 38% across the whole of the UK. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups account for 10% of the workforce, which is higher than the 6% nationally. And 3% of the workforce is reported as having a disability, compared to 8% UK-wide.<sup>2</sup>

## **1.2 Sector by sector**

### **1.2.1 Animation**

Around 120 people are employed in animation companies with more employed in animation roles in other creative media industries.

Animation is growing in significance with companies spread across the region, including The Character Shop in Birmingham, Synthetic Dimensions in Wolverhampton and Spark and Zoom (Brothers McLeod) in Worcestershire. The Lighthouse Media Centre in Wolverhampton hosts an annual animation festival called Flip which is steadily growing an international reputation. Computer Games <sup>[11]</sup><sub>SEP</sub> 1,600 people work in computer games.

The West Midlands is the UK's second largest regional base for the computer games industry with 20% of the sector's workforce. The most notable companies include Blitz Games and Codemasters.

### **1.2.2 Facilities**

1,100 people are employed in the sub-sectors of post production, studio and equipment hire, special effects and outside broadcast. The studio and post-production facilities in the region are mainly focused on television, digital TV production or corporate work. Businesses include Aquila TV, Audio Suite, HD Heaven in Birmingham and Oakslade Studios near Warwick.

### **1.2.3 Film**

Around 100 people operating in the key sub-sectors of production live in the West Midlands. Figures are not available for employment in cinema exhibition at national/regional level.

Film production in the West Midlands is limited to a small number of independent organisations. There are no distribution companies with a national remit based in the region. A number of short films have been shot in the region in recent years, but the West Midlands does not have any fully commercial feature film production companies. Screen West Midlands offer a range of support for emerging film talent and also invest in productions

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<sup>2</sup> Skillset/UKFC Production Workforce Survey 2008

through the Film and Media Production Fund. 2008 saw a number of feature films in production across the West Midlands, with *Soul Boy* – a co-production between Ipso Facto Films based in London and Dreamfinder Productions based in Shrewsbury – being shot in and around Stoke on Trent.

There are 46 cinemas in the West Midlands, providing a good spread of exhibition across the region. This includes multiplex cinemas in the main urban areas, an IMAX cinema and a number of smaller independent cinemas and art cinemas (some of which have production facilities and house small production companies). In Birmingham, Star City, the UK's largest multiplex with 30 screens, specialises in Asian cinema.

#### **1.2.4 Television**

Over 1,200 people work in broadcast TV, cable and satellite and independent production.

Both the BBC and ITV Central have studio bases in Birmingham. The BBC has two bases, namely the Mailbox where regional and network television and radio productions are produced, and the Drama Village at the University of Birmingham. ITV Central is located in purpose-built premises.

There is a strong base of small independent production companies. With the decline in demand from both BBC and ITV in the region, a number of these have successfully diversified, taking on network commissions from London or specialising in regional commissions, cable or commercial work. The main output of these companies is factual entertainment for network and cable television.

The film industry provides jobs for some of the UK's most highly qualified workers. For example, 59% of the production workforce are university educated, while 23% of the production workforce have a graduate level qualification specifically relevant to the core UK film industry. Furthermore, boosting and updating skills in the core UK film industry is a key priority of the UK Film Council through its 'A Bigger Future' skills strategy. The core UK film industry also attracts many highly skilled foreign workers to the UK. The Skillset survey suggests that around a tenth of UK-based production staff are non-British.

The skills of the core UK film industry's workforce are reflected in their average earnings. For example, the average gross income for workers in the UK production sector was £31,700 per annum in 2006, a third higher than the UK average income. The occupations which earn the highest wages are in editing/post-production/visual effects, production/script and development, and sound/electrical, although it should be acknowledged that low-paid and low-skilled workers are also common, particularly in the exhibition sector.

### **1.3 The relationship with other creative industries**

For every job supported in the core UK film industry a further job is supported through indirect and induced multiplier impacts. The core UK film industry therefore helps to support 67,000 FTE jobs in total, allowing for those people employed in companies supplying the film industry and for the jobs dependent on the spending of film industry workers.

In addition, the showing of UK films helps UK TV broadcasters to generate about £235 million of revenues. This 'multiplier' activity contributes a further £1.6 billion a year to UK GDP and £420 million a year to UK tax revenues.<sup>3</sup>

The core UK film industry has synergies with a wide range of other creative industries. Writers, actors, directors and others involved in production obviously work in a variety of other media. And two-thirds of firms involved in the film industry in the UK also work in at least one other screen industry.

There are also important spillovers from technical developments in the film industry to other media, most notably, computer imagery developed for films have been used to great effect in TV programmes and commercials.

### **1.4 Impact of the UK Industry**

The core UK film industry contributes to the economy in a number of other ways not captured by standard multipliers - for example, by promoting British cultural life, attracting tourists to the UK, supporting UK exporters, and generating sales of DVDs, CDs and other merchandise.

The core UK film industry contributes substantially to the cultural life of the UK. Successful UK films are a means of expression of British identity. UK films also address the social challenges that the country faces in the 21st century, including drug addiction, prejudice and race relations.

Moreover, econometric evidence suggests that film audiences place a premium on indigenous films. Research suggests that a film shown in the UK can expect its box office revenue to be up to 30% higher if it is indigenous. On this basis, the existence of UK films boosted the average box office revenues of cinemas by more than £50 million a year over the last decade. As a result, employment in the exhibition sector of the core UK film industry has probably been around 500 higher than it would have been if cinemas had been showing only foreign films, with tax revenues around £8 million a year higher.<sup>4</sup>

The support provided to the core UK film industry has also ensured that several film-makers have maintained a British setting for stories rather than translating them into the context of another country.

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<sup>3</sup> The Economic Impact of the UK Film Industry. (2007) Oxford Economics

<sup>4</sup> *The Economic Impact of the UK Film Industry*. Oxford Economics 2007.

For example, there was speculation that the characters in the Harry Potter films were to be depicted as Americans with the School named as Hogwarts High. And the UK currently benefits from stories originally set overseas being translated to the UK when they are made into films. For example, *Run Fat Boy Run* was originally written as being set in New York but London has been chosen as the backdrop for the film, with significant help and support from Film London.

## 1.5 Impact of Media Industries on UK Tourism

The presentation of UK life in films is not only important in sustaining our culture. It also has important impacts on UK tourism and trade.

In its strategy document 'Tomorrow's Tourism. A growth industry for the new Millennium' (DCMS 1999) the government identified a number of core action points. Amongst these was the 'development of innovative niche markets, such as film tourism and sports tourism, to unlock the full potential of Britain's unique cultural and natural heritage.'

The impact of film on tourism is well-documented through a number of case studies and is recognised in the marketing campaigns of tourist boards around the world. For example, Movies Maps are available to direct tourists to key locations depicted in films such as *Match Point*, *Closer*, *Bridget Jones*, *Love Actually*, *Thunderbirds*, *Miss Potter* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

While there is limited robust statistical data quantifying the value of this impact, the available evidence suggests around 1 in 10 visits may be attributed to the impact of UK films. On this basis around £1.8 billion of visitor spend a year might be attributable to UK feature film production.<sup>5</sup>

British films and television programmes have a significant, positive effect on tourism. Both film and television contribute to a wider 'branding' of UK people, society and culture which has a very strong influence on creating a desire to travel.

Historical films and programmes, whether based on fictional or real events reinforce an overall brand for the UK as a country steeped in history. The effect can be persistent and long-lasting as is the case with *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and the television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.

The effect is likely to be most persistent when the production achieves cult status, such as *Local Hero* and *Absolutely Fabulous*, or when the production is part of a wider historical, literary or cinematic brand, such as *Mrs Brown*, *Shakespeare in Love* or *Notting Hill*.

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<sup>5</sup> *Stately Attraction. How Film and Television Programmes Promote Tourism in the UK*. UK Film Council Report 2007.

Typically, it is the associated sites, rather than shooting locations, which benefit the most, as is the case with *Braveheart*. Historical and religious buildings such as, Alnwick Castle (*Harry Potter*) and Rosslyn Chapel (*Da Vinci Code*), and rural villages, such as Tobermory (*Balamory*) or Stamford village (the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice*), prove to be the most successful in inducing tourism.

There are exceptions to this however, with *The Full Monty* being a considerable draw to the run down urban locations in Sheffield where the film was shot.

Strong, emotionally resonant productions, connecting characters with place, are highly successful, as is the case with *Local Hero* or *Doc Martin*. 'Sunday night' television drama, such as *Monarch of the Glen*, is prime material for generating the tourist effect.

It is evident from the above that a successful film and media industry has significant impact on the economic, social and cultural life, both nationally and regionally. This has been recognized both the RDA's and other regional and national development agencies such as Advantage West Midlands – based in Birmingham. Film and media production has been further supported and developed by the increase in the number and activity of local film offices – usually situated with local government.

These film offices have, in some instances, played a vital role in encouraging film production into the area and ensuring its success. Many are increasingly entrepreneurial in their approach to attracting film production and investment, with the obvious beneficial impact on local businesses, tourism and graduate retention.

## 2. Current Activity and Provision

Stoke on Trent has a small filmmaking community that is primarily active in the corporate market. Examples of the work include promotional films for Staffordshire University and Honda, a new ad for Waterworld, work Creative Partnerships in schools and Stoke primary Care Trust.

Work has also been done with other parts of the creative community, including the Playback Theatre Company and Frontline Dance (Rachel Lines).

Some work has also been done for terrestrial and satellite television, including Channel 4, Sky 1, Setanta and also Sky Sports.

Most of this corporate work is produced with very small teams – for most companies in the area this means between one and three people.

As with much of the media production industries, companies tend to employ staff who they know personally already. Many of the small production companies based in North Staffordshire have been contacted by a lot of young people / students looking for work experience. The feeling was that they will try to help students with work experience wherever they can but that the small size of the companies means that employed places are rare.

Some interviewees commented that it is getting easier to find people locally to work on the projects with the students coming out from the universities, but that quality can still be an issue. One company had a core team of five staff, supplemented by freelancers drawn mainly from the Manchester area.

The corporate work mentioned above is largely commissioned by the individual clients. Many interviewees wanted to work on short or feature projects but were restricted by lack of funding and/or time. Some were funding their own short film projects through the corporate work but were restricted by the need to continue producing corporate work to maintain their income. This backs up comments made by some respondents regarding the largely corporate nature of the film companies in North Staffordshire.

Much of the film production in regions like the NSRZ, is micro-budget to no-budget productions by producers and directors at the start of their career. All too often, any success the a film gets, leads to the migration of talent away from the region to larger and more established centres of production such as London and Manchester.

The retention of talent therefore is crucial to the development and long term success of media production in Stoke on Trent and its hinterland. This has to be more than just holding databases of crew and locations in the Film Office. It has to be about support, funding, training and inspiring filmmakers in the region, encouraging them to stay and make films in the area and to start building a critical mass of community and output.

As we've seen from the national Skillset Census and research conducted by the UK Film Council, the West Midlands region as a whole lacks the size and quantity of commercial feature film producers and distributors necessary to maintain a strong regional industry. Inevitably, while there may be a certain amount of production activity in and around Stoke on Trent, it tends to be short film, music video, local documentary and corporate advertising and training video - its indigenous production rarely having any impact in the wider region and nationally. This lack of production/distribution infrastructure means that any large commercial production tends to come from outside the region.

One example of this is the BBC production *Cranford* that used the Foxfield Steam Railway between Blythe Bridge and Caverswall for an episode in Summer 2008. The station, engines and volunteers were all used in the production with many volunteers using their own period costumes for the filming. The availability of these facilities means that the production was able to shoot with minimal set construction and also have access to extras with detailed period costumes.

This is an example of how North Staffordshire can use its heritage and people to drive media development and production.

While this should be encouraged, it needs to be noted that a lack of sub-regional infrastructure means the facilities for companies wishing to shoot in the City and its environs are consequently limited. Post-production houses, film labs, equipment hire and service and suitably experienced crew will have to be sourced from outside the area and this can impact negatively on the choice of Stoke on Trent as a location and especially, a production base.

Some interviewees felt that it was difficult to step outside the corporate production area, given the minimal feature or television production experience in the region. A number of companies have set up in recent years – such as *Reels in Motion* and *Junction 15* – and many from courses at Staffordshire University – have the capability to move into these larger scale productions but support and infrastructure needs to be in place to allow that to happen.

Competition for corporate work within the area has increased and a number of interviewees made comments regarding the filmmaking community as a whole. When asked about whether filmmakers came together in any kind of network they felt that this did not happen because a number of companies were all working in the same highly competitive corporate sector and were then unwilling to meet and share skills, facilities and knowledge.

They also felt that this could prove a barrier to the development of feature film projects as there seems to be little in the way of co-operative production – a necessity for producing features in a sub-regional context.

They felt also that there seemed to be a reluctance to step away from the regular paid work that corporate clients bring in and to take the risks associated with the development of feature film projects.

This also backs up the comments from Stephen Badham at Screen West Midlands who felt that applications for the various funding streams and also attendance at road-shows and seminars, were particularly lacking from Staffordshire.

In the course of this research a number of interviewees have felt that they stood little chance of success in such applications and therefore did not apply. In actual fact the opposite is probably the case but there is obviously a perception that Screen West Midlands is not somewhere that can help them.

*Turpin*, a forty-five minute period drama about the famous highwayman by Stoke on Trent filmmaker Chris Stone, was shot for £6000 and entirely self funded. The film has achieved some notable success including awards for best sound and cinematography at the Los Angeles Young Independent Film Festival. The film shows remarkable production values for such a small budget and much of the costume/props/actors were achieved through in kind support.

Stone felt that the film would have been impossible to make in any of the larger, more traditional filmmaking centres such as London or Manchester. The fact that the cost of living in Stoke on Trent is relatively cheap meant that crew and actors were more likely to be able to work for low or no pay – a crucial element for independent feature filmmakers.

Patrick McConnell, Stone's collaborator on *His Name Was Ben*, commented that this would have been impossible in London where, due to the high costs of accommodation, actors and crew are simply unable to take any work that is unpaid.

