Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **27 February 2025**

Report of: **Charles Freeman - Culture, Creative Industries and Built Environment Lead, Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH)**

Subject: **PFSH SUPPORT FOR THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the work of the culture, creative industries and built environment panel and proposes the establishment of a screen location agency to serve South Hampshire and the surrounding area

Two budget requests are incorporated

- £15,000 for the continued support of the cultural, creative industries and built environment workstream for 25/26
- £15,000 for the establishment of a regional film office.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

a) NOTES the contents of this report;

b) Notes that Joint Committee will be asked to:-

i) NOTE this report and the work undertaken by the culture, creative industries and built environment panel is noted.

ii) AGREE the future work priorities for the culture, creative industries workstream 2025/2026 be agreed and a £15,000 budget be allocated to support this work

iii) AGREES to support the proposition to establish a screen location agency which will operate across the whole PfSH area

iv) AGREES a £15,000 one off investment be allocated to support the establishment of a regional film office

c) CONSIDERS any comments to be passed to Joint Committee for its consideration.

PLEASE NOTE this report is a draft version of the PfSH Joint Committee report and is subject to change before being considered by the PfSH Joint Committee. The final report will be published ahead of the PfSH Joint Committee.

1. Background

The work of the Culture, Creative Industries and Built Environment panel has formed part of the PfSH business plan since its inception. In 2022 the panel commissioned the Southern Policy Centre to facilitate a conversation regarding future partnership working across the creative and cultural sector.

Following this work, Arts Council England funded the Solent LEP to commission the Solent Culture Plan. After the closure of the LEP, the Culture Plan remained a priority for the Solent Growth Partnership, and will be published in 2025.This includes continued partnership working across the cultural and creative sector and the development of the screen sector, including the establishment of a regional film office.

In 2024 PfSH decided to continue its support of Creative Network South (CNS), while new working arrangements emerged. CNS is a sector group established by PfSH in 2012 to support the development of the creative economy in the area. CNS is hosted by Hampshire Chamber of Commerce. CNS is widely perceived to be a trusted neutral partner well placed to take forward collaborative projects.

CNS work priorities for 2024 included:

- Support for the development of the screen sector.
- Working in partnership with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce to develop the creative industries strand within the local skills improvement plan.
- Working with Solent University to support the development of an academic network and organise an annual research symposium.

Creative Network South meets formally as a network four times a year. Meetings are chaired by Ross McNally, Chief Executive, Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, and receives presentations and updates from partner organisations regarding the development of the creative economy in the area. CNS also retains a small budget to catalyse projects and support sector development.

2. Development of the screen industry and proposal to establish a screen location agency.

In 2023 Creative Network South commissioned The Southern Policy Centre to facilitate discussion regarding the ways the screen industry in the central south could be supported.

In each subsequent year, in partnership with Solent University and Fareham College film cluster meetings have been held with a view to developing a plan to support the screen sector.

The past two decades have witnessed unprecedented global growth in screen production. The UK is regarded as a world-leading setting for film and high-end Television Productions. In 2023, 4.23 billion pounds was spent on screen production in the UK.

Many major productions have been shot in Hampshire these include:

- The Crown, in Winchester.
- Napoleon, in Portsmouth.

- Tenet, in Southampton.
- Great Expectations, in the New Forest.

In many areas, film offices make it easier for production companies to source locations and crew. A film office can therefore play a critical role in attracting film production investment to an area. Currently, no such office serves the South Hampshire area.

Over the last year, Creative Network South (the Creative Industry Sector Group funded by the Partnership for South Hampshire PfSH) has worked with; Portsmouth City Council, Fareham Borough Council, Southampton City Council, Solent University, Southampton Forward, Portsmouth Creates, Creative Island and the Solent Growth Partnership, to commission a feasibility study to explore the best way to establish a local film office to serve the area.

The Film Office Development Agency feasibility study is set out in **Appendix 1** and was launched at the Solent Film Cluster meeting on 11 December 2024. See **Appendix 1 - Film Office Screen Development Agency feasibility study.**

At the Cluster meeting Cllr Pitt leader of Portsmouth City Council announced that establishing a screen location agency is a priority for the Solent Growth Partnership but a regional film office could serve a wider geography and was therefore open to all areas of Hampshire and Isle of Wight.

The proposed approach to establishing the screen agency is set out in the report – option B:

- The appointment of a regional film office, through a fair procurement process. This will probably be an existing agency with a track record of success. The agency will be tasked with attracting film productions to the area.
- That the office, once established, will be self-funding. To achieve this aim, it will need to generate revenue in excess of £150k per annum. The office will derive revenue from the commission it will charge production companies who use its services, and from taking a share of the income from the issue of licences and permits to allow filming.
- Local authorities that choose to be represented by the office would agree to an Memorandum of Understanding, including a common schedule of fees and charges to permit filming, an agreed process for issuing permits (this would reduce the internal administration undertaken by individual authorities.) Local authorities would also agree a common code of conduct relating to filming in the area.

