



R · E · D · A TM
Reading's Economy & Destination Agency

Maximising the potential of the Screen Sector in the Greater Reading Area

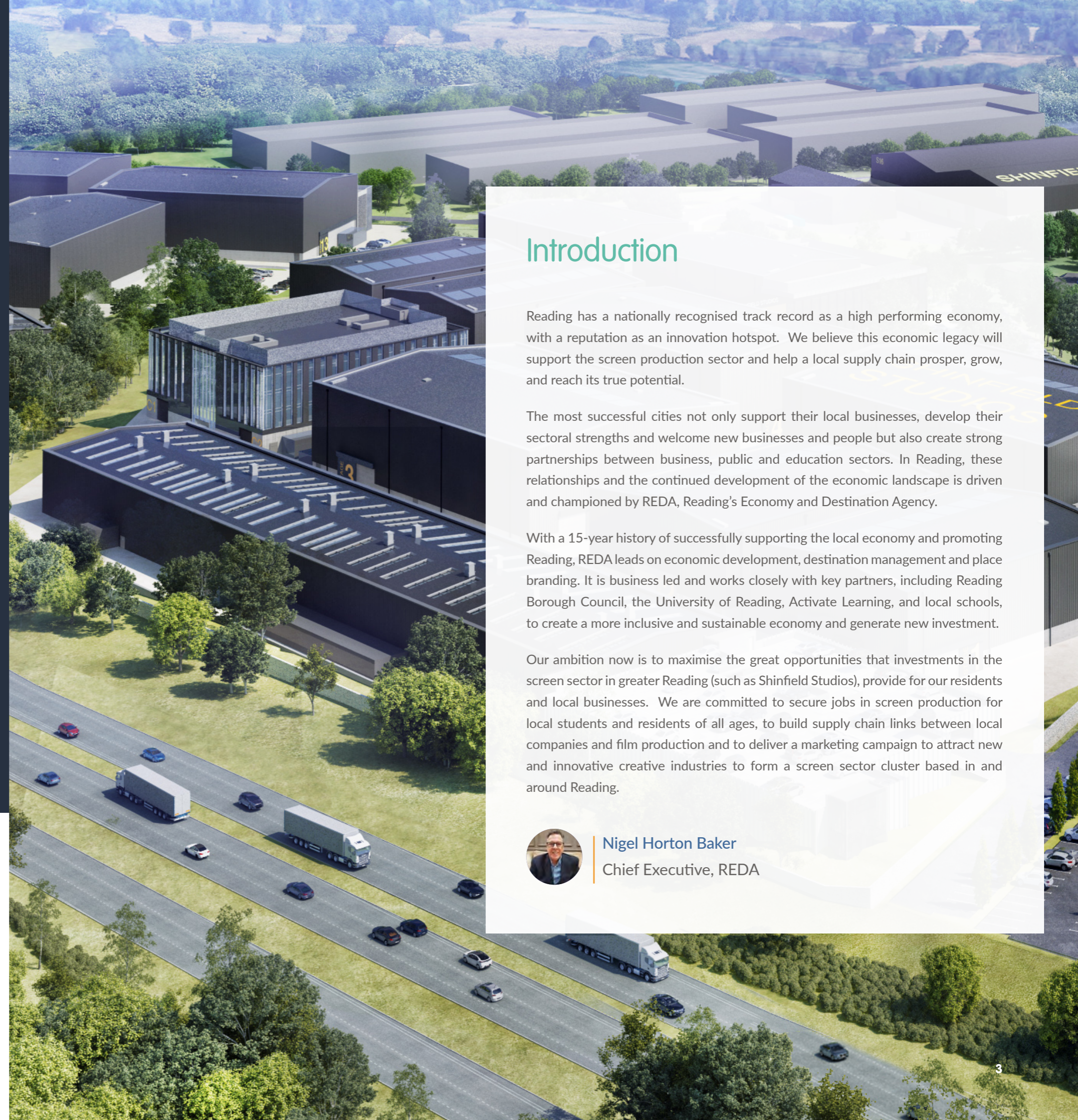
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We would like to thank Joanna Birrell (Berkshire LEP), Dexter Levick (Senior Researcher, Berkshire LEP) and Dominique Unsworth MBE (Producer, Resource Productions CIC) for their hard work in developing this report on our behalf and creating the evidence base to support the economic opportunity for Reading and Berkshire.



Introduction

Reading has a nationally recognised track record as a high performing economy, with a reputation as an innovation hotspot. We believe this economic legacy will support the screen production sector and help a local supply chain prosper, grow, and reach its true potential.

The most successful cities not only support their local businesses, develop their sectoral strengths and welcome new businesses and people but also create strong partnerships between business, public and education sectors. In Reading, these relationships and the continued development of the economic landscape is driven and championed by REDA, Reading's Economy and Destination Agency.

With a 15-year history of successfully supporting the local economy and promoting Reading, REDA leads on economic development, destination management and place branding. It is business led and works closely with key partners, including Reading Borough Council, the University of Reading, Activate Learning, and local schools, to create a more inclusive and sustainable economy and generate new investment.

Our ambition now is to maximise the great opportunities that investments in the screen sector in greater Reading (such as Shinfield Studios), provide for our residents and local businesses. We are committed to secure jobs in screen production for local students and residents of all ages, to build supply chain links between local companies and film production and to deliver a marketing campaign to attract new and innovative creative industries to form a screen sector cluster based in and around Reading.