Junction 15, mentioned above, are one of the most successful production companies in North Staffordshire and were formed by two Staffordshire University graduates in 2005. Their 2008 production, "Ben: Diary of a heroin addict" had its premiere at the Sheffield Doc Fest and was broadcast on Sky 1. The film also made the shortlist for the British Academy of Film and Television Arts documentary award, just failing to secure a nomination.

At the end of 2008 Junction 15 employed their first staff, two more Staffordshire University graduates, indicating that the company has moved from its initial start-up phase and is now established as a film and television production company. This is significant for North Staffordshire as the majority of producers in the region work independently or as owner/partners. Junction 15 also produced a series of short films for the Cultural Development Team at Stoke on Trent City Council that premiered at the Potteries Museum in March 2009. This was phase 2 of the highly innovative arts-for-health film-making project *Ward Stories*, that involved local communities in exploring and tackling issues of public health and lifestyle.

Two of the films *Umeed*, and *Eclipse* will also feature in the Department of Health's national anti-stigma information pack, launched to coincide with World Mental Health Day.

Andrew Rowell another Staffordshire University film graduate, recently won an Emmy award for his role as a part of the remote camera operating team at the Beijing Olympics, working as part of the NBC broadcasts from the games.

Reels in Motion is another successful corporate production company based in Stoke on Trent. Formed in 2004 by three Staffordshire University graduates Matt Hubbard, Phil Bland and Joe Gordon, reels in Motion have become established as one of the leading video production companies in the region, working with clients such as Npower, the NHS and Yell.com.

Another Staffordshire University graduate company that has recently found success is Inspired Film and Video, based in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The company, formed in 2006 by Daniel Stubbs, recently won the Start up Business of the Year at the Sentinel Business Awards.

Their client list include Port Vale Football Club, Skanska, Sibelco UK and Cannock Chase District Council. The company has also recently been commissioned by Staffordshire University to produce a film which focuses on the impact of the University Quarter development in Stoke-on-Trent. The company is also responsible for the documentary on the Potteries dialect 'May Un Mar Language'.

## **2.1 Screen West Midlands**

Screen West Midlands (SWM) is the regional screen agency that covers Stoke on Trent and the NSRZ. SWM has achieved considerable success in feature film production and broadcast development. The agency also leads innovation in audience development and archive and continues to promote the region on an international stage through its dedicated locations service, lobbying and marketing activities.

SWM's recently formed partnership with Channel 4 to deliver the 4iP fund has positioned the West Midlands at the centre of the digital media revolution in the UK, with the agency now supporting the games, online and interactive sectors.

SWM has a number of funds aimed at the development and production of feature films and well as short films through its Digital Shorts scheme.

Screen WM covers six counties in the heart of England: Birmingham and The Black Country, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

The reaction of interviewees when asked about the role of SWM however was very mixed. While a few applied for funding or attended workshops, the majority were rather ambivalent.

Many felt that SWM did not take North Staffordshire seriously and that there was a strong bias towards the larger urban centres of Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry. While there is no evidence for this assumption there is obviously a perception among some local filmmakers, that SWM does not see the North Staffordshire sub-region as a place that has filmmaking talent.

Many interviewees were disappointed with SWM, some commenting that Projecting Stoke two years ago was the first time we have seen them put any funding into the city.

This contrasts interestingly with comments from Stephen Badham at SWM that very few people from Staffordshire as a whole apply for funding and that attendance at roadshows was also generally poor.

For example, the Digital Shorts scheme is open to anyone to apply, be they straight out of university or seasoned filmmakers.

In the 2006/07 competition, only 20 out of 308 (6.49%) applicants were from Staffordshire.

Last year (2008) Digital Shorts roadshows were held in Stafford, Warwick, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Worcester and Birmingham. Out of 159 attendees across the six roadshows only 10 came to the Stafford show.<sup>6</sup>

This does tend to suggest a lack of engagement in Screen West Midlands' activities in Staffordshire as a whole and particularly the North Staffordshire sub-region. This is obviously worrying as not only are the Regional Screen Agencies central to the funding of screen media, but they are also gateways for continuing professional development, networking, and the growth of media production in the English regions. There is a case here for further work to look at the deeper reasons for this lack of engagement and how this trend might be reversed.

Those who did have contact with SWM however did speak very highly of Dan Lawson, Head of Production, Development and Inward Investment.

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<sup>6</sup> Figures from Screen West Midlands monitoring.

## **2.2 Film Education**

North Staffordshire has two large universities both of whom include media courses as part of their provision.

### **2.2.1 Staffordshire University**

Both the Stoke and Stafford campuses at Staffordshire University offer highly regarded courses in film and television production. The Film Production Technology BSc(Hons) degree at Stafford and the Media Production BA(Hons) degree at Stoke produce graduates with high skills levels, many of whom go straight into the industry.

The College Road campus in Stoke was the production base for *Soul Boy* in 2008 and around 30 students from the university worked on the film as trainees.

Staffordshire University recently signed a partnership agreement with the British Youth Film Academy – an agreement that also includes Stoke College. This agreement will see a feature film produced in the West Midlands region each year, with University and College students forming the primary crew roles.

Ray Johnson at Staffordshire University has been particularly active in North Staffordshire and many interviewees felt that his enthusiasm and contribution was an important part of the activity that does go on in the City and its surrounding areas.

Two of the regions' most prominent companies – Junction 15 and Chris Stone Productions – were started by Staffordshire University graduates.

### **2.2.2 Keele University**

Although not as established or as large as the production courses at Staffordshire University, the Media, Communications and Culture undergraduate course at Keele involves both practical and theoretical elements with students learning how to make news programmes, the skills of digital photography, and documentary-programme making, as well as reflecting on these practices.

Media Communications and Culture is also available as a postgraduate degree, although this is primarily centered around critical studies as opposed to production and craft skills.

Many of the filmmakers now working in Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire are graduates of these universities. Reels in Motion, Junction15 and Chris Stone all attended film courses at Staffordshire University.

A recurring theme in interviews was the drain of talented graduates away from North Staffordshire to the more traditional centres of media production.

### 2.3 Support Services

Film and television is a highly complex operation involving multiple skills, suppliers and services. Concentrations of these skills and services – the media production infrastructure – allow producers to make their products efficiently and effectively. Accommodation, catering, set construction, transport, costume design and creation and photographic services are just some of the services that support the production of film and television.

For a region or sub-region to have a thriving media production industry some of the skills and facilities must be available to producers at the location.

As we have seen, Stoke on Trent does not have a background in media production, and therefore the level of allied services that feed into it of the larger and more traditional centres.

Below are the support industries listed on the Creative Stoke website. They give an indication of the level of infrastructure in the North Staffordshire region and the considerable gaps that exist.

**Model & Scenic Solutions** are professional model, set and prop builders based in Bignall End, Stoke-on-Trent. Their clients include major software companies, advertising agencies, political parties, and design / production houses throughout Britain.

**Steve England** is a voice-over expert, with his own specialist studio, based in Leek.

**All4One Music** - provides production music for film, TV, video productions and websites and is based in Newcastle under Lyme.

**Poco a Poco Music** - are freelance music composers specialising in music for corporate video, documentaries and short films. Based in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent.

**Direct Dogs** - based in Stone. Supplies and trains dogs for films, TV and advertising, and can also supply facilities for still photographs for print adverts using dogs. Recent filming includes Brookside and BBC Six Nations Rugby.

**SMA Studios** - a highly-experienced character-based animation studio, creating work for commercials, TV, and features. Based in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent.

### 2.3.1 Extras

**Stoke Gothic**, "the website for goth, cyber, industrial and darkwave scenes" in the area, and can provide extras from your horror film or music promo.

**Stoke Repertory Theatre**, Stoke-on-Trent

**Circuit Personal Management** , Stoke-on-Trent.

**Stoke Film Theatre** is Stoke-on-Trent's long established 212-seat cinema with good links to local cinema fans.

As can be seen from the above list, there are no sound stage or studio spaces suitable for television or film production. There are also no specific costume, props, catering or equipment suppliers.

A good database of actors was also something highlighted by a number of interviewees. Some mentioned that they found it especially difficult to cast one project as they needed Chinese and Asian actors, and information on availability of such actors in the area was just not there.

The difficulty in addressing these gaps in support is that support services tend to follow the level of production and not the other way round. It is important therefore that other ways of filling these gaps be investigated until such time as the level of production in North Staffordshire draws the specialist services into the area.

## 2.4 Business Support and Networks

Funding, as ever, was highlighted as being particularly difficult for short or feature film productions. Many respondents found Business Link to be not really very helpful. Whether this is a local issue or an indicator of the Business Link organisation as a whole is unclear. The Chamber of Commerce have also been approached by filmmakers in the region but again, without much success. Both of these instances might be attributable to the highly specialised nature of film production funding and the fact that again, without the track record of production in North Staffordshire, the advisors and members of both Business Link and the Chamber of Commerce simply do not have the knowledge and experience to help.

The Creative Stoke web site provides an excellent portal for the creative industries but it does show that film and television specific support is, not surprisingly, rather lacking.

There are networks in Birmingham and Manchester for Creative Practitioners but these tend to be for wider creative industries and are mixed practitioners – not targeted support for film / TV, and this was felt to be a crucial factor for all interviewees.

Some had joined the Creative Networks at Millennium Point, but travelling down to Birmingham proved to be a real barrier to regular attendance. All interviewees felt that regular and easily accessible network meetings were vitally important for developing film in the region and that these networks should be targeted at filmmakers specifically.

## **2.5 Festivals**

Stoke Your Fires is a festival of animation started in 2008 and held at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. The festival held screenings, workshops and attracted guest speakers from across the industry, including BAFTA winner Adam Cootes of Aardman Animation.

At present there is no film festival in Stoke on Trent or North Staffordshire although there was considerable support from all interviewees for a film festival in Stoke on Trent.

In 2006, The Green Film Festival was staged at the Park Hall Country Park Visitor Centre from 2 June to 4 June to mark World Environment Day. A series of 20 short films on environmental themes were submitted from around the world with screenings held on different themes. This was however a one-off festival and was not repeated.

Axis Festival was a high calibre music and arts festival for Stoke on Trent, organised by professional people who lived locally, which ran for two years in May 2007 and May 2008. Film screenings were a large part of the festival, with classic films, independent Hollywood productions and documentaries making up a varied program.

The Festival had been supported by Stoke on Trent city council, who had helped fund the 2008 event and had invited them to submit their plans for the future. Following the resignation of the City's Chief Executive the expected support for 2009 was not forthcoming and by the time the Festival organisers were informed of this decision there was not enough time to generate funding from other sources. The event has therefore been abandoned.

### 3. The Needs of the Industry

Film and television production is a highly complex, expensive, time consuming and difficult process. While advances in technology have brought down the costs of capturing and processing the image, the costs of transport, insurance, accommodation, crew and talent have all risen sharply. Add into this the financial crisis and the lack of bank funding for film production and media production is costlier and more difficult to finance than ever.

Unfortunately this is unlikely to change soon. The huge investment levels in film production made by private equity firms, hedge funds and banks just two years ago have vanished. Financial institutions have retreated from the high-risk portfolio that is film production and back into their core business.

For low to medium budget production especially, producers are having to be much more creative and entrepreneurial in how they finance their films. This includes alternate sources of finance, more complex financial packages, and increasingly, building partnerships that can offset some of the costs of production.

More than anything, regional filmmaking, so often the province of small independent producers, requires funding. The Regional Screen Agencies (RSA's) fulfil a vital function in funding, co-ordinating and mentoring the development and production of film in the English regions.

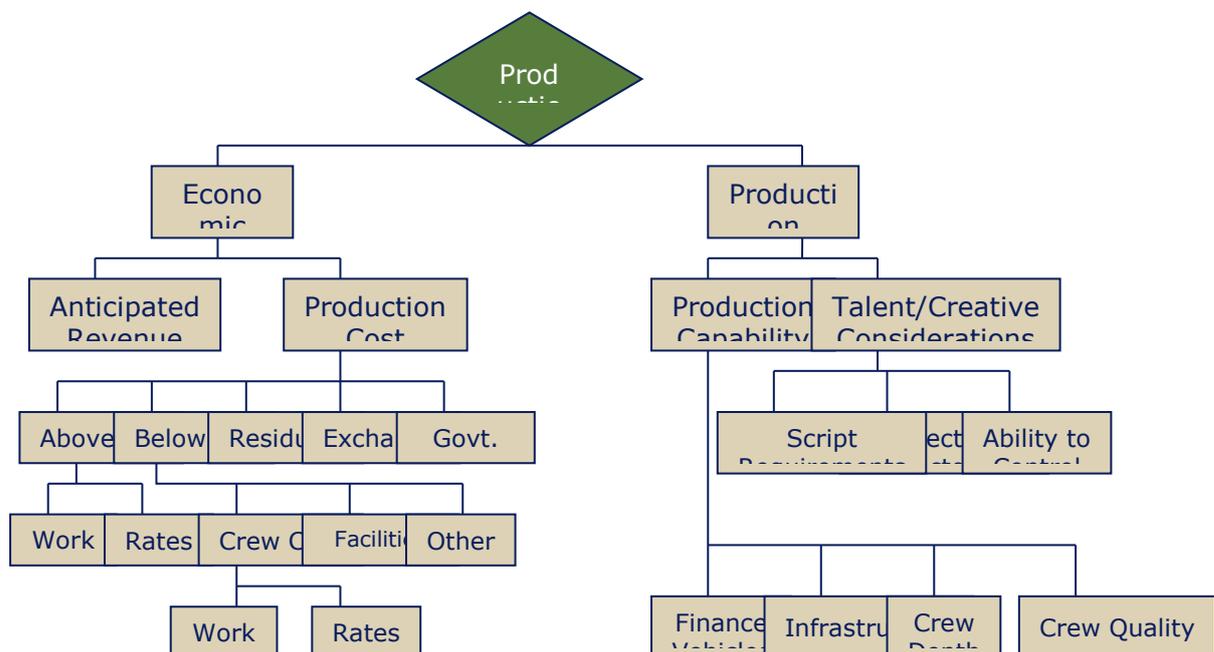
Over the last 6 to 7 years, the UK Film Council has invested in the regional screen agencies (RDA's) across the English regions with the aim of promoting, encouraging and developing a stronger industry outside the traditional production centres of London and the South East.