It is envisaged the set-up costs for the office will be approximately £60k. This will be a one-off cost, and will cover:

- The costs of managing the setup of the agency and procurement.
- Supporting the agency to establish a presence in the area,
- An audit of locations in the area.
- A marketing and promotion campaign.

The Solent Growth Partnership has allocated a budget to support the set-up costs of the film office, and staff time to help the procurement process. PfSH joint committee is asked to support the growth partnership by allocating £15,000 at the inception stage of the

project which will enable all Partnership for South Hampshire authorities to opt into the services of the agency if they so choose without needing to make any further budget commitment to the set-up charges.

If agreed, it is anticipated that procurement for the film office could take place between April and June 2025 and co-ordinated by a management committee of all those participating authorities.

Local authorities that wish to opt into the marketing campaign, targeting production companies in the hope of attracting projects to the area, may be asked to make a further contribution.

It is understood that establishing a Film Location Agency is only one step in a strategy to develop the screen sector in the area. Further elements in the strategy might include:

- The attraction of investment in studio space,
- Sector-specific business support, skills, and talent development,
- Supporting local students to get local jobs in the screen industry.
- The adoption of a strategic approach to showcasing local talent, through the coordination festivals and events.

3. The Work of Culture Creative and Built Environment Theme Pannel

The priorities for the theme panel for 2024-25, have focused on creative industry development and have been delivered through Creative Network South. These priorities related to

- The development of the screen industry (discussed above)
- The implementation of the local skills improvement plan creative industries component.
- The establishment of a research network.

3.1 Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

Creative industries have been identified as a priority within the Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan. Creative Network South is working with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce in order to progress a skills agenda. A working group has been established to engage local colleges, businesses, and universities. Three key areas of work are currently being progressed.

3.2 Games Industry

The LSIP team were approached by Antivenin Games, which wanted to explore ways in which students from further education and university graduates could be supported to find pathways to employment using skills gained on games-related courses.

In recent years the games industry has experienced significant change, The difficulties experienced by students seeking employment with the major games houses is widely documented.

Creative Network South commissioned an audit of the games sector in order to assess demand for a skills bootcamp and hosted a focus group with economic development officers and representatives from colleges and universities The Growth Partnership will ran a games industry bootcamp in February and further games industry meet ups are also planned for later in 2025

3.3 Pathways to Employment for FE students

A creative industries LSIP deep dive exercise identified that businesses within the sector find it hard to support apprenticeships, or T-Level work placements. Most creative businesses in Hampshire employ less than five people, and don't pay the apprenticeship levy. However, work placements play a vital role in enabling students to get a start in the industry.

Hampshire Chamber of Commerce has therefore identified an opportunity to developing partnerships with key stakeholders to facilitate industry placements.

Artswork, the youth arts charity based in Southampton, has for several years run a successful apprenticeship programme supporting the events industry, This initiative was originally catalysed by PfSH. Artswork have, in the last two years, additionally developed a paid internship programme delivering projects for culture and creative organisations across the central south.

Portsmouth Creates is working with Artswork and other partners to establish a paid internship programme in the Portsmouth area, and Creative Network South is seeking to ensure these three projects link together to maximise opportunities for local young people.

3.4 Skills for Life Bootcamps

On account of creative industries being identified as a priority within the LSIP, Solent Partners have been tasked with commissioning bootcamps to support entrepreneurs in the sector establish businesses or to develop pathways to employment within the sector, Solent Partners currently advertising opportunities to participate on the range of creative industry related bootcamps, these include:

- Business skills for creatives run by the University of Portsmouth. This programme builds on experiences of the creative industries business support programme established by Creative Network South and subsequently run by Solent LEP.
- Digital marketing delivered by 'Set for Skills'.
- Screen industries delivered by City Eye
- The games industry bootcamp will be delivered by 'Mastered' in February.

3.5 Academic Research Network

Creative Network South is working to support an academic research network bringing together researchers from universities across the Central South. Similar networks have catalysed the development of the creative sector in many parts of the country including Manchester, Bristol, Brighton, and Oxford.

This year, Creative Network South and PfSH supported Solent University in making an application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Unfortunately, the application was not successful. However, the desire remains to further develop the network.

In January 2025 a third symposium narrating creative regions took place at Solent University, this provided an opportunity to discuss the way in which universities can support creative sector through the devolution process, speakers included Carolyn Abel Head of Culture at Southampton City Council, Professor Simon Brooks Executive Dean, Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries of University of Portsmouth, and Cathy Barnes Pro Vice Chancellor Research, Solent University.

4. Future Priorities

The 2025/26 priorities for the Cultural, Creative and Built Environment themed panel, working through Creative Network South will be:

- To support establishment of a regional film office
- To work with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce to ensure that creative industries skills agenda continues to be developed through the LSIP and its successor.

RECOMMENDATION

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Background Papers:

1) Screen Agency Feasibility study

Film-Office-Feasibilit
y-Study-December-2(

2) Creativity, Culture and Place Southern Policy Centre Report 2022

107.-Creativity-cultur
e-and-place_-Feedbac

Reference Papers: None
Enquiries: For further information on this report please contact:

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