

# THE COMICS CULTURAL IMPACT COLLECTIVE

Community Interest Company  
15346023

DCMS REPORT

**APRIL 2025**

UK Comics Fund Proposal





# INTRODUCTION

**We can only imagine how many of these things you've seen.**

A proposal, a sectoral review, a set of industry insights... perhaps a graph to break it up if you're lucky; a dusty oasis in a discursive desert. We've written a fair number of these reports ourselves out of necessity - you have to speak the language, don't you? However, we come from a background where information is not to be skimmed, but savoured. We come from the world of comics.

**Is this proposal going to be in a comics format?**

Unfortunately, no. And if that causes a feeling of disappointment, make a mental note of that feeling because this is the draw of comics: from the simplest aeroplane safety cards to complex graphic essays breaking down academic theses, comics can make any information accessible, digestible, memorable and infinitely relatable.

Comics is an artform that draws both readers and practitioners towards it, and this country is a hive of grassroots artistic, academic and entrepreneurial activity: the makings of a world-class industry

The truth is we would have loved to present our proposal as a comic, but making comics takes time, which requires investment, which is one thing the nascent comics industry doesn't have. Yet.

This report makes the case for a UK comics fund that will unleash the potential of this creative artform, removing barriers to expansion and freeing up new streams of income, all while fostering a new cultural recognition for our country on the global stage.

In alignment with the government's manifesto pledges on access to arts, this proposal maps out the huge potential for the comics industry in:

- Accelerating growth and creating sustainable sources of income in the creative industries
- Supporting children, young people and adults to develop creativity and find their voices
- Addressing identified skills gap in creative industries
- Enriching cultural and arts learning at all stages of education
- Opening up a route to rich, imaginative, distinctively British content on our public service broadcasters
- Exploring and supporting distribution channels to strengthen UK comic exports
- Providing a significant and hereto untapped boost to a vast grassroots area of the UK's creative economy

**There's gold in them thar hills.**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## UK COMICS FUND

### Overview

The Comics Cultural Impact Collective (CCIC) is requesting a £1.5 million investment over two years to pilot the UK Comics Fund — a strategic intervention to grow the UK's comics sector, modelled on the successful UK Games Fund.

The Fund will provide direct support to creators and publishers, alongside capacity-building for the sector's delivery infrastructure. It will be independently evaluated, scalable, and built with equity and sustainability at its core..

### Economic impact

The Fund is projected to generate £2M - £5M in economic activity annually, based on conservative modelling from comparable creative funding schemes. It will support the creation of 250 - 300 jobs each year (direct and indirect) and fund 60 -100 new comics publications annually. Return on investment is expected to be £3 - £5 per £1 of public funding — aligning with the strong ROI shown by the UK Games Fund and Arts Council England development grants.

Metric	Estimated outcome
Jobs created	250 - 300 (direct + indirect)
New comics published	60 - 100 titles
Revenue growth	£2M - £5M
Export growth	10 - 20% increase in rights sales
Return on investment	£3 - £5 per £1 invested

### Sustainability and sector resilience

This is not a call for recurring subsidy, but a launchpad investment to unlock new jobs, IP, and impact from a sector with untapped potential — an approach proven to work across Games, Literature, and Screen. Its sustainability model includes:

- **IP Retention:** enabling creators to monetise their work across multiple revenue streams
- **Capacity Building:** training in business skills, export strategy, and IP literacy



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

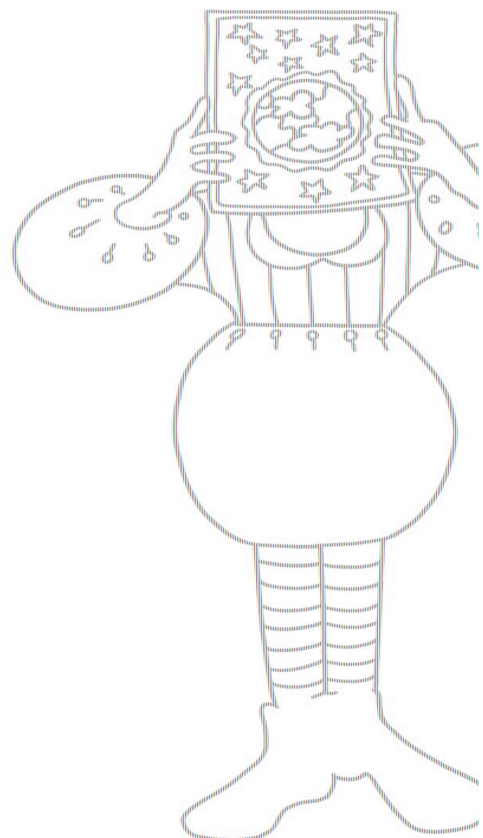
- **Ecosystem development:** Creating an infrastructure hub for talent, mentorship, and collaboration
- **Reinvestment strategy:** encouraging successful grantees to co-invest in future projects or talent
- **Green practices:** prioritising sustainable print and digital-first publishing formats. These pillars ensure the Fund contributes not only to immediate outcomes but to the creative and commercial future of the UK's comics industry