Nigel Horton Baker
Chief Executive, REDA



“Creative industries are a major driver of economic growth. They bind communities, delight millions, and have the power to lead our regeneration as we reposition ourselves on the world stage. We need an ambitious plan of longer-term investment to support this.”¹

¹ Caroline Norbury MBE, CEO, Creative Industries Federation. www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/index.php/news/press-release-creative-industries-federation-warns-crippling-inequalities-unless-government

Executive summary

In the UK there are huge levels of interest in new studio space. The combined UK spend on high-end television (HETV) productions for 2021/22 was £6.6bn. In the last two years there has been more than £3.7bn of new private sector infrastructure investment. New investment in the sector could support between 6,000-13,000 jobs.

The challenge for the Greater Reading Area is to capture that energy and create opportunities for growth with an epicentre at Shinfield Studios, Cine Valley, and radiating out across the Berkshire and Thames Valley area to become a global centre for film and TV production in the UK.

In the next year, the Greater Reading area will see stage area increase from 235,850 sq. m to 1,247,020 sq. m and the number of stages from 12 to 30. For context, Hertfordshire's capacity is 1,078,957 sq.m while Buckinghamshire is 836,919 sq.m. There is major expansion at Shinfield, and Stage 50 at Winnersh, as well as Arborfield Studios and the historic Bray Studios, to meet demand for production space. The screen industry sector in Berkshire is growing at record rates and the area is becoming a global hub for film and TV production.

Much of this investment has occurred in Greater Reading and the adjoining areas through expansion of existing studios as well as new builds. Outside the main studios, more than 90% of the 2,678 businesses employing two or more people generate revenues of £100k-£500k. While there is clear evidence of growth and investment by major studios, the challenge now is to grow the production supply chain to meet current and future demands by the studios.

REDA is preparing this evidence base with a view to working in partnership with the University of Reading, Resource Productions CIC, Shinfield Studios, Wokingham Borough Council and others through 'Screen Berkshire' to explore how the sector's supply chain and skills needs can be met as it grows from a location for studio space and destination for film companies to a fully integrated de facto cluster

supporting vertical and horizontal integration in one place with suitable space for pre- production, production and post production companies to locate their businesses and find a supply of labour skills and self-employed and small enterprises.

This will involve partnership working, outreach into schools and further education, to develop a future workforce pipeline, support in local communities to embed a culture enterprise and self-employment and transition to jobs in the sector using transferable and new skills. The possibility of a purpose-built Creative Sector Skills Hub at Thames Valley Science Park – to deliver well qualified entrants to a range of industry roles within the developing creative sector in Berkshire is a must not an aspiration. Also, in the surrounding area with need to find real estate to attract and locate companies in the supply chain network creating local networks and creative and innovative ecosystems.

This report provides a sound understanding of the structure of the film and screen sector and how it functions. It identifies the occupations, roles and jobs in the sector and provides a starting point for collaboration between REDA, schools and educational institutions, businesses, and their lead bodies to create a one-stop shop and wrap around service for the film and screen ecosystem to develop and grow over the next 25 years, helping to fulfil Reading's 2050 City Vision as a smart, sustainable and technology driven place of creative culture.

REDA has a window of opportunity, having recently secured financial resources over the next three years to support this agenda and work with like-minded partners with the intent of coming together to further leverage external public and private sector finance.



Mapping the screen sector in Greater Reading and Berkshire today

We have looked at this through two lenses:

- Which skills are needed for this sector?
- How can we maximise the local supply chain to support the sector?

When collecting labour market data on the screen sector within Berkshire, our aim was to assess the existing industry skills base in the area, while highlighting skills gaps that require addressing to meet the future needs of the sector within Berkshire.

Berkshire's screen sector is based primarily around Reading and Wokingham forming the centre of the emerging film and screen sector in terms of studio space (with key supporting companies operating further afield, e.g., in Windsor, and Maidenhead and Slough). We therefore focused on these locations for data collection.

Our methodology

We created a list of Standard Industrial and Occupational Classification (SIC and SOC) codes, which captured the key industries and occupations present within the screen sector. We then applied these to the Reading and Wokingham areas and generated industrial and occupational breakdowns within Lightcast Analyst. In addition, we created location quotients from both industrial and occupational standpoints and outlined the level of education required for all the listed occupations, as well as lists of the top posted occupations and job titles within the area. We also undertook the same method of analysis on two separate additional SIC and SOC lists that focused on peripheral activities.

Further to this, in consultation with sector specialist Dominique Unsworth, we highlighted some of the established sector-related companies operating within Berkshire. We also used the data platform Beauhurst to identify a cohort of emerging, high-growth companies operating in Berkshire within the SIC code parameters. The data from this analysis is available to view online at this url

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/industry-data-insights/reports/uk-screen-sector-economy>

The film and TV sector in Greater Reading – what we know



Industries currently providing the most jobs relevant to the screen sector across Greater Reading:

- Construction of other Civil Engineering Projects – 369 (Reading) and 236 (Wokingham)
- Renting and Leasing of Cars and Light Motor Vehicles – 222 (Reading) and >10 (Wokingham)
- Motion Picture Projection Activities – 60 (Reading) and 51 (Wokingham)



Highest employed occupations relevant to the screen sector across Greater Reading:

- Electricians and Electrical Fitters – 555 (Reading) and 817 (Wokingham)
- Photographers, Audio-Visual and Broadcasting Equipment Operators – 214 (Reading) and 188 (Wokingham)
- Graphic Designers – 208 (Reading) and 257 (Wokingham)



Most common education level required for working an occupation within the screen sector across Greater Reading

- NVQ Level 3



Top posted occupations relevant to the screen sector across Reading and Wokingham (between September 2020 and September 2022):

- Electricians and Electrical Fitters – 883 unique job postings
- Authors, Writers, and Translators – 817 unique job postings
- Welding Trades – 494 unique job postings



Top posted job titles relevant to the screen sector across Reading and Wokingham (between September 2020 and September 2022):

- Electricians – 333 unique job postings
- Carpenters – 263 unique job postings
- English Translators – 160 unique job postings

One of the most salient points about these roles is that they are predominantly self-employed roles and often not publicly advertised.