For larger productions to move out of these traditional centres requires strong incentives. These are often financial and as has been noted by interviewees, the cost of living in Stoke On Trent is an important factor for those looking to make films in North Staffordshire.

The other key factors are access to specific locations, availability of suitably experienced crew and support services and co-operation of local authorities.

<b>Physical Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiplicity of locations within close radius</li> <li>• Climate</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate public infrastructure</li> <li>• High-tech equipment and state-of-the-art facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Funding and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of finance</li> <li>• Availability of incentives to lower production costs</li> </ul>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient and flexible bureaucracy</li> <li>• Support from government institutions and</li> </ul>
<b>Production Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Country-of-the-moment' status</li> <li>• Dependent on the script (scenery)</li> </ul>

In addition, the decision involves a balance between a set of complex economic factors and production requirements.



The Screen West Midlands Film Friendly Charter is an important step in assuring producers that local authorities are committed to assisting and developing film productions in their area. This kind of positive attitude is vitally important for producers looking to minimise costs and allow quick decision making once a production is underway.

The example set by the Cultural Development team during the *Soul Boy* shoot in 2008 is exactly what a producer needs. A commitment on the part of the Council to make things happen, to allow access to locations and the enthusiasm and passion of individuals give producers confidence to move the huge logistical operation that is a feature film production into a city or location.

The availability of crew and support services is another important aspect for a production. This however, is much harder to affect as this kind of infrastructure takes time to develop and tends to follow the level of production in a specific location or region. The wealth of services and facilities in London and the South East is a direct result of the quantity of film and television production.

Crew also inevitably tend to follow the concentrations of production activity. This was an issue for *Soul Boy* in 2008 where the lack of suitably experienced crew within the region meant that most of the Heads of Department (HOD's) came from outside the West Midlands area.

Many local filmmakers felt that a film office for North Staffordshire would be an excellent idea. The ability to talk to someone about locations, props and crew was felt to be extremely important. One interviewee commented;

“Its often easier to find fancy things to film in like a stately home or disused warehouse than someone’s living room. Finding basic stuff like peoples houses; kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms. I know that if I need a 1940’s train carriage I can go to Foxfield, plenty of alleyways to choose from, period vehicles, there are associations. It’s not so easy to get a living room with the right furniture or clock on the wall. Help with props searches or in an ideal world access to a warehouse full of props.”

Some felt that Stoke on Trent was a good city to live and work in but one company commented that they don’t advertise where the business is located because they think it will put clients off.

Others stated that they would move from the region if it were not for family commitments. Some felt that there was not the concentration of companies or the commitment to really make things work in Stoke On Trent and North Staffordshire. Whilst this may be the case at present, one of the roles of the film office must to encourage graduates and companies to stay in the area and market North Staffordshire to companies outside the region.

This kind of inward investment will be key to building the filmmaking community in North Staffordshire.

It is also vital that North Staffordshire is promoted as a venue for film and television production, both nationally and internationally. A major part of this activity should be marketing the film office, the region and its benefits at festivals and film markets.

Many city and regional film offices and commissions have stands, displays or marketing activities at these industry events. Major events such as the Edinburgh Film Festival and the BFI London Film Festival attract major producers, stars, and directors from around the world and offer excellent marketing possibilities for a regional film office.

The lack of a major festival in the West Midlands region means that the onus is on the North Staffordshire Film Office to actively step outside the region and sell the facilities, locations and crew on a national and international stage.

The increasingly international nature of even very low budget film production means that countries and regions are becoming more aggressive in their marketing and incentivisation, targeting not just the major studios and producers but realising the benefits in a steady stream of low to medium budget productions coming into their regions.

## 4. *Soul Boy*

As previously mentioned, Stoke on Trent does not have a track record of feature film or television production.

The only previous production of note was *The Card*, a 1952 Ronald Neame film shot in Burslem. Based on the short comedic novel written by Arnold Bennett in 1911, it starred Alec Guinness and Petula Clark.

*Souled Out*, now known as *Soul Boy*, is the biggest budget film to be shot in Stoke on Trent. The project was in development for a number of years before shooting commenced in 2008. Although it had many of the usual feature film elements to its funding structure, key to its success was an innovative entrepreneurial / co-operative approach normally seen in micro or no-budget filmmaking.

*Soul Boy* was always intended to be a commercial production, in so much as it had a UK distribution deal, an international sales agent and a will on the part of the producers to make it a mainstream film.

One difference here with *Soul Boy* was the attachment to the project of high profile music artists. Paul Weller, Duffy and the Dap Kings were all part of the package that brought distributors, sales agents and crucially, talent, on board. The film therefore had the feel of a much bigger budget in terms of the anticipated success. This in turn however, meant that the production values needed to be considerably higher than is normal for a low budget production to match these perceptions. To achieve a high production value, period production on a budget of less than £1m meant that the business model would have to be extremely innovative.

Against this background, *Soul Boy* looked to a new way of funding the production of the film. Ipso Facto Films along with co-producers Dreamfinder production based in Shropshire, would set up a partnership with Staffordshire University whereby the production would take around 20 students onto the film as trainees and in return the university would make facilities and equipment available to the production at no charge. Production offices, rehearsal spaces, art department, storage, parking and editing facilities were all part of the partnership agreement, making this a considerable part of the production budget.

The development of this partnership allowed the producers to increase the level of funding and consequently the inherent production values of the film.

Being able to demonstrate that this was an innovative knowledge transfer approach was central to obtaining agreements from the university and involving other partners, such as the crucial backing of Stoke City Council.

A large part of the filming was due to take place at the Kings Hall in Stoke and the support of the City Council allowed this location to be used for free – a crucial part of the in-kind support that was so important to the production.

In early 2006 discussions with the producers and Staffordshire University began with a view to the university contributing in-kind support in the form of production offices, rehearsal space, art department workshops, offline editing and possibly equipment.

In exchange for this the producers would set up a training programme for around 15-20 students from the university. They would work on the film in all departments, receiving training, mentoring and crucially, a first feature film credit.

As the film was being shot almost entirely on location in Stoke on Trent, the university was ideally placed to make this contribution.

While universities in the UK have contributed students to low budget feature films in the past, it is the level of partnership, the formalisation of this in a legal agreement and the use of cash neutral invoicing – allowing the producers to claim extra tax credits without a direct investment from the university – that makes the *Soul Boy* partnership so innovative.

The contribution from Screen West Midlands was increased once the agreement with Staffordshire University was agreed. The involvement of an extensive training scheme and the increased regional spend that the university agreement delivered meant that Screen West Midlands were persuaded to contribute an extra £50,000.

In an interview for this research, co-producer Natasha Carlish commented that the partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council was as important as that with Staffordshire University. A lot of negotiation took place between the producers and the council to procure locations such as The Kings Hall for free, and to get the full backing of the council executive. The contribution of the Cultural Development team here was crucial and without the goodwill and commitment of those individuals Carlish feels that the film could simply not have been made.

The role that the Cultural Development team took was very much that of a film office in all but name and the joint partnerships of Staffordshire University and Stoke City Council proved vital the production.

The film shows the quality of production values and technical achievement that this model has enabled. Period drama is inherently more difficult and expensive to produce and without the local authority and university partnerships, the quality of production, if not the production itself, would have been impossible.

These kind of partnerships are crucial to film and television production and the creative industries as a whole. A report from Arts and Business states;

*The arts must now tap into these resources (individuals, businesses, trusts and foundations) to receive support beyond monetary contributions (such as knowledge and skills), by being more proactive, flexible and sophisticated with their offer. Furthermore, cultural organisations should be able to provide high and tangible returns on investment and objectives in order to strengthen the case for ongoing support.*<sup>7</sup>

Film Birmingham called the production “...a groundbreaking new approach to filmmaking” and “an innovative working model that could become a new standard for low budget film production in the UK”.<sup>8</sup>

*Soul Boy* shows just what can be achieved through partnership, commitment and enthusiasm. The success of the partnerships that contributed to *Soul Boy* were largely down to a small number of individuals who were committed to bringing the production into the city and making it work.

## 5. Models of Best Practice

The primary role of any film office is to attract film and television productions for the economic benefit of the city or region in which the office is based. The film office should be the official advocate for the feature film, television, video and commercials production industry in the region.

Typical activities are:-

- Find locations that fit scripts
- Act as liaison throughout production and cut red tape
- Host scouting trips for producers
- Hold a database of crew and facilities in the region
- Help consolidate and grow the local infrastructure and the independent film sector.

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<sup>7</sup> Arts and Business report Private Investment in Culture 2007 / 08

<sup>8</sup> [www.filmbirmingham.com/articles](http://www.filmbirmingham.com/articles)

The core aim of the office should be to position Stoke On Trent as a nationally and internationally competitive film city, thereby boosting tourism, job creation and the development of core skills, graduate retention and SME growth.

This however must be tempered with a realistic and rational approach. Stoke on Trent and the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone as a whole have little in the way of track record in commercial feature film and broadcast television production.

If the level of production and infrastructure is not there then it has to be created from scratch. Although the filming of *Soul Boy* in 2008 and its release in early 2010 will undoubtedly increase the awareness of Stoke on Trent as a location, a considerable amount of work needs to be done to create a viable and thriving production community in the region.

The creation of Film Birmingham came as a result of the BBC speaking to the City Council and suggesting that a film office be set up to handle the amount of production in and around the city.

Stoke on Trent is approaching the creation of a film office from the opposing direction, using it to generate interest in the area as a production location and, on the back of that, to build a more prosperous and prolific regional film and television industry.

It is vitally important therefore that the Stoke on Trent Film Office not be a purely reactive agency. To achieve its aim, the Film Office must actively draw production into the city and region. A good example of this approach can be found with Film Offaly in the Republic of Ireland. From a base of little commercial production activity, Film Offaly used financial incentives in the way of script competitions and direct production sponsorship to draw writers and producers into the area. It has also been active at film festivals, conventions and film markets – promoting both its locations and its financial and in-kind support. It is this kind of activity that Stoke on Trent Film Office must engage in fully.

## **5.1 Film Birmingham**

Film Birmingham presents an interesting example of how a film office in a major city can be run effectively and efficiently. It is managed and run by just one full time employee. Film Birmingham does not run a 'referral system' as many offices do. It does not pass on requests from filmmakers to the relevant departments of the local authorities but instead has the power to make those decisions itself. This means that one person is responsible for co-ordinating and agreeing any production requests. From the filmmakers point of view this works extremely well as all necessary paperwork is completed by the Film Birmingham office itself and not by the filmmakers. This facilitates speed of action which is often crucial once a production is underway.

This client-focussed model has allowed Birmingham to attract the major BBC drama series' *Hustle* and *Survivors* to the city. For *Hustle* in particular, the concerted efforts of the film office along with funding from Advantage West Midlands through their Advantage Media Production Fund, played a key role in the producers deciding to relocate the production out of London.

Birmingham has a long track record of producing broadcast television within the city and this has made it considerably easier to develop a strong film office.

While the logistical support that a film office can give to a production is crucial, and increasingly, these offices are also helping producers access finance or offering incentives to bring film production into a city or region.

Tax incentives are a major weapon for a city or region to use in attracting film productions. This is particularly relevant in the United States where individual states have the ability to set their own tax conditions alongside the federal ones. Many have sought to offer extremely generous fiscal incentives for producers to bring their films to a city or state.

The local spend by a production along with the resulting increase in tourism and its associated spend means that overall, a \$50m feature film budget can be worth almost \$100m to the local economy.

This is equally true in the UK. In 2007 a statistical review of stated that 40% of tourists to the UK cited seeing locations on film as one of their influences for visiting. Domestic tourism as well is heavily influenced by locations appearing in films and on TV.

One issue is that wherever you get really good incentives you find a number of productions coming in and that creates a competition for the best crew. Sometimes that means that there are not enough local crew to meet all the production's needs.

This was true for the shooting of *Soul Boy* in the Summer of 2008. With four other productions taking place in the West Midlands region at the same time, local crew with the right level of expertise and experience were in short supply. While this can help generate revenue for the local economy it can also mean problems for productions if the tax or financial incentives that brought them to the region have a clause regarding the use of local crew.

The importance of graduate retention and on-going training is particularly important here and must be a part of the strategy for Stoke on Trent going forward.

If Stoke on Trent is to look at developing and offering some kind of financial incentives to producers, then it has to be part of a well thought out strategic development and must take into account the issues for producers and financiers.

It depends on how the incentive procedure works in each as to how easy it is to get the money back. If the structure of finance in a production incentive is clear and easy then the producers will be able to borrow more and at a cheaper cost as the financier will see that their return will be more certain and quicker.

That easy monetisation of the incentive reduces the risk to the lender and so aids the producers in terms of level of finance and finance cost. Any incentive put in place then by a local or regional film office must be aware of how the financial structures work and what will work best for the producers and financiers alike.

## 5.2 Northwest Vision and Media

The film offices of Northwest Vision and Media, and in particular Liverpool, are good examples of what can be done. Guy Richie and Eric Cantona were just two of the big name filmmakers to be tempted by the region's locations and facilities, with more than 500 other productions also basing themselves in the Northwest in the last 12 months.

The use of local services, hotels and facilities and crew, meant that visiting productions adding an estimated £45m to the local economy in 2008. "This is a staggering figure, and I'm proud that our reputation as a film-friendly region continues to grow, at a time when some areas are reporting a downturn in filming figures," says Kaye Elliott, Director of Production Services and Locations for Northwest Vision and Media, which works on behalf of the creative and digital industries in England's Northwest.

In 2008, they recorded 1,106 enquiries, resulting in 526 productions being shot in the region. That's a very impressive result for the region," adds Kaye.

Greater Manchester saw the most filming days with 890 of the 1475.5 days spent filming in the region taking place in that area. The Northwest's stunning locations as well as the extensive number of crew and facilities registered on Vision and Media's data base attracted some high profile productions to the region, including Guy Richies' latest feature film, Sherlock Holmes, which spent 11 days filming on location in both Manchester and Liverpool.

Other productions include the BBC's new six part drama, All the Small Things filmed in Cheshire and the BBC's critically acclaimed re make of 70's drama Survivors which was part filmed in Lancashire.