## Strategic alignment with DCMS goals

The UK Comics Fund directly supports DCMS priorities by:

- Stimulating economic growth through cultural investment.
- Enhancing UK soft power and exports
- Supporting young people, freelancers, and diverse voices
- Aligning with net zero goals through environmentally conscious creative practice
- Delivering measurable returns with lean, scalable infrastructure

*This is not just arts funding — it's a future-facing investment in the UK's next creative growth sector. It's small in cost, large in outcome, and ready to deliver results from year one.*





# BACKGROUND

## But first: what is a comic?

Comics have been defined as '**sequential art**' (Will Eisner, 1985).

Applying this classification, the artform can be traced all the way back to **prehistoric cave paintings** in Lascaux, the **Bayeux Tapestry** (11th Century) and **William Hogarth's** paintings and prints (1697-1764).

Today, 'comics' is a medium which incorporates any and all genres: fiction and nonfiction, biographies and autobiographies, even poetry, instruction manuals and artists' books.

The term 'comics' encompasses **graphic novels**, **comic strips**, **manga**, **zines** and **digital comics**, and they are for every readership from **children** to **adults**.

## You might know comics from...

- Publications like THE BEANO, DANDY, 2000AD, or their modern day cousin THE PHOENIX
- The explosion of manga our young adults are currently reading in their millions, or the bestselling BUNNY VS MONKEY series for children
- Posy Simmonds' long-running strips in *The Guardian*, as well as her award-winning graphic novels
- The highly acclaimed MAUS by Art Spiegelman, telling the story of a holocaust survivor
- HEARTSTOPPER, a multimillion-selling comic turned blockbuster streaming hit

...or many, many other places, from your daily newspaper to big exhibitions at the nation's art galleries.

## What you might not know is...

- There are thousands of comics creators in the UK, representing a massive, untapped source of creative industry
- There is a huge potential market for comics in this country, making it an overlooked investment opportunity
- Comics bring unique benefits to the UK's wellbeing, literacy, equality and cultural capital
- In short: comics are a growth industry just waiting to be unleashed

# THE VALUE OF COMICS

Comics are an integral part of the UK's cultural landscape and are powerful tools for communication, education, literacy and artistic expression.

We are in the midst of a widely-reported **enjoyment-of-reading crisis among young people** with The National Literacy Trust reporting the lowest level of reading enjoyment since records began in 2005. However, NLT research also found that nearly twice as many young people who read comics enjoy reading, compared to those who don't read comics in their free time (58.6% vs 33.1%). **There is no crisis of reading enjoyment amongst comic readers.**

Research shows a similar result in adults. 31% of adults do read or have read comics, according to research by Professor Andrew Miles at the University of Manchester. The Reading Agency's research<sup>2</sup> shows that 27% of adults read comics once a month or more. The links between reading for pleasure and overall wellbeing are well established, and with 40% of young people reading graphic novels or comics at least once a month, comics have a **demonstrable effect on wellbeing** for at least a third of the UK population.

When used as a tool for communication, information delivered in a comic format— as shown by research by Sheffield Hallam<sup>3</sup> — is proven to be **more impactful long-term**, fostering over six times the retention levels of information compared to text alone.

As one of the most accessible artforms, **comics give artistic voice to creators from marginalised backgrounds**: a third of creators are working class compared to one in ten in the rest of the arts, and creators and readers are more likely to be neurodivergent, disabled and LGBTQ+ than the general population.<sup>4</sup>

Comics also have **enormous economic potential**: the comics industry in France alone is estimated at a global value of €15bn.<sup>5</sup>



Graphic from an article for *The Bookseller*, by CCIC, 15/9/23

<sup>1</sup> [Report finds 'shocking and dispiriting' fall in children reading for pleasure](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Reading Agency](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Teaching People To Read Comics](#)

<sup>4</sup> [UK Creator Survey Hannah Berry 2020](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Top Draw. the Monocle](#)



# THE VALUE OF COMICS

## BUT...

Though the UK comics scene is a vast, untapped creative economy, it operates largely in a silo and is fuelled almost exclusively by the enthusiasm of its creators, participants and readership.