Understanding how studios work

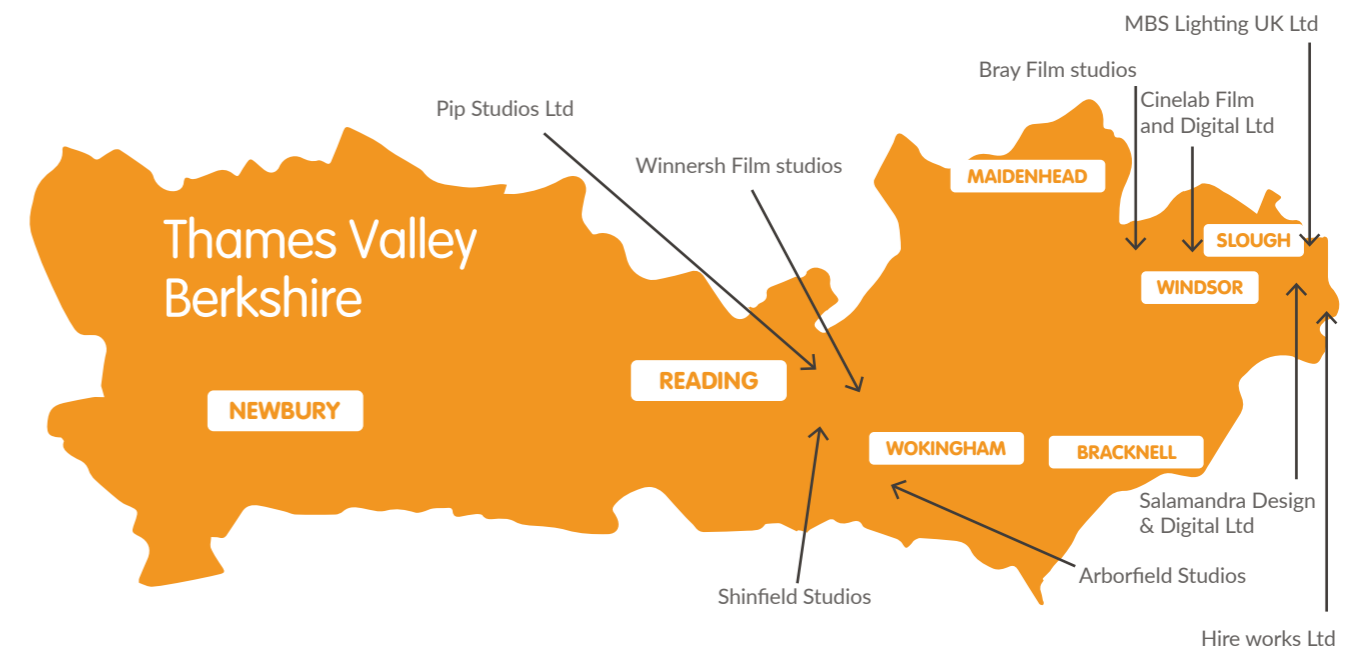
One of the key stimuli for growth is the creation and expansion of film and TV studios. It is therefore important to understand the unique ecosystem that surrounds a studio. The content producers are not the studios themselves but their 'tenants', who range from streamers, such as Netflix and Disney, to traditional broadcasters including BBC and ITV. The supply chain is further complicated by the fact that each of these companies' sub-contracts independent production companies to produce the content on the ground. Those production companies then hire freelance producers, production managers, and other heads of department (HODs) who hire freelancers and suppliers, aka 'crew'. It is rare in the UK to find a studio with a vertically integrated supply chain producing its own content within its own bricks and mortar.

Larger studios, such as Pinewood or Shepperton, usually attract an 'anchor tenant' – these are large-scale content producers and streamers who continuously shoot film or high-end television (HETV) back-to-back. Some anchor tenants may take up a long lease, which requires the development of a long-term local supply chain over several years; others may simply turn up, crew-up, shoot and leave within three months.

Most of the workforce operates as sole traders, known as 'freelancers' or one-person limited companies; they secure work project-to-project by person-to-person referral. Suppliers range from specialist construction and set decoration, camera, lighting, grip, sound, post-production, plant (machinery such as generators and cherry pickers), greens (specialist foliage and gardening), catering, action vehicles, locations, costume, and prop hire.

Who's putting the film and TV industry on the map in the western arc outside London

Existing supporting companies



Map showing Reading, Berkshire in context of London and western film arc in Herts Bucks and Surrey

To date Berkshire has been the supplier of services and land to the screen sector. Some example organisations located here include:

- [MBS Lighting UK](#), Slough – lighting equipment hire for the film and television production industry.
- [Salamandra Design & Digital](#), Windsor – animation and design.
- [Hireworks](#), Slough, one of the largest editing equipment hire companies in the industry.
- [Cinelab Film and Digital](#), Slough – is the UK's only full-service Film Laboratory and Digital Dailies Facility.
- [PIP Studios](#), Winnersh Triangle – world class audio post-production facility.
- [Berkshire Film Office](#) manages all filming requests and provides information on production facilities, film locations and available crew and talent in Berkshire

Emerging/high growth companies in the area:

- [Beings Digital](#), Wokingham – marketing and graphic design for live broadcasts.
- [Capture](#), Reading – digital asset management systems.
- [Select Car Leasing](#), Reading – car leasing services to businesses and consumers.