### 5.3 Kent Film Office

A pioneering new fund for film and TV production in Kent has been launched after Kent-made feature film *The Calling*, starring Brenda Blethyn, generated more than £500,000 for the county's economy and received prestigious recognition at the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Kent County Council has become the first local authority to provide a fund specifically for film and TV production. The new Kent Development Fund will provide £200,000 a year to support production in a range of ways from funding script development to investing in both Kent-based and external production companies who want to come and film in the county.

It will be used to attract additional funding from Europe, regional development agencies and private investors, with the aim of increasing spend into the Kent economy and promoting the county as a prime location for film and TV projects. The fund was created after a successful pilot project between production company Maeve Films, based in Ramsgate, and Kent County Council's Kent Film Office.

Kent County Council provided £75,000 of funding for *The Calling* and also worked to secure match funding. This initial investment attracted other investors to the project including Screen South, Courtyard Studios, Maidstone Studios and The Hop Farm, which resulted in more than £500,000 of spend into the Kent economy before 'The Calling' was even screened. The investment also secured jobs for eight trainees from Kent on the production. It showed that directly supporting film production in the county could bring significant economic benefits including the creation of training and job opportunities in one of the few remaining growth industries in the UK.

Kent County Council is making financial support available for future projects because the south of England is one of just two areas in the UK that does not already have a film production fund. The support is needed to keep Kent competitive against other locations in the UK.

The announcement of the fund came at the Edinburgh International Film Festival where the film was nominated for the Michael Powell Award for the Best British New Feature.

Alex King from Kent County Council said, "The success we've had with supporting the production of just one film is a very clear indicator of the tremendous results we can achieve by supporting more films in future. "This fund is fantastic news for the film industry, for Kent's economy and for Kent residents. We're extremely proud to be taking another innovative approach to supporting our county."

Jo Nolan, Screen South Chief Executive Officer added, "It's wonderful to see the importance of the film industry being recognised in this way. Screen South knows that Kent has so much to offer film makers and this fund is a crucial step towards encouraging and supporting local talent."

#### **5.4 Film Offaly, Republic of Ireland**

Offaly is a rural county in the heart of the Republic of Ireland. Film Offaly was recently set-up to develop and promote filmmaking within the county and has been pro-active in the way that it has sought to build the profile of the film office and county. Money was made available from the Irish Film Board to fund a script competition in Offaly. Funding was offered to the winning scriptwriter with the condition that the resulting film must be shot with Offaly.

The office also has an annual grant scheme to support local filmmakers develop their projects.

Film Offaly is less than two years old but already has had significant impact on film production in the county of Offaly. There are interesting parallels here with the North Staffordshire film office proposal. Both are relatively rural areas without a history of film or television production. Film Offaly has taken an entrepreneurial approach to developing media production and encouraging its indigenous talent that can be mirrored by North Staffordshire.

These incentives are vitally important for drawing producers into a region. The example below from New York shows just what can be achieved through well thought out and targeted incentive schemes.

While the example of New York may not seem applicable to North Staffordshire, a number of the incentives mentioned above will work just as well in Stoke on Trent, Leek or Newcastle under Lyme.

## 6. Production Locations

Stoke has a wide variety of unique, unusual and useable locations and while it might not be able to offer the big city views – the producers of *Hustle* are using Birmingham to double for London – it can present a varied set of locations within a reasonably close distance to the centre. During an interview for this report, Stephen Badham at Screen west Midlands commented that it was important for Stoke on Trent to present a clear message to the industry as to what it can offer – a unique selling point.

*Soul Boy*, a period production set in 1974, used a number of Stoke on Trent's industrial heritage sites to give the film a real feeling of authenticity. The ceramic industry has left a wealth of wonderful Victorian and Edwardian buildings in and around the areas of Longton and Burslem. Short Street in Longton still has the original Victorian cobbled streets and housing. These present an excellent opportunity for filmmakers looking for this kind of period feature.

Longton Cemetery is large enough to allow areas to be cordoned off for filming without causing too much disruption to local people. It has the superb original gate house, along with interesting memorials, statues and winding paths. This could easily double for a large London cemetery if so wished.

Queens Park in Dresden again is large enough to double for London parks, to allow secure filming and offers original Victorian features such as the bandstand and iron 'Carriage' signposts. It is becoming increasingly difficult for producers to find period urban spaces and details.

There are many fine examples of period houses to be found around the country and the plethora of period dramas based on the works of well known authors have showcased these well. It is much harder to find working class Victorian terraces that have the necessary period integrity. Stoke on Trent has some of the few remaining examples of these locations, in Longton and Burslem. These are an important resource that can be marketed and exploited and input strongly into the Stoke on Trent brand image.

## 6.1 Stallington Hall Farm

The outside of this location was used for action scenes during the recent production of *The Silencer* (2007). Recently renovated, Stallington Hall Farm is a Georgian/Tudor beamed farmhouse in the Staffordshire Moorlands offering lots of scope for a multitude of arts related projects.

The farm was used in 2005 by Loughborough based Phoenix-i Productions as the backdrop for some of the external scenes for the film, *The Silencer*. The filming took place in the grounds of the property and encompassed both action and dialogue scenes. The film was entirely self-funded by director Steve Lawson. The film was distributed by Blackhorse Entertainment but failed to get a theatrical release.

## 6.2 Biddulph Grange

Biddulph Grange is a High Victorian garden, 7 miles north of Stoke-on-Trent, and is one of the most of the 19th century National Trust properties. It has tunnels and pathways, rare and exotic planting and architecture - from an Egyptian court, to elegant Italian terraces. Unique Chinese garden, including a temple, enclosed within its own Great Wall of China. It also has the classic Victorian eccentricities such as an upside-down tree and strange stone sculptures.

The city also has numerous interesting and atmospheric open areas that provide great visual backdrops for films. These are often patches of waste ground, run down houses, abandoned churches, workshops and industrial units.

While these may not at first seem as appealing as grand houses, municipal buildings and green parks, they are equally valuable for a filmmaker looking for contemporary settings. Gritty urban dramas, horror or ghost stories and political thrillers, would all find real value in this kind of location.

It is important that these locations, often ignored in favour of the more immediately obvious ones, be documented and marketed. There is also a real case for preserving many of these areas and buildings for the future. The drive for regeneration often wipes away the irreplaceable heritage of a city. This heritage – the original cobbles and terraces of Short Street in Longton is a prime example - can have huge value not only for film and television producers but, on the back of this, for tourism.

If the city is to brand itself in such a way as to compete with the more usual centres of production in the UK, then it is these locations that must be seen as just as important as its more notable and obvious counterparts.

At the Cultural and Creative Strategies Conference in May this year, Toby Hyam of Creative Space Management commented that “Cities need special places”. Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire have these places, but they must be preserved, used and marketed.

It is important that Stoke on Trent and the Film Office build its ‘brand’ upon its unique combination of locations. It is also important to stress the ease of road and rail communication, the variety and value of accommodations and the commitment of the local authority to facilitate film and television production in the area. Again, the importance of Screen west Midlands’ Film Friendly Charter must be stressed here.

It is also important that a ‘re-brand’ of Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire as a creative media centre take into account the importance and concepts of place marketing.

An interesting point that came out of the interviews for this report was the fact that most companies in North Staffordshire used their own local knowledge to find locations rather than using a location service. There was a wide range of responses to the issue of location finding. Some said that they rarely moved out of Burslem as their work was locally based urban subjects.

Others stated that they would ask friends, speak to Ray Johnson or Paul Bailey, come across locations by accident or compromised on what they are looking for.

Some commented that they don’t use a specialist location service due to the cost involved – “I object to having to pay for the service just to be able to search a database.”

All interviewees felt that Stoke City Council had provided good support when asked about using locations, although worryingly some filmmakers stated that they don’t usually bother to get a permit or permission. This obviously presents serious problems of public liability, public safety and consent, and these are issues that the film office will need to address.

By looking at the examples in the previous chapters on the needs of the industry and the models of best practice, the North Staffordshire Film Office can put in place a strategic program of development to allow it to exploit its multiple locations to the full.

The CD’s that accompany this report show examples of the locations mentioned above plus others.

## 7. Screening Venues

Suitable screening venues were mentioned by many interviewees as something that Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire need to develop.

Reels on Wheels have a full size 35mm projector, screen, film (subject to availability), sound system and a projectionist. They operate The Forum Theatre during school holidays, it is situated within the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-On-Trent. The 300 seat theatre is equipped with Dolby Stereo, air conditioned and has full disabled facilities including a loop induction system.

The Odeon Festival Park is the main commercial screening facility in Stoke on Trent, alongside the Vue Cinema in Newcastle under Lyme. Screenings at these venues are tightly controlled by the distributors and not normally available to independent filmmakers. However, the British Youth Film Academy, who have a partnership with Staffordshire University, have a negotiated deal with Odeon cinemas to screen their films. This then opens up opportunities for graduates and filmmakers involved with these projects to see their work screened at a large commercial cinema.

The Stoke Film Theatre based at the College Road campus of Staffordshire University, is an established cinema showing more independent, foreign and art-house cinema. It offers good opportunities for local filmmakers to show their work and BAFTA recently held a screening and Q+A there for the Midlands film *Better Things*.

However, the responses from interviewees regarding the Film Theatre were mixed. Whilst some stated that it was a good facility, especially as there were opportunities to screen a variety of work, others felt that it looked run down and out of date and was not somewhere that they would want to bring clients, investors or financiers.

Modern digital projection equipment allows screenings in full High Definition to be fully portable. That offers up the possibility of screening not just feature films, but short films, animations, public information films and documentaries in a wide variety of sometimes un-conventional settings.

Public and private spaces ranging from 40-50 up to several hundred

In August, BAFTA, in association with Screen East, is staging screenings of the best in British cinema at Wimpole Hall in Cambridgeshire and Ickworth House in Suffolk. Large outdoor screens in the gardens of the two National Trust properties will screen films for audiences of up to a thousand. Biddulph Grange, north of Stoke on Trent is also a National trust property and would work equally well as an outdoor screening venue with a fantastic backdrop.

A similar event took place recently at the National Trust property of Shugborough in Stafford. An outdoor screening of Mama Mia and picnic in the grounds proved hugely popular.

At the opposite end of the scale, but equally important, there is also the opportunity to develop a programme of walk-by screenings at venues such as empty retail units in Hanley or the other towns. Many of these units are large open spaces and would be ideally suited to screenings of short films and animations by local filmmakers, recent graduates and others.

The BBC/BAFTA competition Me and My Movie, aimed at schoolchildren, has proved hugely popular and there is no reason why this region could not run its own young persons competition with the short-listed films being screened in town centre locations such those just mentioned.

The backdrop of the Potteries would also be a great venue for showing films with an historical, archive or particularly local theme. Perhaps some of the fine Wedgwood buildings could be used for such screenings. Additionally there are a number of industrial warehouses, storage facilities or disused pottery sites which might provide a potential screening venue. Obviously not all of these sites would be suitable due to issues around access, insurance and health and safety concerns.

A new arts and design centre for Newcastle College is being built in Newcastle under Lyme town centre and will feature screening and media facilities. Partnerships and involvement with the college would be useful as another means of getting local work out to the wider community.

Other possibilities could include Trentham Gardens. Although technically under the jurisdiction of Stafford Borough Council, it is seen by most people in Stoke on Trent as being part of the city. As one of the largest visitor attractions in the region, with around 2 million visits each year, it provides an ideal location for large scale outdoor screenings.

The Newcastle Jazz and Blues festival could also incorporate screenings in the future. A popular local music festival, it would also be worth looking at incorporating films that have a musical theme.

Alton Towers is the largest theme park and family destination in the UK with around 3 million visitors each year. With hotels on site it crucially provides for a large number of tourist stays with the North Staffordshire region. This provides an excellent opportunity to negotiate a partnership for screenings and promoting the film and television industries in Staffordshire to a UK wide audience.

When asked about screening facilities many filmmakers felt that a high quality, purpose built film theatre was needed – not as an add on to an already existing building. Some stated that they don't do as many screenings of their work now as they have in the past due to a lack of a suitable venue.

Many respondents felt that a screening facility was needed in Hanley City Centre – similar to the Film Theatre, but not so out of the way. It should also show more Art House, foreign and Bollywood films.

This could also be somewhere which could show trailers relevant to the main film, or a ‘have a go’ screening night to showcase up and coming talent.

Local independent cinemas, ie. those outside the main cinema chains, make a valuable economic, social and cultural impact on their communities.

### **7.1 Economic impacts of Local Cinema**

Cinemas contribute to the local economy in terms of audience/visitor spend, the sourcing of local suppliers, and the local labour market.

- The cinema audiences generate money for the local economy through visits to local bars, restaurants, bakeries, food shops and take-aways as part of their cinema trip.
- Cinema managers, where the market allows it, try to seek out local suppliers in favour of more distant alternatives. There is a feeling that, as small businesses themselves, they should try to help sustain the local economy.
- The cinemas have a direct, albeit limited, positive impact on their local labour markets through the employment of local residents as staff.
- The cinemas also provide valuable job opportunities to otherwise excluded groups – for example part-time jobs available to older residents not in search of a full-time job.
- Staff training and provisions of career development opportunities enrich local labour markets.
- Association with the cinema, with its prominent local image, creates important marketing opportunities for other businesses.

## 7.2 Local social and cultural impacts

Cinemas have been shown to enhance the social and cultural lives of their local communities in a number of ways:

- Local cinemas play a crucial part in fostering a “sense of place” for their communities as key venues with a community focus. They provide a strong social function as a meeting place and centre in which to socialise.
- The venues widen the range of cinema-going opportunities for local residents, enhancing local cultural life. They either provide a mainstream programme where no other cinemas exist in the locality, or a specialised alternative in those areas with multiplex provision.
- The opportunity to see mainstream films in a non-multiplex atmosphere is attractive to some sections of the audience.
- Moreover, the cinemas play an important social inclusion role, particularly for elderly people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to watch films “for them” in an easily accessible “traditional” environment, and for other excluded groups such as young parents with babies.
- Special events and activities target various community groups which would otherwise be excluded. Film festivals, special screenings and educational initiatives often reach underserved subgroups of the population. For example, The Metro, Derby holds special screenings for children with autism and with hearing impairments. Two of the case study cinemas also enhance access and participation among otherwise excluded local minority ethnic groups through film festivals and special screenings of world cinema.
- Cinemas enhance local learning opportunities through links with local schools, screenings and courses, although lack of funding often restricts the range of educational activities.
- Many local cinemas are also involved in the delivery of “lifelong learning” opportunities through courses around film. Their role in improving the skills and knowledge base of the community is recognised by participants and practitioners alike.
- Cinemas also make an important social contribution to their local communities through the provision of volunteering opportunities.
- Links with Film Societies have a strong impact on local film culture, with the cinemas providing a venue, and often taking the lead in booking films.