Where many artforms have an established infrastructure through which to draw down and distribute funding, support and opportunities, such organisations are notably absent from comics.

This manifests in an inescapable disparity in the levels of funding, to which Arts Council England's current structures are unsuited: present NPO<sup>6</sup> funding is £14.18 per head for opera audiences, but **less than 2p for comics audiences**.

This is clearly out of step with public interest levels, and as ACE is a reactive funding organisation there is currently no mechanism to redress the balance.

## AND SO...

To help unleash this sector's potential at a time when growth areas are so desperately needed to boost the economy, The Comics Cultural Impact Collective are proposing a scheme to catalyse the comics industry in the same way that the UK Games Fund helped make UK gaming the £8bn industry that it is today.

**The Comics Fund** would take a responsive model that directly addresses industry-specific needs and fosters innovation and growth, especially given comics' unique role in contemporary storytelling and diverse engagement, to address systemic inequalities in arts funding without reducing funding for other art forms.

While augmenting the country's creative output, the scheme would also **generate employment** — particularly youth employment as the creator population is skewed significantly younger — and **cultivate entrepreneurialism**, establishing new and self-sustaining career pathways.



Crowds at Thought Bubble comic convention in Harrogate 2024. Image [Simon Godsave Photography](#)

<sup>6</sup> [ACE 2023-26 Investment Programme](#)

# WHO ARE THE COMICS CULTURAL IMPACT COLLECTIVE?



**Hannah Berry** FRSL is an award-winning comics creator, scriptwriter and campaigner, a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and UK Comics Laureate 2019-21. Author of three solo graphic novels for Jonathan Cape (LIVESTOCK, ADAMTINE and BRITTEN & BRÜLIGHTY), she has also contributed comics to a wide variety of publications from 2000AD to The New England Journal of Medicine. Berry is a founding committee member of the Society of Authors' Comics Creators Network.



**Karrie Fransman** has created comics for the UN, The Red Cross, The Guardian and The Times. She published GENDER SWAPPED FAIRY TALES (2020) and GREEK MYTHS (2023) with Faber & Faber and published two graphic novels with Penguin Random House: THE HOUSE THAT GROANED (2012), and the award winning DEATH OF THE ARTIST (2015). She is Creative Director at PositiveNegatives.org, using comics to tell stories in research.



**Rhiannon Griffiths MBE** is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of Comics Youth CIC, a youth-led social enterprise supporting marginalised young people aged 8-25 to improve their well-being through comics. A Fellow of the Society for Public Health and the School for Social Entrepreneurs, she has secured over £20 million in funding for charities and was awarded an MBE for services to young people in 2023.



**Sara Kenney** has worked as a writer/producer/director for 25+ years in science & health engagement with TV, comics & games (BBC, Channel 4, Image, STEAM). She's run hundreds of workshops, panels and mentoring sessions with young adults. Her comic projects include SURGEON X (Image Comics), PLANET DIVOC-91 (Webtoons) & ACID BOX (Avery Hill). In 2024, Sara released a digital escape game inspired by the comic SHE COULD FLY (Berger Books/Dark Horse). She also works at the UK Environment Agency as Innovation & Engagement Manager. Working to bring scientists, engineers and community orgs together with a 'bottom-up' approach to storytelling with comics, games, music and film.



**Zara Slattery** is a comic artist, illustrator, educator and author of the award winning graphic memoir, COMA (Myriad Editions). She creates historical, medical and environmentally focused comics; collaborating with academics, writers and organisations (Canterbury Cathedral, Uni of Exeter, Intensive Care Society). Zara is a steering committee member of the Society of Authors' Comics Creators Network, a disability and inclusivity advocate and author of the COMIC ART & ZINE FAIR ORGANISER'S ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST.



**Myfanwy Tristram's** award-winning comics work focuses on activism, social history, pop culture and global systemic issues. In 2017 she coordinated the DRAW THE LINE project bringing together over 100 comics artists from 16 countries, which was successfully crowdfunded in the UK and subsequently published in the US by Street Noise Books. Tristram is currently working on THE NOISY VALLEY, collecting oral histories of protest in the Rhondda Valley. She is the Communications Manager at a democracy NGO and helps run Cartoon County, a long-running comics forum.