Studio space in the Greater Reading area



Shinfield Studios, Reading

18-stage production hub currently in development. Stage 1 is now open (four stages, workshops, offices), with the entire site to be opened in phases by 2024

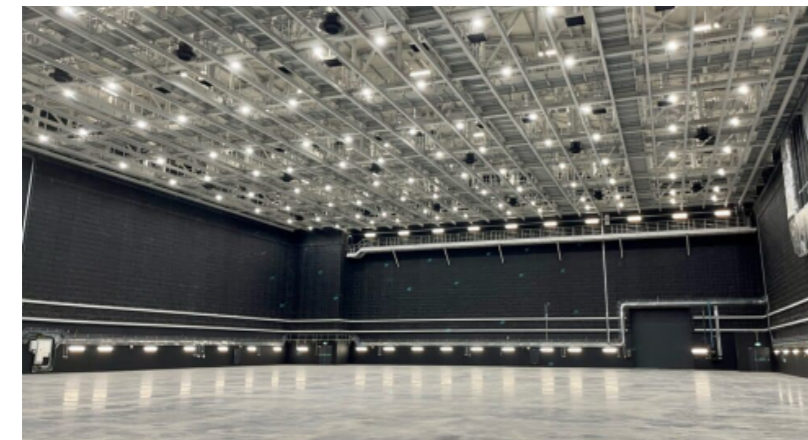
[MORE INFO](#)



Winnersh Film Studios –

six stages, offices and workshops. Two stages now open, with four still to open, including a stage to house the world's largest VP volume.

[MORE INFO](#)



Arborfield Studios, Wokingham –

run by Longcross Studios in Surrey. A former army barracks comprising stages ranging from c7,000 sq. ft to c70,000 sq. ft. with spaces for an editorial/ VFX suite, wardrobe, art, construction and props, and a backlot area. [MORE INFO](#)

Other studios along the M4 Berkshire corridor

Bray Film Studios is a heritage studio on the bank of the Thames, 25 miles from Central London and 13 miles from Heathrow Airport. The studios have provided creative space for more than 140 productions, including Dracula, The Rocky Horror Picture Show and recently Rocketman. The studios have received further permission for a total of nine sound stages.

	Current (sq. ft)		When completed			Revenue and Jobs information	Data source
	Total stage area (sq. ft)	No. of stages	Total stage area (sq. ft)	No. of stages	Jobs by 2024		
Shinfield Studios	506,234	24	1,000,000	18	3000	Stage 1 is open with the entire site to be opened in phases by 2024. Total inward investment of approx. £600 million per annum	Shinfield Studios
Winnersh Film Studios	35,685	2	120,000	6	1000	Entire site to completed by end of 2022. Will add £50m to the economy per annum	Winnersh Film Studios
Arborfield Studios	295,000	8	127,020	6	600	Site completed. Will employ between 200 and 600 people at peak times	Arborfield Studios
Greater Reading total	238,850	12	1,247,020	30	4600		



Pip Studios

From Jurassic World Dominion to Top Gun: Maverick, co-founders Ally Curran, Mark Sheffield and Nigel Bennett, have worked on over 200 films between them, and in 2020 opened the UK's first purpose-built audio post-production facility, Pip Studios.

The audio post-production facility boasts 13,000 sqft of studio space in Winnersh Triangle, Berkshire and offers a full range of audio and localisation services to global film, TV, streaming and gaming content providers. The right location for Pip Studios was vital with many clients travelling internationally. Berkshire offered close proximity to Heathrow Airport, London city centre and locally based studios.

As a growing business, Pip Studios aims to inspire the next generation of Berkshire talent, particularly within the audio industry. Ally Curran, Co-founder, and Director of Operations says "As the sector continues to grow in the Thames Valley area, there will be an array of roles available for those thinking of a career in the film or TV industry. These include post-production services such as Sound and Picture Editing, Visual effects, Picture Grading and Localisation services. However, the requirement of skills and talent go

further and are as varied as Hair & Makeup Artists, Costume and Set Designers, Construction workers, legal and finance professionals".

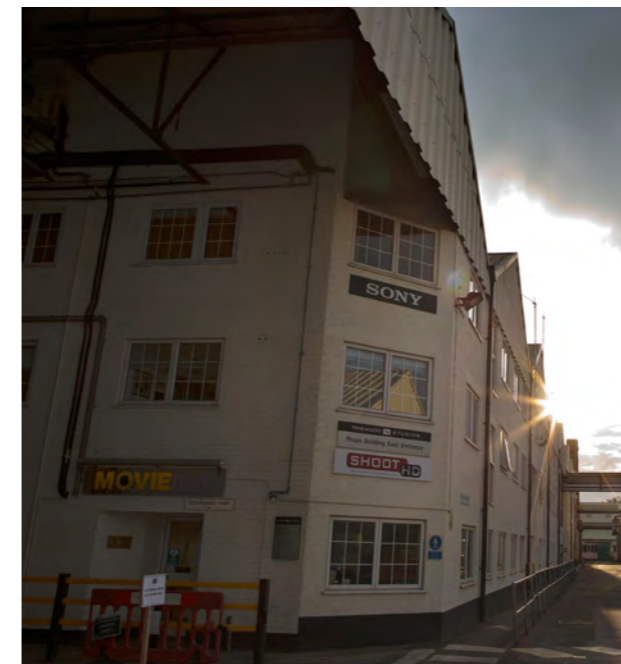
However, skills gaps are causing issues in the screen sector. There is a longer-term aim to help address these challenges with improved careers education, advice, and guidance. Here in Berkshire Pip Studios is already employing and developing local talent. Two new staff members have no film industry experience but are trained on the job. Ally adds: "Supporting young people in making a smooth transition from education into long-lasting careers is one way we can lower the skills shortage. In particular, developing the professional skills, experiences and behaviours that are most sought after by industry employers, like us. By working as a community, alongside Shinfield Studios, Stage 50 and the Berkshire Film Office, our sector can continue to grow in Berkshire."