- Local cinemas are seen in general as affordable leisure options for families, with fewer concerns over travel and food costs than other activities. The cinemas are seen as safe, secure venues fostering independence among young people.<sup>9</sup>

It is important for North Staffordshire to develop vibrant and successful local cinemas as part of the wider development of film production in the region. The Metro Cinema in Derby is a good example of what an independent local cinema can do.

The Metro Cinema in Derby, established in 1981, receives significant amounts of public funding from a variety of sources. It offers a mainly specialised programme and offers a range of educational activities from pre-screening talks to courses in film studies and screen-writing. It is a single screen cinema, seating 126 people. It sells about 25,000 tickets a year. While it is the only specialist cinema in Derby, there are two mainstream competitors within the city. Metro employs nine permanent members of staff (3 full-time, 6 part-time), with a further 12 or so part-time staff working front of house. The cinema is currently housed in a Grade II listed building within walking distance of Derby City Centre.

The Metro is currently working with Q Arts - a Derby based contemporary visual arts organisation - on the planning of a major building and relocation project. This will result in a purpose-built, accessible building in the centre of Derby, and will include three additional screens for an expanded Metro programme and audience.

This is very much the kind of screening facility that interviewees felt would be ideal for Stoke on Trent. Although the Film Theatre on College Road acts in a similar way to the Metro Cinema, the majority of respondents felt that North Staffordshire needed a more purpose built facility, with a more modern and better quality theatre, break-out spaces and function rooms.

This was felt to be especially important by those filmmakers in the region working with larger corporate clients. They were keen to have a facility where films could be screened and meetings held in a high quality environment.

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<sup>9</sup> *The Impact of Local Cinema*. UK Film Council 2005

## 8. Aspirations, Opportunities and Future Investment

As was earlier mentioned, much of the filmmaking community in Stoke on Trent concentrates on the corporate market.

While Stoke on Trent has a thriving creative industries community, a number of filmmakers felt that there was little in the way of networks or activities for them. Some felt that there was not much of a sense of community among filmmakers – something that was not the case larger centres such as Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and others.

Many interviewees stated that there was a need to bring people into the region to build the industry, whereas in fact the opposite was the case – especially with graduates. Staffordshire University produces many skilled filmmakers but the feeling was that not enough is being done to hold them in the North Staffordshire region.

Some felt that perceptions of what Stoke is didn't help. Some companies don't advertise their location because of what they perceive the image of the city to be.

However, living and working in the North Staffordshire region and Stoke on Trent in particular gives a cost benefit that can be passed onto clients as competitive tenders.

Some local filmmakers felt that there was an issue with competition between the 5 towns that make up Stoke on Trent. While there was a recognition that this is part of the character of the city and should be celebrated, there was also a need to connect more.

Some companies working in the corporate market felt that locally the price point clients are prepared to pay is not enough and so work with a lot of clients outside the region.

One other issue regarding pricing and highlighted by a number of companies was the competition from Staffordshire University students approaching clients to quote for corporate work and undercutting local companies. Much lower rates could be charged as the students had free use of extensive levels of equipment. Many felt that this was unethical and was damaging the local filmmaking economy.

It was felt that networking events aimed specifically at encouraging the development of feature films would bring people together without the need to share corporate details that seemed so sensitive in what is a highly competitive area.

Some filmmakers had joined established business networks such as BNI (Business Network International - [www.bnistanleymatthews.co.uk](http://www.bnistanleymatthews.co.uk)). However, the comments about the business breakfasts were not good and the £500 membership was felt to be a waste.

There were comments made by those interviewed about a lack of feature films in development in the region, a surprising comment in a city where Staffordshire University produces so many talented film graduates. Some interviewees felt that while they might have the technical and craft skills to make professional and broadcast quality films, the gaps in the business and industry knowledge made it difficult to put together the highly complex finance packages required for such productions.

Graduate retention was highlighted as a real problem with many of the most talented graduates moving away to work with larger production companies in London and Manchester.

Using the Film Office to develop and promote events aimed at graduates in and around the city was felt to be important as a means of generating more activity and thereby assisting in the creation of a stronger filmmaking community. It was also felt that the Film office should be a conduit for funding applications to Screen West Midlands and other bodies as this would lend an air of legitimacy to those projects. Whether this is practical, in terms of workload or even desirable is a point for debate but there is a general feeling that a locally based Film Office should take a lead in coordinating and encouraging filmmakers to apply for funding.

The idea of a film festival in the sub region was universally welcomed. Many felt that there should be a competitive element to it with guest speakers, and high profile filmmakers attending with their films. It was felt that this should not be just about North Staffordshire filmmakers but should aim to be a truly national and international festival.

## **8.1 Going Forward**

Inevitably, because of the concentration on corporate work by filmmakers in the area, much of the ideas and aspirations centre on that kind of work as opposed to feature film development. Many interviewees were looking for training in the business skills for creative companies along with access to support and knowledge within the area.

The idea of developing a filmmaking hub was something proposed by a number of respondents. A media centre, similar to the Electricworks in Sheffield with informal meeting places which creates the right impression, is self sustaining and can allow for cross pollination between the people and companies based there was cited by one interviewee as an exemplar.

A number of interviewees asked what happened to the Hothouse. "It was developed as a creative centre, but all the creatives have moved out."

The unanimous feeling was that there needs to be one place in Stoke, a hub, that can act as an office space, screening venue, meeting place and visible media centre that can be marketed nationally. It was felt that at the moment there are lots of little initiatives that are isolated and that a media centre would create the right perceptions for clients, business and investors.

There was also a feeling that this media centre should include or be connected with a purpose built studio/sound stage for the area. This would bring in a large amount of business from film and television companies looking for cost effective space outside London. With the closure of the Pebble Mill and Grenada studios in the Midlands, there was a lack of affordable studio space outside the South-East.

Another aim of such a centre could be to stage higher value networking events – a lot of business networking events that local filmmakers attended were felt to be inappropriate and not relevant. This is because the clients who tend to go there are small local companies who do not have the budgets to commission top quality work. Many interviewees wanted to have 'meet the buyer; type events with big companies attending like JCB or Barclays.

## **8.2 Media City**

It is important to note here the impact on North Staffordshire of the opening of such a hub in the Northwest. Media City in Salford, due to open in 2011, will be just forty-five minutes by train Stoke on Trent. The effect on investment, jobs creation and migration in the media industries will be significant.

Media City has been designed to provide a purpose-built home for creative and digital businesses. The first phase, spread over 36 acres, will be completed in 2011 but there is the potential to utilise up to 200 acres of land over the next decade, depending on demand.

The BBC will move around 2,500 staff to Media City, which will involve relocating five London-based departments, along with all local and network broadcasting currently operating out of Manchester city centre. The University of Salford will also have a presence at Media City, with a brand new campus for more than 800 students and staff.

Media City will house one of the largest high definition studio facilities in Europe, featuring seven HD television studios and two audio studios (one dedicated to the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra).

Centred around a waterfront public realm area twice the size of London's Trafalgar Square, Media City will be a destination in its own right, complete with bars, cafés and restaurants.

The development's piazza has been designed to accommodate large-scale events for up to 9,000 people, making it a natural focal point both day and night.

Salford City Council is involved the development of the site and its transport infrastructure to create an accessible investor, visitor and employee destination. In addition, the council is looking to use this development as a catalyst to raise the profile of Salford, to raise aspirations and to create job opportunities for local residents.

It is vital the North Staffordshire as a whole act now and with purpose to prepare for the inevitable and considerable effect that Media City will have.

### **8.3 Funding and Investment**

All interviewees felt that obtaining funding for projects was a real problem. All suggested that much more help was needed with development funding and investment in feature films. However, there was a feeling that many of the funders don't understand the process of film development and therefore that makes it difficult to secure investment at the right level. Some mentioned the UK Film Council wanting to have 50% copyright on their film in return for investment.

This possibly shows a lack of understanding regarding the nature of public funding for film projects and the restrictions and conditions placed upon those funds. Rights will always be an issue with films supported through public funding bodies. This is perhaps indicative of the sense of disengagement between the filmmaking community in North Staffordshire and the regional screen agency.

An important initial role for the North Staffordshire film office will be in fostering closer ties between the region and Screen West Midlands. This will ensure that local filmmakers feel they can work with the regional screen agency to develop their projects and gain a better understanding of the various funding streams available. It will also then generate greater engagement with all the activities of SWM that can help filmmakers develop their projects.

Filmmakers should also look at other national and local government funding schemes such as family or community based projects to develop short films using Creative Partnerships or Community and Learning Partnerships funding.

This could possibly be combined with ESF funding targeting un-employed adults and young people providing training that would add benefit to a growing film and television industry in the region.

Using the local community to produce a film and up-skilling adults within the same project. Funding from Connexions could be used to work with NEETs – young adults Not in Education, Employment or Training - and create a really significant project. Local filmmakers could be used to facilitate this, not only creating employment for the media community but also encouraging the networking opportunities that were seen as a key element lacking in the city and wider region.

The creative product could then be screened in city centre units that would make it truly accessible.

#### **8.4 Wider issues.**

We have discussed the benefits that film and television production bring into a community, socially, culturally and economically. Developing a thriving media industry in North Staffordshire can help tackle the issues of worklessness – a key priority for local, regional and national government. North Staffordshire is well aware of the negative impacts of worklessness on individuals, families and communities; increased poverty and social exclusion, loss of economic output, high fiscal burden and an inter-generational impact on the prospects on children of workless people.

Regional and local policy interventions to address worklessness can be used as a driving force to bring together services and strategies across a range of issues. Aligning the development of a North Staffordshire Film Office with other economic development, educational and social agendas will allow film and television production to be part of wider worklessness strategy, and in turn, attract greater support and possibly funding.

## 9. Recommendations and Conclusions

This report has shown that North Staffordshire, whilst being relatively virgin territory for film production, has the potential to develop a thriving filmmaking community and a successful film office.

This potential however, can only be realised through concerted, long-term action. Graduate retention, the development of support services, the creation of financial and in-kind incentives and an entrepreneurial approach to promoting and encouraging film production are all essentials for success.

The role of the film office for North Staffordshire is critical here, in that it cannot just be a location permit handling service. It has to act as the driver for all the above.

Its approach must be to create a One-Stop-Shop for the industry, and production companies should be encouraged to benefit from the support and added value benefits which could come from contacting the Film Office early in their planning process. Likewise, the Film Office should endeavour to communicate regularly with neighbourhood and business organizations so that any negative impacts associated with filming can be mitigated.

In this instance, the Film Office plays a vital role as liaison between the production community, neighbourhoods and residents groups, and elected and appointed officials, and their staffs. This key position will enable the Film Office to directly address issues relating to filming, and to address potential issues before they become major problems.

For a sub-regional office, facilitation, support in kind and access to some form of funding will be crucial to establishing a platform for future growth. Attracting productions away from the usual centres of London and Manchester must be the aim of the Office, but to do that they must make the move viable for producers in terms of locations, facilities and willing support. Signing up to the Screen West Midlands Film Friendly Charter would make a strong statement that the Council is serious about attracting film and television into the area.

It is also important that the Film office establishes the North Staffordshire Films 'brand'. It is vital to counter the perceptions of the area as devoid of any interest, talent and facilities. This perception issue was highlighted by a number of the interviewees as being something that they felt could potentially damage their businesses, but they all recognised that there were benefits to living and working in the region.

“The very approach that is making our towns, cities and regions successful – the application of creativity, the development of cultural vitality, the celebration of difference – is severely lacking in the practice and literature being used to promote ‘places’.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Chris Murray (2001) *Making Sense of Place. New Approaches to Place Marketing*.

The region as a whole, and Stoke on Trent in particular, have locations and physical resources that are rare. Aside from the obvious large, historic country houses, parks and municipal buildings, North Staffordshire has many fine examples of its industrial heritage. While these may look like eyesores to many people they provide exciting and unique opportunities for filmmakers. The Victorian cobbles of Short Street and the intact and unspoilt terraced houses are just two examples of locations that are becoming hard to find.

### **9.1 The Role of the North Staffordshire Film Office**

This research suggests that a film office should look to accomplish the following aims:-

- Promote the city as a preferred film destination.
- Regulate and co-ordinate communication of permit issuance, code of conducts and risk management factors through the development and implementation of a sub-regional film policy.
- Facilitate, support and promote new investment in film production within the location thereby contribute to economic growth and sustainable job creation.
- Monitor and support local industry developments.
- Look to develop systems and opportunities to provide finance for any projects that will develop filming in Stoke on Trent and the NSRZ.
- Develop strategic and business partnership and other co-operative activities with the filming and television industry both locally and internationally.
- Market the city and region to attract film & video producers and production companies worldwide, bringing new dollars to our community through feature film, commercial, corporate and television production.
- Facilitate production shoots that come to the region, serving as liaison between out-of-town producers and local productions resources, services and government.

- Maintain an accurate and up to date database of locations and crew. While this information is held centrally by Screen West Midlands, the regional Film Office should be responsible for updating the SWM database regularly.

The film office should also encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences between the different forms of the film-making industry, establishing contacts between professionals and producers, festivals and schools, video-makers and places that programme and promote the movie culture, independent films and the trade press.

Develop relations with institutions, national and international operators, network and publishers, based on enhanced support for the activity and increased visibility of film-making, audiovisual and multimedia initiatives.

Activate public and private resources to support the production, circulation, promotion of film, acting as the promoter of proposals for policies relating to the different forms of the cinema and audiovisual industry at the local and the national level.

Help filmmakers to register and participate in festivals, markets, seminars and conferences, to link up with sales agents and participating press offices.

The above recommendations will be achieved over different timescales and with differing levels of ease. It is important therefore that a clear strategic vision for film in North Staffordshire be developed in conjunction with key stakeholders. This should then form the basis for a realistic and robust business plan that can be actioned over the short, medium and long term.