# WHO ARE THE COMICS CULTURAL IMPACT COLLECTIVE?

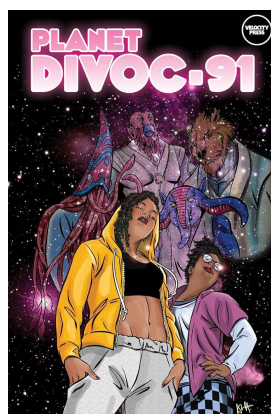
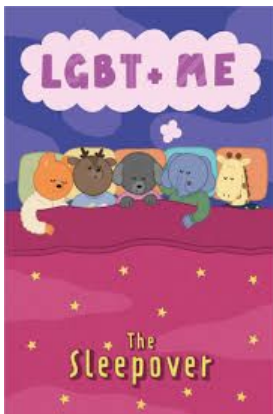
## Together, we are...

...an independent collective of professionals from the UK comics community, collaborating since February 2023 to amplify awareness of comics' profound cultural and economic impact.

CCIC is a community interest company (CIC) and is the UK's first infrastructure organisation dedicated to comics advocacy, aiming to **amplify the cultural impact of this medium as tools for business growth and positive social change**. Since our formation, we have worked to compile essential data to demonstrate the need for stronger support, recognition, and resources for the sector.

We are wholly community led, undertaking regular and extensive research into every area of comics and seeking input from stakeholders — from creators to publishers to educators and beyond — via roundtable discussions, surveys and interviews.

We compile and publish our findings, sharing them widely in order to ensure that change is brought about in a way that accurately reflects the needs of the sector. While we have a combined total of 106 years of experience in the industry, we are directly informed by the tens of thousands of years of experience gleaned from our community.



Comics created and developed by our member of our team



# WHY NOW?

Evidence shows that there is a strong business, economic, social and cultural case for supporting comics. Yet there is a historic and current gap in funding that has not been filled by public funding.

*“This is a market worth closer to £70m, just coming off its pandemic peak. But I wonder, [...] how much it could really be worth with a bit of a collective push?”*

Philip Jones, Editor’s Letter, The Bookseller, 2023.

Comics are far more than superhero tales: they encompass historical narratives, slice-of-life stories, graphic medicine, thrillers, science fiction, journalism, and more, reaching readers across ages and backgrounds.

- **Comics have an outsized influence on society:** many are adapted into blockbuster films, games, series (on Netflix, Amazon, Apple), and other new forms of media, connecting with audiences of billions worldwide and generating significant income for the UK creative industries
- **Creative skills gained from working in comics** can be applied across sectors and address the creative skills gap. From design, storytelling, storyboarding and use of new digital technologies, the skills gained from making comics can be deployed across multiple creative sectors
- **Comics are proven to help with literacy** and while a crisis in reading for pleasure has been identified in the UK, this crisis does not apply to comics, which has a growing audience



Mersey Margins 2025



# THE ISSUE

- Though many comics creators' work reaches the market via publishers — whether traditional or online — 60% are self-published<sup>7</sup>, sold directly to readers through the vibrant grassroots comic ecosystem of festivals and conventions, or via digital channels such as social media



Thought Bubble comic convention, 2024. Image [Simon Godsave Photography](#)

- The artistic output of this world is unsurpassed in creative innovation, but it is currently very limited in scale: the average income from comics in 2018-19 was £10,299, with 87% of creators supplementing their income through other means.<sup>8</sup>
- The reason for this shortcoming is clear, when one compares comics with other artforms: much of the infrastructure that helps artists reach audiences, generate income streams and employment — and thus bring £124bn to the UK economy — simply does not exist for comics due to historic underfunding and outdated biases.

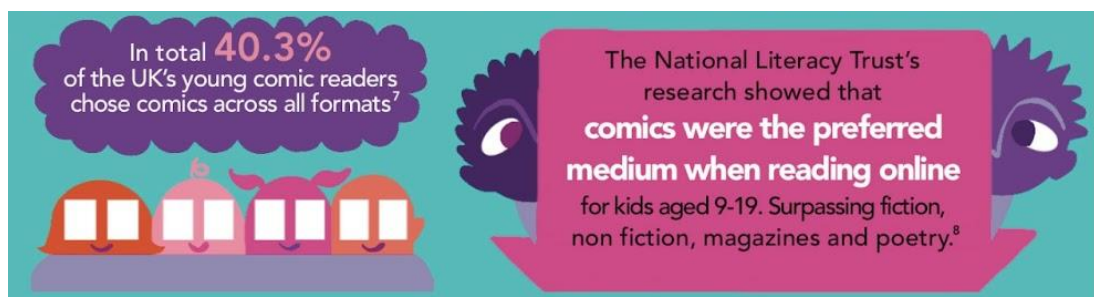
<sup>7</sup> [UK Comics Creator Survey Hannah Berry 2020](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Creative industries add 124bn of value to UK](#)