Studio space in a western arc around London surrounding Berkshire

London and surrounding areas

A total of 13 major film studios in London and its immediate surroundings currently provide a total of 1,629,000 sq. ft. of studio space and 110 sound stages, 54 of which are larger than 10,000 sq. ft. All but two are either in southwest Hertfordshire or the west of London, forming part of a 'central London-Soho/southwest Herts /west London and M4 corridor' triangle, which has characterised major film studio locations since the early days of film.

A total of 16 new studio developments in Greater London are being planned; the three new studios in Greater Reading are part of these developments.



Area	Total stage area (sq. ft)	No. of stages
Bucks		
Pinewood	506,234	24
Ridgway Studios	35,685	2
Wycombe Studios	295,000	8
	838,919	34
Surrey		
Longcross Studios	76,228	4
Shepperton Studios	167,504	14
	243,732	18
Hertfordshire		
Elstree Centre	11,800	1
Elstree Studios	30,870	3
Bovingdon Airfield	88,000	4
Elstree	95,712	9
Hill Farm Studios	42,675	4
Sky Studios	260,000	13
Warner Brothers	549,900	19
	1,078,957	53
Area	Total Stage area (sq. ft)	No. of stages
Buckinghamshire	836,919	34
Surrey	243,732	18
Hertfordshire	1,078,957	53



Maximising the opportunities for other local businesses/sectors to benefit

The rapid investment in Greater Reading by the screen sector provides the opportunity for wider benefits to our local economy. Some of the more obvious benefits will be for individuals or vendors who work in film and HETV production; other significant benefits will be derived from different areas of the economy. This is referred to as the ripple effect, i.e., the micro-economic impacts that each production generates for other business sectors. We need to ensure that our local businesses maximise the opportunities available.

Screen Business 2021 analysed the impact of the screen sector tax reliefs to the UK economy². While the focus was on the impact at a macro level of the expenditure by film and high-end television, this report also considers the value to other sectors in the locality where the production expenditure takes place.

For those productions analysed, the proportion of production costs spent in the general economy was between 40% and 60% of the total production budget. Importantly, significant amounts (depending on the size of the production) were spent in sectors which have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as travel and transport, hospitality, and catering.

Although the proportions were lower, money was also spent in critical service areas such as safety and security, and health and medical.

To ensure that this wide range of opportunities is available to all, we should look to examples where other sectors seek to engage effectively with their local SME supply chain. There should be a focus on upskilling those within the sector and re-skilling those from other sectors in decline.

This analysis provides an insight into the opportunities for other business sectors to benefit from the growth of the screen sector locally. The key business areas which benefited the most from productions were:

- **Business support**
General business equipment and supplies sector, e.g. purchases of office equipment, printing and copying services. Producers also purchase and rent many miscellaneous items, such as storage containers and marquees, especially when on location.
- **Construction**
Specialist set builders will reach out to the wider construction sector to hire equipment and specialists such as earth diggers and heavy lifting equipment.
- **Real estate**
When productions are on location, they may rent buildings that also serve other sectors of the economy.
- **Travel and transport**
Bringing equipment, props, crew and other personnel into and around the production location.
- **Hospitality and catering**
Accommodating and feeding substantial numbers of talent and crew. Mobile catering companies are needed, but the quality and availability of restaurants are also important to service high-level talent.
- **Finance and legal**
Specialist legal expertise is needed to draft and negotiate specialised contracts across cast, crew, music and licensing. Accountancy is also crucial, especially in relation to payroll, film financing and the film tax credit.
- **Fashion and beauty**
Productions such as period or futuristic shows require considerable work by skilled costume buyers, cutters, tailors and dressmakers. Similarly, hair and make-up practitioners are essential. These might range from SFX make-up artists to wig makers or Black hair specialists.
- **Music and performing arts**
Performers, musicians and singers who work in theatres, orchestras and opera companies can provide musical background and/or work as supporting artists (SAs) for screen productions.
- **Power and utilities**
Production units use generators to power lighting rigs and location bases, mindful of environmental impact.
- **Safety and security**
Specially trained health and safety advisors and security are needed to help co-ordinators assess and manage risk. A-list cast, stunts, fire, and water work all require additional support.
- **Training and education**
Subject to council licensing, minors are allowed to work on-set, but their education and welfare needs must be met by registered chaperones and qualified tutors. There is a wider need for schools, colleges, universities and independent training providers to identify and service the sector skills gaps.
- **Health and medical**
Trained medical staff are needed to attend sets and construction sites, providing immediate health cover. Physical and emotional wellbeing checks are increasingly required, including COVID testing and more generalised health checks. This currently includes the role of COVID Supervisor.

Heathrow International Airport

Heathrow Airport's thriving sustainable supply chain

"Heathrow is at the heart of our local economy, and we need our Hounslow businesses to be able to better benefit. Having Heathrow support local SMEs to do business with the airport, provides positive impacts for those businesses. Providing SMEs with clear opportunities at Heathrow, as well as helping them to understand how they can support Heathrow in delivering their goals, will further help to drive local economic recovery from the pandemic and the downturn at the airport."



Sally Smith
COO, Hounslow Chamber of Commerce

Rationale

With thousands of companies operating from or supplying goods and services to Heathrow, the airport's influence stretches far beyond its boundary.

By supporting small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across the UK to do business with the airport, Heathrow can have a real impact on smaller businesses, both regionally and for those that are local to the airport. This activity drives local economic recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.

Target

Deliver business opportunities at Heathrow by growing the proportion of SMEs in its supply chain (from 40%) and the proportion of local SMEs (from 50%).

Key Activity

Remove barriers to entry for local SMEs.

Heathrow Airport Ltd want to ensure that SMEs – and local businesses in particular – can share in the economic benefits generated by Heathrow.