A major part of taking North Staffordshire forward as a centre for film and television production must be a co-ordinated and strategic marketing campaign, aligned to the particular incentives that the region can put in place. A visible presence at film festival, markets and conferences must be part of that, along with advertising and copy within the industry press.

## 9.2 Further Work

This research is an important first step in the development of North Staffordshire as centre for film and television production. However, its scope has been broad and inevitably a number of issues have been raised that could benefit from further work.

The form, role and functioning of a specialist film network for the region is something that many interviewees felt was important and that was currently missing.

Lack of engagement with the regional screen agency is an issue that has certainly held back the indigenous development of both short and feature film production in North Staffordshire. It is essential that concerted and timely action be taken to address this.

Stoke on Trent has a wealth of locations that fall outside the normal 'places of interest' lists. These are often sites of industrial heritage that do not have the scale of some of the more famous potteries buildings, but are equally important and valuable as locations with important period details. A feasibility study into their preservation and usage would be valuable in helping north Staffordshire 'brand' itself in terms of its film development.

The development of specific projects aimed at attracting funding for film production and exhibition should be further examined under the schemes listed in Appendix 1.

## Appendices

### 1. Sources of Funding

#### **Funding, Information and Reference points**

The issue of funding is a complicated one and should be viewed as having a number of separate elements due to the range of different parties with an interest in the media industry in the region. These are:

1. Direct funding for businesses to produce digital content
2. Direct funding for Voluntary and Community groups and charitable and not-for-profit organizations
3. Funding for Local Authorities to support businesses and individuals

Each of these types of funding is available, but will take an investment of time, effort and financial commitment from the applicants before any return will be seen. It is often this up front investment which makes it difficult for individual companies and organizations to access funding and one of the perceived benefits highlighted through interviews of a local film office.

#### **European Audiovisual Observatory**

76 Allée de la Robertsau

67000 STRASBOURG

FRANCE

Tel: +33 (0)3 90 21 60 00

Fax: +33 (0)3 90 21 60 19

Switchboard operating hours: 09:00 - 12:15 14:00 - 18:00

<http://www.obs.coe.int>

Set up in December 1992, the centre gathers and circulates information on the audiovisual industry in Europe. The Observatory has 36 member states, including the UK and works alongside partner organizations, professional organizations from within the industry and a wide network of contributors. Its mission is 'to create transparency in the European audiovisual sector and to provide information services for audiovisual experts.' Its principal areas of interest are film, television, video/ DVD and new media with information services in market and statistics, law and production and finance.

## **Korda**

A database of public funding structures for audiovisual production and distribution across Europe. The database is managed by the European Audiovisual Observatory. The two main target groups for the database are creative and production professionals and fund-administrators and policy makers.

Full list of currently entered funding

bodies:<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>[http://korda.obs.coe.int/web/en/recherche\\_fonds.php](http://korda.obs.coe.int/web/en/recherche_fonds.php)

Full list of the currently entered funding

programmes:<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>[http://korda.obs.coe.int/web/recherche\\_aide.php](http://korda.obs.coe.int/web/recherche_aide.php)

## **British Council**

The British Council supports film makers with a range of signposting services. The British Council Film Department promotes contemporary and innovative UK film to audiences around the world, working in both lead and supporting roles on showcases, workshops, festivals, conferences, tours, residences and virtual projects. We also collaborate with artists and other cultural organisations: building skills, capacity and cultural awareness, creating access to audiences and markets, and promoting international partnership and creative exchange.

## **www.britfilms.com**

The Britfilms website is managed by the Film team at the British Council.

A full online resource with listings of training and courses, festivals, British films and filmmakers and a range of other resources and information.

International Short Fil Festival Submission Scheme.

'We run a long-established and unique scheme where we promote selected films (from the thousand or so submitted to us each year) to the list of 50-60 major international film festivals we work with. There are no deadlines, all genres are eligible and generally anything under 45 minutes is classed as a short.

## **Companygiving.org.uk**

A subscription only resource primarily aimed at voluntary and community organisations, but non-registered charities can also make use of the site, which gives full details on the project support available, detailing what and who the funder is prepared to support and the organisations it has supported in the past. Whilst the charitable trusts often exclude non-registered charities and private businesses the companies listed can make donations to any cause or organization which provides a social benefit in the area in which they operate.

## **Balancing Business Ltd - West Midlands**

PO Box 13442  
Redditch  
Worcs  
England  
B97 9DY  
0121 288 2640/0121 288 2466  
[info@balancingbusiness.co.uk](mailto:info@balancingbusiness.co.uk)  
[www.balancingbusiness.co.uk](http://www.balancingbusiness.co.uk)

We provide individually tailored business advice to women in the West Midlands, including: individual business planning sessions to assist in business plan preparation; assistance in applying for finance for the business; weekly workshops which discuss all the areas of running your own business and include workshops delivered specifically to the group by the Inland Revenue, relevant departments of local councils and web site training; weekly opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with other women who are looking to or are already working for themselves.

Our current services are funded by the European Social Fund and are provided free of charge to women in the West Midlands.

**Business Initiative**  
[www.business.org.uk](http://www.business.org.uk)

The Agency is an independent non-profit making organisation, sponsored by local businesses and run by a full-time Director (Jill Levens) with a support team including experienced Business Advisors who can offer FREE and CONFIDENTIAL advice on all aspects of business. The Agency is an associate of the Chamber of Commerce and a full working partner with Business Link.

Business Initiative has a qualified team of trainers who offer full support ranging from short start-up business courses to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) up to Level 3 in skills such as business planning and business start-up.

If you are considering starting a business give us a call to access advice on funding, book-keeping, premises, marketing and planning.

We will look carefully with you at your proposed business and help you establish the best way of getting started. As an 'existing small business' - you can benefit from the Agency's free advice service and participate in training programmes especially tailored to meet your needs. Many of the programmes are financially subsidised, enabling us to offer excellent value for money.

### **MEDIA Plus**

Administered by UK Media Desk, Contact: Agnieszka Moody, 4th Floor, 66-68 Margaret Street, London W1W 8SR — Google Maps <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Tel: 020 7323 9733 <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Fax: 020 7323 9747 <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Email: England@mediadesk.co.uk <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Website: www.mediadesk.co.uk <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> MEDIA is a six year programme of the European Union to strengthen the competitiveness of the European film, TV and new media industries and to increase the international circulation of European audiovisual product. MEDIA Plus commenced on 1 January 2001 and will run to 31 December 2006. With a budget of €513 million (around £350 million) MEDIA Plus supports professional training (screenwriting, business and new technologies), project development (single/slate), and the distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works. Independent production and distribution companies can apply for development or distribution funding in the form of grants and interest free loans. Financial assistance is available for training providers and organisers of markets and festivals. Individuals may also benefit from subsidised places on training courses and international markets. Support is available for production and new media companies, sales agents, distributors, festival and market organisers, training providers and exhibitors.

### **Celeste Prize**

Email: info@celesteprize.com <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Website: www.celesteprize.com/prize <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> International Art prize, open to Painting, Photography and Digital Graphic, Video and Animation, Installation and Sculpture. There is a total of 40,000 Euros in Prizes. Application entry is 80 Euros for a single artwork and 4 supporting images.

### **Animate!**

PO Box 25860, London N5 1GZ — Google Maps <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Tel: 0870 241 4687 <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Email: info@animateonline.org <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Animate! is a commissioning agency for projects for television and artists film and video. Their schemes are not limited to animators but applicants must be resident in the UK and have some experience of the manipulation of imagery in film, video or digital media. Full guidelines and details of current projects are available at [www.animateonline.org](http://www.animateonline.org).

## **Funding - Lens Based**

### **Film London**

Suite 6.10, The Tea Building, 56 Shoreditch High Street, London E1 6JJ —

Google Maps  Tel: 020 7613 7676  Fax: 020 7613 7677 

Email: [info@filmlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@filmlondon.org.uk) 

[www.filmlondon.org.uk](http://www.filmlondon.org.uk) 

Film London is the strategic agency for the film and media sector in London. It is an amalgamation of the London Film Commission (LFC) and the London Film and Video Development Agency (LFVDA), which merged in April 2003. Film London will invest in film production, exhibition and education and in the economic and industry development initiatives across the capital. Included in the vast range of services Film London provide are an information database on hotel deals for filmmakers from outside of town, diary availability for crews and location managers, a filmmakers code of practice and a listing of London's film services. Various development schemes outlined on their website aim to nurture the capital's film, TV and animation professionals and support the training sector.  Update this listing

### **MEDIA Plus**

Administered by UK Media Desk, Contact: Agnieszka Moody, 4th Floor, 66-68

Margaret Street, London W1W 8SR — Google Maps  Tel: 020 7323

9733  Fax: 020 7323 9747 

Email: [England@mediadesk.co.uk](mailto:England@mediadesk.co.uk) 

[www.mediadesk.co.uk](http://www.mediadesk.co.uk) 

MEDIA is a six year programme of the European Union to strengthen the competitiveness of the European film, TV and new media industries and to increase the international circulation of European audiovisual product. MEDIA Plus commenced on 1 January 2001 and will run to 31 December 2006. With a budget of 513 million Euros (around £350 million). MEDIA Plus supports professional training (screenwriting, business and new technologies), project development (single/slate), and the distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works. Independent production and distribution companies can apply for development or distribution funding in the form of grants and interest free loans.

Financial assistance is available for training providers and organisers of markets and festivals. Individuals may also benefit from subsidised places on training courses and international markets. Support is available for production

and new media companies, sales agents, distributors, festival and market organisers, training providers and exhibitors.

### **Arts Council England - London**

2 Pear Tree Court, London EC1R 0

Tel: 0845 300 6200

Fax: 020 7608 4100

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

London's Government-funded visual art and crafts funders, Arts Council England supplies monies via its Grants for the Arts programme, recently cut by 35% in the face of money being redirected by government to the Olympics, making this even more competitive. They run free seminars to answer your questions, and their website (above) provides further advice.

In 2003/04, Grants for the Arts distributed £1.78 million to individual artists working in London through 316 awards (and £7.4 million to organisations through 445 awards, and £4 million for touring through 97 awards). In all, ACE received 2,500 application, including some that were ineligible. ACE are currently working to encourage more applications from freelance curators, project organisers and critics, who are currently under-represented in the funding allocation. Eligible projects include research and development, travel (including international), networking events and independent projects.

They are also keen to support activities promoting critical debate on the production and presentation of contemporary visual art; for example, events, seminars, conferences, publications (paper based / electronic), periodicals, catalogues and artists' books. [Update this listing](#)

### **Celeste Prize**

Email: [info@celesteprize.com](mailto:info@celesteprize.com) [Website:](#)

[www.celesteprize.com/prize](http://www.celesteprize.com/prize) International Art prize, open to Painting, Photography and Digital Graphic, Video and Animation, Installation and Sculpture. There is a total of 40,000 Euros in Prizes. Application entry is 80 Euros for a single artwork and 4 supporting images. [Update this listing](#)

## **Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC)**

Whitefriars, Lewins Mead, Bristol BS1 2AE

Tel: 0117 987 6500

Fax: 0117 987 6600

Email: [a.henry@ahrc.ac.uk](mailto:a.henry@ahrc.ac.uk)

[www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)

AHRC have a range of UK-wide programmes supporting the highest quality research and postgraduate training in the arts and humanities. From around 1500 applications to their seven Research schemes they make around 550-600 awards. From around 5500 applications to their Postgraduate schemes for funding people in Higher education they make around 1500 awards. In addition, AHRC manage on an agency basis for HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England) almost £10 million to fund museums, galleries and other collections in English HEIs (Higher Education Institutions).

## **Animate!**

PO Box 25860, London N5 1GZ

Tel: 0870 241 4687

Email: [info@animateonline.org](mailto:info@animateonline.org)

Animate! is a commissioning agency for projects for television and artists film and video. Their schemes are not limited to animators but applicants must be resident in the UK and have some experience of the manipulation of imagery in film, video or digital media. Full guidelines and details of current projects are available at [www.animateonline.org.uk](http://www.animateonline.org.uk)

## **Animate Projects**

89 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL

Tel: 020 7407 3944

Email: [info@animateprojects.org](mailto:info@animateprojects.org)

[www.animateprojects.org](http://www.animateprojects.org)

[www.myspace.com/animateprojects](http://www.myspace.com/animateprojects)

[www.animateonline.org](http://www.animateonline.org)

Animate is a groundbreaking commissioning project established by Arts Council England and Channel 4 to support risk taking and experimental animation works for television. Exploding the traditional preconceptions of what animation is and could be, Animate exists to break down barriers and

challenge expectations. The project explores the relationship between art and animation and the place of animation and its concepts in contemporary art practice. Since 1990 Animate has commissioned 84 dynamic and diverse films including works from David Shrigley & Chris Shepherd (Who I Am and What I Want), Run Wrake (Rabbit) and AL + AL (Perpetual Motion in the Land of Milk and Honey and Interstellar Stella), amongst others.

### **Film Council**

10 Little Portland Street, London W1W 7JG

Tel: 020 7861 7861

Fax: 020 7861 7862

Email: [info@ukfilmcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@ukfilmcouncil.org.uk)

[www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk](http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk)

The Film Council was set up by the Government in April 2000 to be the lead organisation for the UK film industry. Its remit includes the encouragement of both cultural and commercial film activity. The principal source of its funds is the National Lottery, and it will channel all public money for film production and the National Film and Television School.

See [www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/funding/](http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/funding/) for information on the Council's funding strands.

### **Microwave**

Microwave launched in 2006 to commission debut feature film-makers in the capital. It is a project for London-based companies to produce ten micro-budget feature films over a three year period.

Funding for full length film for up to £75,000 with the option of raising additional in-kind support taking the budget to a maximum of £100,000. The scheme will provide an intensive approach to film-making, with an emphasis on tightly focused scripts, short production schedules and commercial potential. Backed by the BBC, the scheme provides up to £75,000 of direct funding per project together with a unique professional mentoring scheme from leading industry figures.

This project could provide an interesting template for similar schemes run through either Screen west Midlands or the North Staffordshire Film Office.