# WHO READS COMICS?

- 40.3% of young people read comics at least once a month. **At a time when reading is declining, comic book engagement is increasing**<sup>9</sup>
- Reading enjoyment amongst young people is at the lowest level since 2005 — but research from The National Literacy Trust reports that **'nearly twice as many children and young people who read comics said that they enjoy reading'** compared with those who don't read comics in their free time (58.6% vs. 33.1%)
- CCIC is working with The Reading Agency to learn more about their research on comics reading: early signs indicate that **this greater enjoyment of reading is also reflected in adults who read comics**
- **31% of adults engage with comics**, according to research by Professor Andrew Miles at the University of Manchester, **with 27% of adults reading graphic novels or comics once a month or more**
- Academics from the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education are exploring the intersection between comics and autism. There is a growing body of evidence that **this artform attracts a large number of neurodiverse creators and audiences**<sup>10</sup>



An article for *The Bookseller*, by CCIC, illustrated the ways in which comics reach wide and diverse audiences. The Bookseller 15/9/23

<sup>9</sup> [Children and young people's engagement with comics in 2023 | National Literacy Trust.](#)

<sup>10</sup> [University of Cambridge: Autistic perspectives sought for new study on comics and inclusion.](#)

# FUNDING FOR COMICS

## Why not Arts Council England?

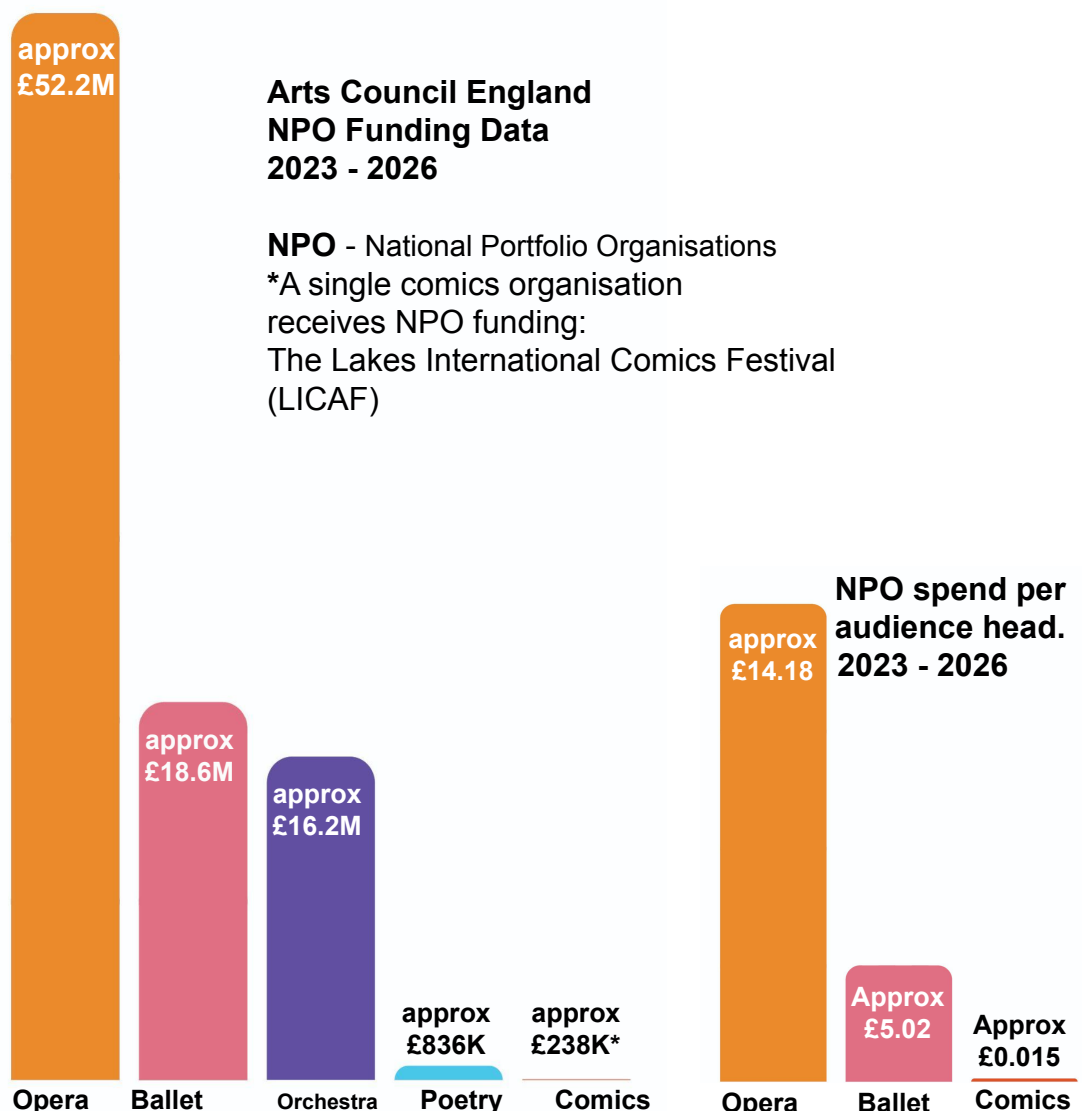
CCIC has conducted an in-depth analysis on Arts Council England (ACE) funding.<sup>11</sup>