Creative industries sector information

Film and TV is the second largest contributor to the £111.7 billion per year GVA. Together, the creative industries are defined as the following sectors: advertising; IT, software, and games; film and TV; music, arts and culture; publishing; architecture; design and fashion; crafts.

The national status of the creative industries, according to a report from the NCFE.³

- Contributing 6% of UK GVA.
- Creative industry jobs are growing at three times the UK average.
- Creative industries employ more than 2 million people and, pre-Covid, expected to create 1 million more jobs by 2030.
- 47% are self-employed, compared with 15% across the workforce as whole.
- Many SMEs are small and expand to accommodate projects.
- 53% of creative professionals in the Greater Southeast now work in a creative capacity outside the direct sector.

Threats to the creative sector

- 42% of creative industry employers in the UK report a skills gap issue.
- 73% of creative businesses with more than 100 staff struggle to find people with the right skills.
- 1.2 million new workers will be needed in the sector over the next decade.
- 87% of highly creative workers are at low to no risk of automation (Source: Nesta), but productivity is 30% lower than France and Germany.

Recruitment methods

The boom in production across the UK has necessitated wider crew searches but shortened the timeframe within which to crew-up. Crew across the UK appear to be prioritising long-running, well-paid opportunities offered by HETV over lower budget independent/British film, childrens, and other scripted TV.

- Word-of-mouth remains the dominant method of finding crew and was reported widely across the UK.
- The need for speed and trust in hiring was cited as the main reason this practice prevails.
- Cast and crew agencies e.g., Redroofs in Maidenhead and Sara Putt Associates in Shepperton.
- Online communities and jobs boards e.g., www.thecallsheet.co.uk and www.thetalentmanager.com.



Skills needed to help our local film and TV sector to thrive

The BFI Skills Review 2022⁴ for film and high-end television was commissioned by the Department of Digital, Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) and recommended:

- A more formalised approach to hiring, workplace management and professional development.
- More comprehensive careers information, profiles, and pathways.
- Better data to support policy and action.

As a result, the BFI aims to prioritise the following:

- Mapping crew and forecasting shortage.
- Creating job descriptions.
- Careers advice and guidance.
- Workforce diversity monitoring.

The report details the following actions which any skills plan should consider:

1. Invest a minimum of 1% of production budgets into skills and training.
2. Allocate appropriate resource to manage and develop their crews' skills and training.
3. Proactively engage with developing and delivering national and local skills activity.
4. Invest in and embed HR best practice to ensure the workplace is attracting and retaining from the widest talent pool.
5. Continue work to tackle issues around bullying and harassment to create supportive, inclusive, and attractive workplaces.
6. Address underrepresentation in the workforce through training and development programmes and support flexible working models.
7. Consider the impact that late commissioning, long hours, and working practices have on workforce development and retention.

8. Invest in apprenticeships, and offer structured, supported work placements and paid traineeship opportunities.
9. Work collaboratively to set standards and frameworks with partners including the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education.
10. Form links with educators and training bodies, at a local level, to create pathways into work and opportunities for career development.
11. Support local programmes to reskill and recruit people to widen access to job opportunities.
12. Collectively support work to improve careers information, advice, and guidance; and make progression pathways visible.
13. Be active in schools, colleges and youth organisations, utilising IP, and talent to drive engagement.

In April 2023, the responsibilities and remit of many publicly funded screen sector agencies changed. Some BFI-funded, agencies affected included Screen Skills which received reduced support. Some new skills contracts were tendered out by the BFI including six regional 'skills clusters'. A local cluster led by Resource Productions CIC, University of Reading, Shinfield Studios, Bedlam Film Productions and Berkshire Film Office (including all six local authorities) secured 'cluster' funding of £600,000 over three years from 1st April 2023. The 'BFI Berkshire Skills for Screen Cluster' is due to be branded as 'Screen Berkshire' from 3rd October 2023.



Roles with skills shortages

The Screen Skills 2022 Forecast into skills and training needs to support UK film and high-end TV (HETV) productions⁵ identified the following roles with skills shortages. These are listed in order of those most frequently mentioned:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Production manager | 9. 3rd assistant director |
| 2. Location manager | 10. Covid-19 supervisor |
| 3. Production accountant | 11. Editor |
| 4. Production coordinator | 12. Location assistant |
| 5. Line producer | 13. Prop master |
| 6. 1st assistant director | 14. Script supervisor |
| 7. 2nd assistant director | 15. Art dept. assistant |
| 8. Production secretary | 16. Art director |



Workforce training and development challenges

- 50% have arranged or funded training for staff over the past 12 months.
- Less than 30% invested in training for freelancers.
- Larger organisations are more likely to invest in training than smaller ones. One quarter of employers cite the use of freelancers as the main reason for not training.
- Investing in staff: problems occur when stepping-up workers too quickly to meet increased demand.
- Difficulty attracting recruits from under-represented groups and retaining older workers.



What might help tackle skills gaps?

- Expansion of traineeships, internships, or work placement programme
- Mentoring/buddying schemes
- Increase in training spend for freelancers



Preferred types of training to meet respondents' future skills needs:

- Training courses for those already in the workforce
- On-the-job training, e.g., mentoring, job shadowing
- Technical/vocational training for those new to the workforce
- Supporting Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships across all ages.



Diversity and workforce composition

The UK creative industries face significant inclusion and diversity issues. Overall, the workforce is more male, more white, younger, non-disabled and better off. We are missing opportunities. Approaching to overcoming lack of diversity could include:

- Flexible working arrangements.
- Recruitment practices that ensure equal opportunities to diverse candidates.
- Transparency across the organisation.
- Supportive approaches to on-the-job learning.