### **Wellcome Trust Arts Awards**

Gibbs Building, 215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE

Tel: 020 7611 7222

Email: [arts@wellcome.ac.uk](mailto:arts@wellcome.ac.uk)

[www.wellcome.ac.uk/arts](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/arts)

The Wellcome Trust believes the arts are an effective way of stimulating debate and engaging people with biomedical science. Visual art, music, moving image, creative writing and performance can reach new audiences which may not traditionally be interested in science and provide new ways of thinking about the social, cultural and ethical issues around contemporary science. Funding can be applied for at two levels: small to medium-sized projects (up to and including £30 000). Funding can either be used to support the development of new project ideas, deliver small-scale productions or workshops, investigate and experiment with new methods of engagement through the arts, or develop new collaborative relationships between artists and scientists. Large projects (above £30 000), the funding can be used to fund full or part production costs for large-scale arts projects that aim to have significant impact on the public's engagement with biomedical science. There is a deadline in January for the large Award scheme and four deadlines a year for the smaller Awards.

## **EU Funding**

### **Euclid**

Cultural Contact Point UK: Matti Allam | Geoffrey Brown

EUCLID. 12 Charlotte Street | Manchester M1 4FL | United Kingdom

Phone 44 (0)7000 382543

Fax 44 (0)161 245 3322

email [info@euclid.info](mailto:info@euclid.info)

[www.euclid.info](http://www.euclid.info)

[www.culture.info](http://www.culture.info)

[www.culturefund.eu](http://www.culturefund.eu)

## **The Culture Programme**

The EU's Culture programme (2007-2013) has a budget of €400 million for projects and initiatives to celebrate Europe's cultural diversity and enhance our shared cultural heritage through the development of cross-border co-operation between cultural operators and institutions.

The Programme Guide for the Culture Programme (2007 – 2013) is available from

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/programme/documents/2009/culture\\_programme\\_guide\\_2009\\_en\\_v2.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/programme/documents/2009/culture_programme_guide_2009_en_v2.pdf)

The Guide contains full details about the Programme and a calendar setting out the deadlines for each strand of the Programme.

## **Strand 2: Support for Cultural Bodies**

Cultural organisations, associations and institutions play a crucial role in promoting culture and advancing its interests. However, cultural bodies operating at a European level are still few and far between. This strand of the Culture programme supports cultural bodies which operate or seek to operate at a European level.

This strand is aimed at promoting a sense of shared cultural experience. To be eligible, applicant organisations must show a truly European dimension, whether individually or as a network, association or federation. Their influence should be felt in at least seven European countries, and preferably at the EU level as a whole. With a budget of approximately 10% of the programme's overall budget, it provides co-financing for the permanent work of these organisations.

### **Support to cultural organisations**

Support is available for organisations engaged in providing representation at EU level, collecting or disseminating information to encourage trans-European cultural co-operation, networking at European level for cultural bodies, participating in cultural co-operation projects or acting as ambassadors for European culture.

Festivals can also be funded. Festivals are an established feature of European cultural life and, increasingly, they offer opportunities for artists to perform outside their national borders offering European audiences the chance to experience the full range of Europe's cultural potential. One of the advantages of supporting activities of this type is that the work of these bodies can become a permanent feature of European cultural life. They produce publications, recordings, and other products which means that their work can continue to circulate even after a specific event, tour or conference is over.

Deadline 1st November 2009

### **MEDIA Desk UK**

Agnieszka Moody and Hatice Özdemirciler  
c/o UK Film Council

10 Little Portland Street  
London W1W 7JG  
Tel: 44 20 7861 7511  
Fax: 44 20 7861 7950  
<http://www.mediadesk.co.uk/>

The MEDIA Programme offers three schemes for independent producers:  
Development Funding  
TV Broadcasting  
i2i Audiovisual (access to finance)

### **Development Funding**

The MEDIA Programme offers support to cover the costs of development of European films, TV programmes and multimedia in the following categories:

Fiction with minimum duration of 50 minutes

Creative Documentary with minimum duration of 25 minutes (one-off or series)

Animation with minimum duration of 24 minutes (one-off or series)

Interactive Works

Please note that there is no funding for short films or films that have started principal photography.

Applications are accepted from companies with a track record. There are schemes aimed at companies of different experience and financial capacity. Individual writers cannot apply.

### **Single Project or Slate Funding?**

**Single Project** is aimed at companies with limited financial capacity registered for at least 12 months and wishing to invest in the development of just one project.

**Slate Funding** is aimed as a company development grant for medium-sized companies with previous experience at an international level and the financial capacity to develop several projects simultaneously. The company must have been registered for at least 36 months before the submission date to be eligible for slate funding.

**Slate Funding Second Stage** is only available to companies who currently have an active slate funding contract. Recipients of Slate Funding please contact MEDIA Desk or Antenna for further details.

**Interactive Projects** is a new support scheme aimed at independent European games developers. Grants from €10,000 - 100,000 are available including production of playable prototypes. One company can apply for up to two projects in one Call for Proposals. Previous track record is required.

The track record requirements are different for each scheme. Please refer to individual pages for Single Project and Slate Funding to find out the details.

### **TV Broadcasting**

TV Broadcasting supports independent producers in producing TV programmes with involvement of several European broadcasters. The scheme is for the production stage of the project and allows to cope with an increased cost of production due to the necessity to produce different versions, dubbing and subtitling.

Eligible categories of TV programmes:

Fiction with minimum duration of 50 minutes

Creative Documentary with minimum duration of 25 minutes (one-off or series)

Animation with minimum duration of 24 minutes (one-off or series)

### **i2i Audiovisual**

The i2i scheme supports production companies which use bank financing and/or completion bonds to finance their films. It offers subsidy to cover up to 50% of the following costs, capped at €50,000:

- Insurance costs associated with the bank loan agreement

- Completion guarantee costs

- Financial costs (the interest on the loan)

### **Distribution**

The MEDIA Programme supports trans-national distribution of European films and TV programmes. European distributors can get support for releasing theatrically European films originating from territories other than their own (non-national). There is also support for European sales agents and DVD/video publishers. Producers can apply for support for TV distribution. Finally there is support for networks of cinemas programming significant amount of European non-national films (Europa Cinemas).

### **Training**

MEDIA 2007 offers two training schemes aimed at different trainees:

- Initial Training - This scheme is for networking of European film schools and the target trainees are the students.

Continuous Training - Funding is available for training providers to deliver continuous vocational training activities for film and television industry professionals.

Both schemes support training in the areas of new technologies, economic, financial and commercial management and scriptwriting. Applicants can apply for a non-repayable grant of up to 50% towards the costs of the training activity (in some cases for 75%).

### **Promotion**

The MEDIA Programme supports a wide range of festivals, markets and initiatives that promote European films and television programmes and encourage the networking of professionals across borders throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

### **Access to Markets - Scheme Overview**

This scheme supports organisations that propose events and activities (including computer-based information tools) designed to promote European audiovisual works and facilitate access to markets for European professionals. This Call for Proposals is for events (Actions 1, 2 and 4) starting between 1 January 2010 and 31 May 2010, or for annual activities in 2010 relating to computer-based information tools on the audiovisual and cinematographic industry (Action 3).

Promotional events and activities covered by this Call for Proposals must take place in Europe. The next Call for Proposals for multi-annual Framework Partnership Agreements will be launched in 2011.

### **Eligible Activities**

Promotional events and activities applying for funding must address one of the following topics:

Action 1: Access to Markets for European professionals

Action 2: Promotion of European audiovisual and/or cinematographic works before and / or during the production phase.

Action 3: Computer-based information tools on the audiovisual and cinematographic industry, intended for professionals

Action 4: Common European promotional activities

**Budget** <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub> The budget for this Call for Proposals is €1.5 million.

Deadline 7th August 2009

### **Promotion outside Europe - Scheme Overview**

This scheme supports organisations that propose activities designed to promote European audiovisual works at festivals and markets outside countries participating in the MEDIA Programme. The deadline on 12 August 2009 is for activities taking place from 1 January 2010 to 30 September 2010.

Deadline 12th August 2009

### **Audiovisual Festivals - Scheme Overview**

This Call for Proposals is for festivals taking place between 1 May 2009 and 30 April 2010. Festivals starting between 1 May and 31 October 2009 should apply for the deadline on 31 October 2008. Festivals starting between 1 November 2009 and 30 April 2010 should apply for the deadline on 30 April 2009.

Applicants are offered an opportunity to apply for a one-year contract or for established, stable projects, a three year framework partnership agreement with the Commission.

<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Support of up to 75,000 Euro is available for festival organisers covering up to 50% of the following costs:

Costs related to the presentation of European film

Subtitling and translation<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

Screening fees

Professionals accompanying a European film

Travel costs<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

Accommodation

Official catalogue and brochure

To be eligible festivals must devote a minimum of 70% of their entire programme to European films from at least ten countries participating in the MEDIA Programme. Festivals focussing on archeology or anthropology, medicine, ornithology, science, environment, tourism, sport, commercials, live-broadcast events, music videos and videogames are not eligible.

The eligible applications will be ranked according to the following award criteria:

the European dimension of the programming 15%  
cultural and geographic diversity of the programming 20%  
quality and innovative nature of the programming 10%  
Audience impact 30%  
Impact on promotion and circulation of films/AV works 15%  
Participation of film professionals 10%

The budget for this Call for Proposals is estimated at €3.5 million. The Commission reserves the right not to allocate the entire budget. Calls for funding under this theme are made on a regular basis and therefore it has potential to contribute significantly to a film festival in North Staffordshire in the future.

### **Other Initiatives**

Apart from funding for training, distribution, development and promotion MEDIA offers funding for digital technologies. Pilot Projects is the scheme to help European operators try new solutions and business models for new ways of creation and distribution of audiovisual content via digital technologies.

### **Media Mundus**

The new MEDIA Mundus programme would run from **2011-2013** and will capitalise on this growing interest and the opportunities offered by global cooperation of the audiovisual industry. It will increase consumer choice by bringing more culturally diverse products to European and international markets and will create new business opportunities for audiovisual professionals from Europe and around the globe.

The proposed new MEDIA MUNDUS programme will:  
boost the exchange of information between professionals, particularly through training activities and scholarships that make networking between European and third country audiovisual professionals easier. This will improve access to foreign markets and build trust and long-term commercial relationships.

Improve the competitiveness and transnational distribution of audiovisual works worldwide by making international co-productions easier.

Improve circulation and exposure of audiovisual works worldwide and increase public demand, especially among young audiences, for culturally diverse audiovisual content.

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/media/mundus/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media/mundus/index_en.htm)

For further details contact:

 Irina ORSSICH Tel: +32 2 299 67 98   
Emmanuel COCQ Tel: +32 2 296 97 80

## **Other EU funding (non-MEDIA)**

MEDIA 2007 is a programme run within the Infso (Information Society) and MEDIA Department of the European Commission. Often in collaboration with the MEDIA programme there are some other departments within the European Commission that provide support mechanisms that assist the European audiovisual industry.

Many of these other programmes are involved with foreign policies of the European Union and, while the MEDIA programme is focussed on developing the internal European market for the audiovisual industry, other departments often focus on 'Third Country' territories - defined as 'countries that are not part of the EU.' These programmes encourage the EU member states' interaction with the rest of the world and attempt to promote European culture and industry outside the EU.

For the audiovisual industry this often includes programmes active in ACP countries (African, Caribbean and Pacific rim countries). Now, a new activity has been launched in association with MEDIA 2007 - a programme entitled MEDIA International. MEDIA International is designed to promote audiovisual market interaction between EU countries and the rest of the world while also increasing the exposure of European film to international audiences.

Erasmus Entrepreneurs Expired 29th May 2009

Partnerships with African, Caribbean and Pacific Expired 5th September 2008

Awareness Raising in the Field of Development Expired 6th October 2008

TV production in the western Balkans and Turkey Expired 18th July 2008

## **Medea Awards**

The aim of the annual MEDEA Awards is to encourage innovation and good practice in the use of media in education. Their purpose is to recognise and promote excellence in the production and pedagogical design of media-rich learning resources at all levels of education, and to highlight good practice in the use of media and video in the classroom.

The MEDEA Awards 2009 are now open for submissions of entries. This year there are two new MEDEA Awards; the MEDEA Award for Creativity and Innovation set up to coincide with the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 to encourage participation from teachers and learners and intended to highlight creative and innovative use of media in education, and the European Collaboration Award intended to reward a production, project of initiative that features or has come about as a result of European cross-border collaboration.

Deadline: Wednesday 30th September, 12 PM (midnight).

Nikki Cortoos<sup>[1]</sup> MEDEA Secretariat<sup>[1]</sup> Leuvensesteenweg 132<sup>[1]</sup> B-3370  
Roosbeek<sup>[1]</sup> (Belgium)<sup>[1]</sup>  
Tel: +32 16 284 040<sup>[1]</sup>  
Fax: +32 16 223 743<sup>[1]</sup>  
email: secretariat@medea-awards.com  
www.medeawards.com

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sme/index_en.htm)

An online portal which aims to give easy access to information on all European Union policies and initiatives of relevance to small and medium sized enterprises.

General contact  
European Commission  
DG Enterprise and Industry  
Communication and Information Unit R4  
BREY 13/092  
B - 1049 Brussels (Belgium)

A report published by the EU Enterprise and Industry Directorate General titled **European Union Support Programmes for SMEs** provides an overview of the main funding opportunities available to European SMEs either directly or indirectly through intermediaries. Available to download from [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/finance/files/sp\\_2008\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/finance/files/sp_2008_en.pdf)

## 2. Production Directory

### 2.1 Filmmakers

Chris Stone Production – independent writer/director. Recent work includes the short features *Turpin* and *His Name was Ben*

LenZflare- producing solutions for clients looking for high-quality & creative films. Based in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Maclagan Men Ltd. - a video production unit based in Stoke.

McGovern Productions - video producers based in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Inspired Film and Video- a video production company based in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

ST16 - specialists in community video production. *Sentinel* newspaper business awards 'Business of the Year' 2008 winner.

Junction 15 - specialist video production company, based in the Burslem School of Art building in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent.

Reels in Motion a video production company from Stoke-on-Trent.

Nameless Productions- a film production company based in Stoke.  
Tunnel Vizion Media - worldwide multi award-winning film & music-video producers.