The conclusion? The main body for arts funding in the UK is not currently equipped to support the comics industry at the scale required in order to maximise the potential benefits.

## Historically...

ACE's emphasis on supporting opera, ballet, theatre and orchestras has led to substantial funding allocations for these genres, whereas **emerging artforms such as comics receive comparatively little support, despite an exponential growth in public interest and accessibility.**

The lack of correlation between audience interest and funding is stark (see table below). This is also mirrored across project funding.



<sup>11</sup> [ACE NPO 2023-2026 Investment Funding](#)

# FUNDING FOR COMICS

## An imbalance of interests

Data from ACE shows that the funding for different arts — opera, poetry, ballet, comics, and orchestra — does not relate to the level of public interest in these forms.

Here, the facts speak for themselves:

- **31% of adults and 40.3% of young people engage with comics and graphic novels<sup>12</sup>, compared to the 7% of adults who engage with opera<sup>13</sup> and 7% with ballet.**
  - **But...ACE provides £50 million+ annually to support opera alone**, recognising it as a core component of the UK's cultural fabric.
  - In contrast, comics receive **under £1 million annually**, despite having an audience nearly six times that of opera.
- ACE National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) receive three-year core funding. This in turn creates sustainability and funds people in roles who are able to apply for more project funding as part of their remit.
  - ACE's 2023-26 NPO spend for adult audiences is approximately **£14.18 per head for opera audiences** and **£5.02 for ballet audiences...**
  - but **for comics audiences** it is **1.5p per head...**
  - and when younger audiences are factored in, the spend is **less than 0.5p per head.**



Article by CCIC published in The Bookseller 15/9/23

<sup>12</sup> [National Literacy Trust](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Cultural engagement in Britain](#)



<sup>14</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew\\_effect](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_effect)





# UK GAMES FUND MODEL

Now that we've seen how the ACE funding model doesn't fit the needs of the comics industry, let's look at one which does.

The [UK GAMES FUND](#) is a responsive model that directly addresses industry-specific needs and emerging sectors.<sup>15</sup>

A similar approach for comics could foster innovation and growth, especially given comics' unique role in contemporary storytelling and diverse engagement, **without reducing funding for other art forms.**

The UK Games Fund:

- Supports an industry **worth over £7.8 billion annually in the UK** market alone
- Was launched in 2015 with £4 million, rising to £5.5 million in January 2025
- Is **creating jobs, promoting diverse new teams, enhancing skills in a new generation of workers, and increasing the wealth of IP** in the UK
- Funds prototype games, and in doing so supports businesses to develop and grow
- Hothouses talented developers with **a residential programme**
- Through Tranzfuser, **supports teams of UK graduates** to build successful video game development studios, giving them the freedom and space to develop

## Similar funds

The UK Games Fund is not unique. Other sources of investment that are helping support culture and art practices include:

- the [BBC £1 million Small Indie Fund](#)
- the recently announced [£2.5 million Global Screen Fund](#)
- the [ACE £5 million Grassroots Music Fund](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Grand View Research - Video Game Market Size](#)

# COMICS ARE BIG BUSINESS

- Alice Oseman's HEARTSTOPPER made over £18m in the UK alone<sup>16</sup>
- Jamie Smart's BUNNY VS MONKEY comics have made over £11m<sup>16</sup>
- Charlie Adlard's THE WALKING DEAD is globally a \$2bn comic, streaming, games and merchandising franchise<sup>17</sup>

Comics are big business. If we look at the economic projections for games and comics they are both growth industries with global impact.