In addition to Screen Skills national data, the Berkshire Film Office's talent database has seen an increase in requests for the following localised crew:

- Hair and make-up artist
- Runner
- Costume designer
- Storyboard artist
- Edit assistant
- Accounts assistant
- First and Second camera assistant
- Camera operator



Local Skills Investment - Taking Action Now

What's been happening across Berkshire in 2023

Local investment has already been successfully secured to bolster the screen sector in Berkshire:



1. BFI - Berkshire Skills for Screen Cluster aka Screen Berkshire

The British Film Institute (BFI) has committed £600,000 over a pilot three-year period to support a 'Skills Cluster' based in Berkshire. This initiative aims to increase accessibility to the film and TV industry while providing training and development opportunities for emerging production crew.

The cluster, a collaborative effort led by Slough-based Resource Productions CIC and the Berkshire Film Office in partnership with the University of Reading, Shinfield Studios and Bedlam Film Productions secured this funding to address the acute skills shortage in the industry. It seeks to create pathways for newcomers, individuals from underrepresented backgrounds, those seeking to upskill, the existing workforce and jobseekers over 50.

The Berkshire cluster will collaborate closely to identify skills gaps and coordinate training opportunities for local production crew. The goal is to expand the local skills pool and provide viable routes into the screen industry, alongside robust career development support.

2. Skills Capital Funding – Investment in facilities and equipment

Reading College, endorsed by the University of Reading, Modest TV, and Envy Postproduction, has invested in a Creative Industries Skills Centre. This centre features industry-standard facilities benefiting students pursuing Music and Media pathways at the campus.

The new facilities include a green screen film and television studio, recording studios, versatile rehearsal spaces, and multimedia iMac and PC classrooms. Activate Learning secured £480,000 from Berkshire LEP through the Government's Local Growth Fund for the Creative Industries Skills Centre.

Berkshire LEP also invested in high-end camera equipment at the University of Reading's Minghella Studios. This supports skills training in the university's Film, Theatre, and Television Department and contributes to the industry-integrated emerging Skills Hub. This internationally recognised equipment is used for filmmaking, documentaries, and television, as well as in film schools across the UK.



3. Department for Work and Pensions – Sector-Based Work Academy Programme (SWAP)

SWAPs, managed by Jobcentre Plus, help prepare those receiving unemployment benefits to apply for jobs in a different area of work. Placements run up to 6 weeks and are designed to help employers recruit a workforce with the right skills to sustain and grow their business. They are tailored to meet the recruitment needs of the sector, including pre-employment training, a work experience placement, and guarantee of a job interview for participants.

An initial 'Runner SWAP' was successfully delivered in July at Reading College (Activate Learning) and Bray Film Studios with 10 participants. Another is tentatively planned for early 2024 as part of the cluster activity with the support of Jobcentres across Berkshire.

4. Department for Education - Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps are intensive and flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector specific skills and fast track to an interview with a local employer. Designed with employers, participants gain the in-demand skills to move into or progress in their chosen sector. Participants are offered a guaranteed job interview upon completion. Bootcamps are an integral part of the BFI cluster activity, supported by Berkshire LEP, aligning perfectly with the broader effort to bolster the screen industry's talent pool in Berkshire.

An initial 'Film and TV Skills' Bootcamp was successfully delivered in July at the University of Reading, Shinfield Studios, Stage 50 and Pip Studios with 10 participants.

This comprehensive bootcamp covered every facet of the filmmaking process, equipping participants with the knowledge and skills required to pursue a career in film. It featured face-to-face instruction, including elements delivered at employer locations and job interviews.

The next bootcamp to be delivered will be 'Camera, Lighting and Grip', recognising a specific skills gap, particularly in Level 3 and 4 technical and higher technical roles, this bootcamp focuses on developing technical trainees. It's designed to address the growing demand in the local industry and includes face-to-face training, industry guest speakers, and mentoring support for participants seeking camera, lighting and grip roles in film and TV.

5. Local Skills Improvement Plan

The business-led Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), facilitated by Thames Valley Chambers of Commerce (TVCC), identifies critical skills gaps in the creative industry then works with local independent training providers and FE to address those gaps. These include specialised training for electricians and engineers working with film set equipment, proficiency in digital animation/virtual production software, drone operation, freelance career management, leadership and management skills, and professional services like HR.

Key recruitment challenges revolve around camera operatives, AV technicians, cinematographers, editors, animators, production coordinators and runners, carpenters, electricians, and accountants specializing in production and payroll.



Recommendations

What can REDA do?

The strong links between REDA, Screen Berkshire, employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders can provide a foundation for capitalising on the growing creative sector. A focus on addressing the needs of this flourishing sector locally should influence business planning and decision-making for a range of stakeholders.

See www.local.gov.uk/publications/work-local-unlocking-talent-level

- REDA can utilise its Sector jobs and skills programme and its UK Shared Prosperity Funding to support this development to begin embedding film screen sector jobs and careers opportunities in local schools and communities currently not participating in the labour market or seeking better quality job opportunities and to create a culture and the skills to embrace self employment as a route to these economic opportunities and strong local procurement and supply chains are created with easy access to the film companies and the studios.
- Support a culture of partnership working with Reading and Wokingham Councils, University of Reading, Activate Learning, film industry skills bodies and businesses in the film sector ecosystem in order to develop effective and efficient ways of supporting the sector to do business and grow locally.
- Ensure that the profile of the creative sector/screen sector is raised with all relevant skills and employment boards to identify gaps in provision and support the development of appropriate local training and education for the job roles needed by employers.
- Ensure that all work is aligned with the ambitions of the Berkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan which is being developed by the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce.
- Work with the British Film Institute and delivery partners as they begin to implement their new strategy from 2023.
- Connect with the Berkshire Careers Hub (Careers and Enterprise Company) and other local providers to encourage employers to develop work experience, placements, and Apprenticeships.
- Identify opportunities to promote jobs in the sector locally.
- Collaborate with local providers such as DWP and New Directions and other employment support organisations to connect unemployed residents to jobs.
- Work with the [Berkshire Business Growth Hub](#) and [Berkshire Film Office](#) to create a directory of local suppliers.