Viva Film Productions - making short issue-based films. Based in Stoke.

inSignificant Productions- based at Keele. Interactive-video authoring.

Ray Johnson- Ray has been making films in the area since 1972, with documentaries broadcast on TV channels and many now on DVD. He also founded and runs the Staffordshire Film Archive, and is on the Board of Screen West Midlands.

Stoke Cine and Video Society- a long-standing group, which puts decades of practical experience to use in regular film productions.

### 2.2 Animation

SMA Studios - a highly-experienced character-based animation studio, creating work for commercials, TV, and features. Based in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent.

Koko Digital are one of the UK's leading digital marketing specialists, strategically located in Stoke-on-Trent.

Daniel Baddeley, a 3D-character creator and animator, based in Stoke-on-Trent.

Big Red Studio Animation, an animation provider based in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent.

Eye Studios - specialists in producing audio for animation.

DB Digital 3D - 3D modelling an animation with Maya, Photoshop, RealFlow.

Big Red Studio - based in Burslem.

no.ground.processes - a co-op for experimental music + filmmaking, and also interested in DJ's/VJ's, interactive-media artists, photographers etc. The main web-master lives in Stoke and works at the University, but other members are based all over Britain.

k4design, Stoke-on-Trent.

### **2.3 Support Services**

Model & Scenic Solutions are professional model, set and prop builders based in Bignall End, Stoke-on-Trent. Their clients include major software companies, advertising agencies, political parties, and design / production houses throughout Britain.

Steve England is a voice-over expert, with his own specialist studio.

All4One Music - provides production music for film, TV, video productions and websites.

Poco a Poco Music - a freelance music composer specialising in music for corporate video, documentaries and short films. Based in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent.

Direct Dogs - based in Stone. Supplies and trains dogs for films, TV and advertising, and can also supply facilities for still photographs for print adverts using dogs. Recent filming includes Brookside and BBC Six Nations Rugby.

Stoke Gothic "the website for goth, cyber, industrial and darkwave scenes" in the area, and can provide extras from your horror film or music promo.

Stoke Repertory Theatre Stoke-on-Trent

Circuit Personal Management suppliers of extras based in Stoke-on-Trent.

Stoke Film Theatre is Stoke-on-Trent's long established 212-seat 'art-house' cinema, with good links to local art cinema fans.

## **2.4 Archive material (for documentaries, etc):**

Staffordshire Film & Multimedia Archive (now "Staffordshire Past Track").

Midlands Moving Image Archive.

The Staffordshire Film Archive

## **3. United Kingdom Film Festivals**

Aberystwyth (February): **Ffresh - Student Moving Image Festival of Wales**

Aberystwyth (November): **Abertoir Horror Festival**

Accrington, Lancashire (March): **Pennine Film Festival**

Appledore (May): **Appledore Visual Arts Festival**

Bath (November): **Bath Film Festival**

Belfast (March/April): **Jameson Belfast Film Festival**

Belfast (October): **15 Second Film Festival**

Belfast (October): **Belfast Festival at Queens'**

Belfast (November/December): **Cinemagic World Screen Film Festival for Young People**

Berwick-upon-Tweed (September): **Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival**

Birmingham (October / November): **Black International Film Festival**

Birmingham (March): **Flatpack Film Festival**

Birmingham (May): **Young Independent Film and Television awards**

Birmingham (October): **cinem@tic**

Bognor Regis (April/May): **End of the Pier Film Festival**

Bradford (March): **Bradford International Film Festival**

Bradford (June): **Fantastic Films Weekend**

Bradford (September): **Bite the Mango Film Festival**

Bradford (October): **Co-operative Young Film-Makers Festival**

Bradford (November): **Bradford Animation Festival (BAF)**

Bridport (April): **From Page To Screen**

Brighton (November): **Cinecity**

Brighton (November): **Oska Bright Film Festival**

Brighton (November): **Student Film Festival Awards**

Bristol (February/March): **Screentest; The National Student Film Festival**

Bristol (September/October): **The Compass of Mystery Festival**

Bristol (October): **Wildscreen International Wildlife & Environmental Film Festival**

Bristol (November): **Encounters International Short Film Festival**

Bromyard, Herefordshire (July): **Nozstock Festival**

Buckinghamshire (October): **Short Cuts Film Festival**

Cambridge (April/May): **Cambridge International Super 8 Film Festival**

Cambridge (June): **CCMT Christian Film Festival**

Cambridge (September): **Cambridge Film Festival**

Canary Wharf, London (September): **Canary Wharf Film Festival (CWFF)**

Canterbury (November): **Canterbury Anifest**

Cardiff (October): **Iris Prize Festival**

Cardiff (November): **Soundtrack: The International Film and Music Festival**

Cheltenham (March/April): **Viewfinder Film Festival '09**

Cheltenham (October): **International Screenwriters' Festival**

Chester (May): **Screen Deva**

Chichester (August/September): **Chichester Film Festival**

Chipping Sodbury (January): **Ninth Dustbin Film Festival**

Clacton-on-Sea (July): **Clacton Festival**

Colchester (October): **Signals International Short Film Festival**

County Tyrone, Northern Ireland (May): **Mid Ulster Film Festival**

Coventry (January): **i-blink**

Derry (November): **Foyle Film Festival** AA

East London (April): **East End Film Festival**

East London (October): **British Urban Film Festival**

Edinburgh (March/April): **Deaf Focus Film Festival**

Edinburgh (April/May): **Dead by Dawn, Scotland's International Horror Film Festival**

Edinburgh (June): **Edinburgh International Film Festival**

Edinburgh (June): **Leith Short Film Festival**

Edinburgh (August): **Leith Film Festival**

Edinburgh (October): **Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival**

Edinburgh (October/November): **Africa In Motion**

Edinburgh/Glasgow/Dundee/Manchester/London/Cambridge  
(November/December): **French Film Festival UK and Ireland**

Edinburgh/Glasgow/Dundee/Manchester/London/Cardiff (May): **Italian Film Festival UK**

Exeter (February): **Animated Exeter**

Exeter (November): **Two Short Nights Film Festival**

Falmouth, Cornwall (November): **Cornwall Film Festival**

Glasgow (February): **Glasgow Film Festival**

Glasgow (February): **Glasgow Youth Film Festival**

Glasgow (October): **Document 7 International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival**

Grimsby (October): **Meniscus**

Guildford (March): **Our World Film Festival (Alternative Guide to Our World)**

Harwich (May): **Electric Silents**

Hastings (July/August): **Shot by the Sea - Festival of Moving Image**

Hay-on-Wye (September): **Festival Of British Cinema**

Hereford/Ludlow/Welsh Marches (February/March): **Borderlines Film Festival**

Homfirth (May): **Holmfirth Film Festival**

Hull (April): **Glimmer: The Hull International Short Film Festival**

Inverness (September): **LOCHNESSFILMFESTIVAL**

Islington, London (July): **The Angel Film Festival**  
 Jersey (October): **Branchage, Jersey International Film Festival**  
 Kendal (November): **Kendal Mountain Festival**  
 Keswick (February): **Keswick Film Festival**  
 Kingussie, Inverness-shire (February): **Food on Film Festival**  
 Lancashire (October): **Bacup Film Festival**  
 Langsett (March): **Langsett Independent Film Festival**  
 Leeds (May): **Evolution**  
 Leeds (July): **RAI International Festival of Ethnographic Film**  
 Leeds (November): **Leeds International Film Festival**  
 Leicester (October): **Can Leicester International Short Film Festival**  
 Lichfield, Birmingham (July): **The Lichfield Inspire Film Festival**  
 Liverpool (November/December): **NICE-Festival: The Nordic Art & Culture Festival**  
 Liverpool (October): **Outsiders Liverpool Lesbian and Gay Film Festival**  
 Liverpool/Manchester/Lancaster (September): **Abandon Normal Devices - Festival of New Cinema and Digital Culture**  
 Llanberis (March): **Llanberis Mountain Film Festival**  
 Llanfyllin (July): **The Workhouse Festival**  
 London (July): **Crystal Palace International Film Festival**  
 London (April): **Declaration of Independence Film Festival**  
 London (July): **Films at Kilburn Festival 2009**  
 London (September): **Firecracker Showcase: London's East Asian Film Festival**  
 London (October onwards): **Future Shorts**  
 London (October/November): **London Greek Film Festival**  
 London (Ongoing): **onedotzero**  
 London (January): **The London Short Film Festival (Presented by Halloween)**  
 London (February): **The Orange British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA) AA**  
 London (February): **Valentine Film Festival**  
 London (March): **Human Rights Watch International Film Festival**  
 London (March): **Images of Black Women Film Festival**  
 London (March): **London Australian Film Festival**  
 London (March): **Optronica**  
 London (March): **The Birds Eye View Festival**  
 London (March): **Tongues On Fire**  
 London (March): **Wood Green International Short Film Festival**  
 London (March/April): **LIDF - The London International Documentary Festival**  
 London (March/April): **London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival**  
 London (March/April/May/June/July/August/September/October/November/):  
**Urban Forest Pictures**  
 London (April): **Animate the World**  
 London (April): **Learning on Screen**  
 London (April): **London Independent Film Festival**  
 London (April): **Taiwan Cinefest London**  
 London (April): **The Satyajit Ray Foundation Short Film Competition**

London (April/May): **SCI-FI LONDON - The London International Festival of Science Fiction and Fantastic Film**

London (May): **Fashion in Film Festival**

London (May): **Romanian Film Festival**

London (May): **The NEXT film festival**

London (June): **East of Center Film Fest**

London (June): **Wimbledon Shorts Film Festival 2009**

London (June/July): **City in Motion (part of the City of London Festival)**

London (July): **Fast Forward Film Festival**

London (July): **Limbic Arts Festival**

London (July/August): **Rushes Soho Shorts Festival**

London (August): **FrightFest**

London (August/September): **London International Animation Festival (LIAF)**

London (September): **Filminute - The International One-Minute Film Festival**

London (September): **UK Brazilian Film Festival**

London (September/October): **Russian Film Festival**

London (October): **Raindance Film Festival**

London (October): **Renderyard Short Film Festival**

London (October): **The Times BFI London Film Festival** FIAPF

London (October): **This Is Not A Gateway**

London (October): **This Is Not A Gateway 'Festival On Cities'**

London (October/November): **dyssing monadys**

London (November): **Betting on Shorts: More than a Eurovision of Shortfilm**

London (November): **Big Issue Film Festival**

London (November): **British Independent Film Awards**

London (November): **Buffalo-san Black and Asian Film Festival**

London (November): **G-Fest Gaywise LGBTQ Arts Festival**

London (November): **International Manga and Anime Festival**

London (November): **ISEFF International Student Ethnographic Film Festival**

London (November): **London Children's Film Festival**

London (November): **London Latin American Film Festival**

London (November): **We The Peoples Film Festival**

London (November/December): **Discovering Latin America Film Festival**

London (November/December): **We the Peoples Film Festival**

London (December): **The Cypriot Film Festival**

London, Barcelona, Berlin, São Paulo, New York, Mexico City, (All): **QuickFlick**

London, Berlin, Budapest (February): **EMERGEANDSEE**

London, peripatetic (November): **UK Jewish Film Festival**

London, South East London and UK (Ongoing): **Bombay Mix: The Bollywood & Beyond Film Club**

London/Spain (April): **Renderyard International Film Festival**

London/UK Wide (July): **Super Shorts Film Festival**

Luton (November): **Filmstock International Film Festival**

Manchester (February): **Kinofilm, Manchester International Film Festival**

Manchester (March): **¡Viva! Spanish & Latin American Film Festival**

Manchester (April): **Movement On Screen**

Manchester (August): **Process International Hip Hop Film Festival**  
 Manchester (October): **International Festival of Fantastic Films**  
 Manchester (October): **NOISE Festival 2008**  
 Manchester (November): **exposures: new talent in moving image**  
 Manchester (November): **Insight Film Festival**  
 Margate (April): **2 Days Laughter Short Film Competition 10**  
 Margate (October): **2 Days Later Short Horror Film Competition**  
 Middlesbrough (February): **Animex International Festival of Animation and Computer Games**  
 National (October): **Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival**  
 Newcastle upon Tyne (March): **Northern Lights Film Festival**  
 Norwich (September): **Norwich Film Festival**  
 Norwich (November): **Aurora**  
 Nottingham (June - July): **ScreenLit Festival of Film ,TV & Writing**  
 Online (Ongoing): **Outcasting**  
 Oxford (April): **Oxdox International Documentary Film Festival**  
 Oxford (July): **Britdoc**  
 Portree (March): **Celtic Film and Television Festival**  
 Portsmouth (November): **DV Mission 48hr Film Challenge**  
 Portsmouth (October/November): **DV Mission 48 Hour Film Challenge**  
 Reading (October): **Reading Experimental Film Festival**  
 Redditch (February/March): **REDDITCH FILM FESTIVAL**  
 Salford, Greater Manchester (November): **Salford Film Festival**  
 Sheffield (March/April): **Lovebytes Digital Arts Festival**  
 Sheffield (April): **2 Weeks To Make It**  
 Sheffield (June/July): **Showcomotion Young People's Film Festival**  
 Sheffield (October): **Reduction Festival**  
 Sheffield (November): **Sheffield Doc/Fest**  
 Southend-on-Sea, Essex (May): **Southend-on-Sea Film Festival**  
 Stamford (July): **Hitter Film Festival**  
 Stamford (April): **Stamford Short Film Festival**  
 Stockton on Tees (October): **CLIP Festival of Short Film**  
 Stratford-upon-Avon (November): **Falstaff International Film Festival**  
 Swanage and Purbecks (October): **Purbeck Film Festival**  
 Swansea (May): **Swansea Bay Film Festival**  
 Swansea (November): **BeyondTV**  
 Torbay (September): **International Comedy Film Festival**  
 Various (September): **Adventure Film Festival**  
 West Midlands (June): **BLaSt**  
 Westwood Cross, Broadstairs, Kent (October): **International Filmmaker Festival**  
 Whitby, N Yorks (September): **'Whitby in Shorts' International Short Film Festival**  
 Wolverhampton (November): **Deaffest London**  
 Wolverhampton (November): **FLIP Animation Festival**

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