- **The size of the global video game market was estimated at \$217.06 billion in 2022** and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.4% from 2023 to 2030
- **The global comic book market was valued at \$15.5 billion in 2022**, and is projected to reach \$26.9 billion by 2032, growing at a CAGR of 5.9% from 2023 to 2032

It is important to note that these comics figures do not account for the economic impact that ripples through to feature films, series and games.

## Amazing IP

Hit shows and films based on original works by UK creators include HILDA, THE BOYS, HEARTSTOPPER, WATCHMEN, V FOR VENDETTA, TAMARA DREWE, THE WALKING DEAD and many more.

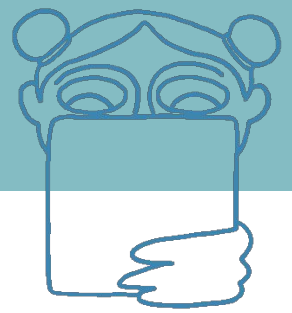
Comics are considered a rich source of material for adaptation, and innumerable titles continue to be optioned for development. Ensuring creators retain creative control of their copyright will greatly enhance the sustainability of the sector.



A selection of the many comics adapted as films and series each year.

<sup>16</sup> Figures from Nielsen BookScan

<sup>17</sup> [How Much Money Has The Walking Dead Made](#)



This Fund represents a transformative step towards positioning the UK comics sector as a core segment within the creative economy, advancing systemic growth, and fostering a more representative, inclusive, and innovative comics industry.

## What is it?

A £1.5 million a year initiative designed to:

- address critical funding gaps
- champion the diverse voices that exist in this burgeoning grassroots community
- foster a more equitable creative landscape.

## What will it do?

- Elevate and sustain the UK comics industry
- Nurture talent at the early ideation and mid-stage production phases
- Provide essential capacity-building infrastructure

## How will it do it?

- **Catalyse industry growth:** Establish comics as a core creative industry in the UK alongside film, television, games and literature. Increase employment, address skills shortage and foster new creative talent
- **Create commercial and creative viability:** Equip creators, publishers and distributors with the resources and business acumen
- **Promote diverse voices:** Provide targeted support to diverse creators and underrepresented voices, promoting fresh, experimental storytelling
- **Develop new skills and innovative storytelling:** This objective includes support for projects that explore new technologies (eg AR/VR) and interactive formats, broadening comics' appeal and relevance in the digital age

## Embracing the diversity of the comics community

- Prioritising support for underrepresented creators
- Promoting the UK's diverse storytelling potential
- Building a sustainable industry that uplifts and celebrates marginalised voices
- Cultivating comics as a vibrant cultural export with significant cross-media potential

## The comics creators community is already diverse

Comics are an accessible medium with a low barrier to entry, which allows marginalised voices to thrive — 31% of comics creators are working class<sup>18</sup> compared to less than 10% in the wider arts<sup>19</sup>; however, without adequate financial support, the sector struggles to develop and sustain diverse talent. Investing in the comics sector at this level would not only diversify the UK's creative economy, but also address the high demand for funding and support among marginalised creators, making it an accessible art form for both creators and audiences alike.

<sup>18</sup> [UK Comics Creators Survey](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Arts, Culture and Heritage: Audiences and Workforce](#)



# PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL

The funding we are advocating works in synergy, across two distinct areas:

1. **A tiered granting system:** £1 million allocating grants for early-stage ideation and advanced project completion in both comic creation and publisher infrastructure
2. **Capacity-building and support:** £500,000 dedicated to addressing the comics skills shortage and strengthening distribution infrastructure

## 1) A tiered granting system

- **Early stage development grants (total: £250,000)**

**What?** Small grants to help creators develop and prototype concepts, create polished samples, and prepare market-ready pitches, overseen by CCIC

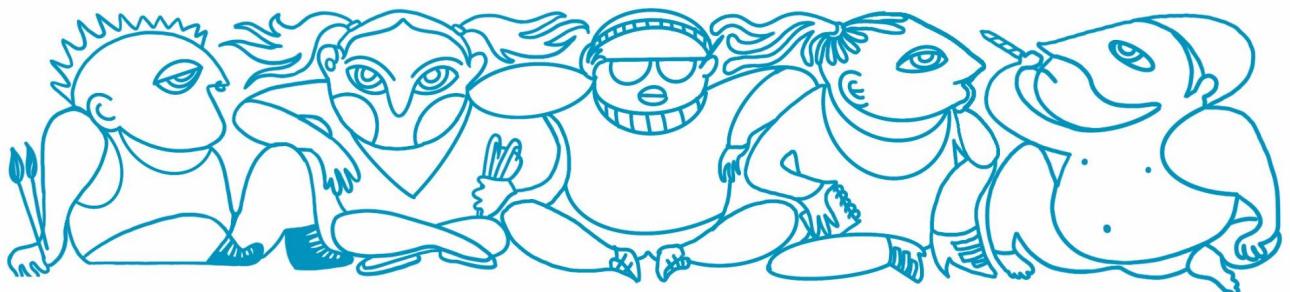
The offerings would include emerging technology grants relating to comics: funding for projects incorporating VR, AR, and interactive elements would attract younger audiences and increase digital engagement, keeping comics relevant to the next generation