Careers

REDA working with Careers Leads to develop the future film scene workforce

Short-Term – 2023-2024

- Engage with local and national initiatives designed to improve the supply of people with skills to support the creative sector.

This should include BFI, Screen Skills, Creative Careers, Into Film, Arts Council England, Berkshire LSIP & Berkshire Film Office. *For example working with partners to pilot the creation a talent supply chain model from primary school upwards.*

- Identify opportunities to market Reading for inward investment and relocation of film sector companies to Reading. Based on the research already carried out by REDA and focusing on growing a recognised sector cluster in the area

Mid-Term – 2024-2025

- Undertake education and business partnership programmes in schools focusing on the sector.

This should focus on actively encouraging more firms to offer work experience and placements through agencies like the Berkshire Careers Hub. *For example working with the careers and enterprise company and the LSIP to ensure all Reading schools have access to creative businesses.*

Long-Term 2025-2026

- Promote opportunities in the creative sector to young people and career changers.

This will involve helping young people and adults make informed decisions, particularly in relation to Apprenticeships, training and jobs. *For example working with Reading College to ensure they are able to offer Apprenticeships that are useful to local screen sector businesses.*



Education

REDA working with Education to develop entry level, technical and higher level skills

Short-Term – 2023-2024

- Work with education partners (schools, colleges, universities and indies) to develop the curriculum to respond to identified gaps in provision.

This should include LSIP and cluster partners and embed skills that support freelance working by building on the [Screenskills Freelance Toolkit](#). *For example supporting Screen Berkshire with their 'Reflect and Share' strand of work and providing resources to upskill teachers and tutors.*

Mid-Term – 2024-2025

- Provide a first-class service to employers who wish to engage (whether in terms of work inspiration or course development).

This will aim to provide high-quality employability provision and build stronger bridges into industry from education and other sectors. *For example supporting Berkshire Growth Hub to identify, prioritise and better support the upskilling and re-skilling freelancers and SMEs.*

Long-Term 2025-2026

- Develop the ecosystem for vocational qualifications including Apprenticeships and T-Levels

This might include setting up a local flexi-job apprenticeship programme and/or developing T-level provision that meets the needs of the sector. *For example working with Activate, Windsor Forest Colleges Group and local chambers to pilot a T-Level/Apprenticeship brokering service.*

Business

REDA working with business organisations and employers

Short-Term – 2023-2024

- Provide more experience of the world of work to young people.
- Screen sector supply chain events for small business

This will involve encouraging employers to engage with education providers at all levels on a programme of career-focused sessions, talks or tours. *For example matching creative sector business attendees of local supply chain events with a local school or college and some resource to implement.*

Mid-Term – 2024-2025

- Support and promote projects and schemes that help sector SMEs and freelancers to develop entrepreneurial and business skills.
- Work with providers to upskill / adapt trade and craft skills for screen sector

This should include supporting training on how to diversify recruitment practices to address skills gaps. *For example working with Berkshire Film Office to run sector supply chain events that include needs assessments, business support and mentoring.*

Long-Term 2025-2026

- Promote the use of the Apprenticeship Levy to address skills gaps.

This could incorporate - shining a spotlight on local good practice in the areas of employer / education collaboration, training and development, and recruitment and retention practices (including diversity and flexible working). *For example working closely with the lead for Apprenticeships at Reading college to demystify and simplify the process for local employers.*

Current player and partners

These are some of the agencies, organisations and government programmes referenced above that are currently active in the area of skills within the creative industries.



Key Stakeholders and Information Sources

Locally

- Screen Berkshire**
 A new organisation delivering programmes for the BFI Skills Cluster : Resource Productions CIC, University of Reading, Shinfield Studios, Bedlam Film Productions & Berkshire Film Office (representing Local Authorities across Berkshire)
<https://www.resource-productions.co.uk/training/>
<https://berkshirefilmoffice.co.uk/>
- Thames Valley Chambers of Commerce, Skills Unit**
 Oversight and business integration of the Local Skills Improvement Plan:
<https://www.berkshirelisp.co.uk/>
- Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership:**
 Business Growth Hub, Skills Boot Camps and Careers and Enterprise Company
<https://www.berkshireopportunities.co.uk/>
- Activate Learning**
 Reading College delivering FE and Adult Education in creative and screen skills
<https://reading.activatelearning.ac.uk/courses/career-pathways/media/>
- Reading Borough Council / REDA / Reading Cultural Partnership**
 Bringing creative businesses to students of all ages, providing opportunities for training and education and business partnerships across local all schools
<https://whatsonreading.com/readings-cultural-and-heritage-strategy>

National

- British Film Institute - www.bfi.org.uk**
www.bfi.org.uk/industry-data-insights/reports/uk-screen-sector-economy
www.bfi.org.uk/industry-data-insights/reports/bfi-skills-review-2022
- Arts Council England - www.artscouncil.org.uk**
- Creative and Cultural Skills - ccskills.org.uk**
www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/index.php/news/press-release-creative-industries-federation-warns-crippling-inequalities-unless-government
- ScreenSkills - www.screenskills.com**
www.screenskills.com/news/new-forecast-of-skills-and-training-needs-to-support-uk-film-and-high-end-tv-production-boom
- Creative Industries Federation - www.creativeindustriesfederation.com**
www.ncfe.org.uk/media/2c4n4qli/creative-industries-overview-selep-skills-conference.pdf

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