**How many?** 25-50 grants of £5,000 to £10,000 each

**Eligible recipients:** Creators and emerging artists to the industry, with a focus on creators from underrepresented backgrounds

**Use of funds:** Recipients can use the grant for concept development, research and prototyping, and to develop to pitch-stage synopses, character designs, visual concepts and sample pages

They can also use the money to pay for mentoring, developmental editing and education — which will in turn support established creators and promote skill-sharing within the community — as well as business, marketing and legal training or support



# PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL

- **Content production grants (total: £750,000)**

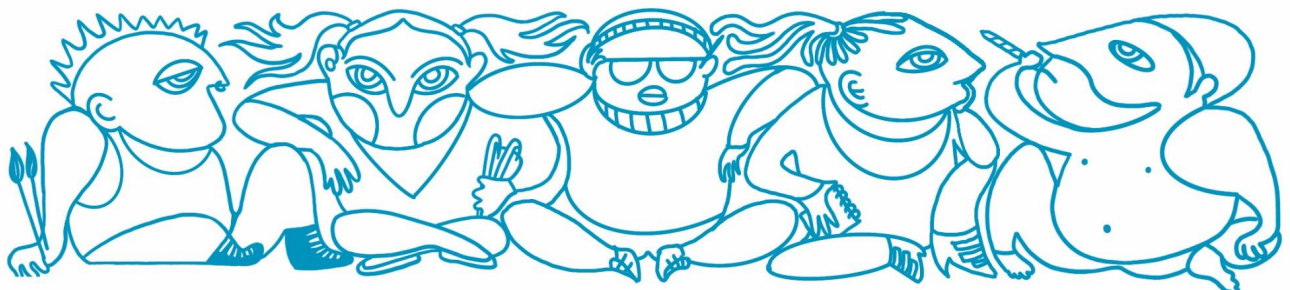
**What?** Larger grants support projects from individuals or publishing companies, ready to move into full content production, from completed scripts and storyboards to final publication.

This funding enables creators to produce high-quality comics for the market, professional editing, enhancing scripts, and preparing projects for distribution and promotion.

- **How many?** 25 grants of £30,000 each

- **Eligible recipients:** Creators and small publishers with viable market-ready projects, capable of achieving commercial success through print, digital, or multi-platform distribution

- **Use of funds:** Recipients can use the grant for production costs. They can also use the money to pay for capacity building in terms of business, marketing, legal and infrastructure support



# PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL

## 2) Capacity building and support

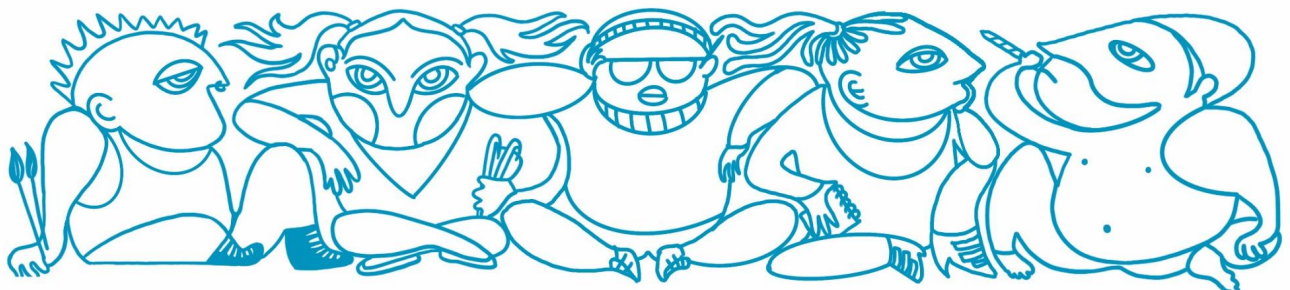
In addition to the direct grant funding, £500,000 would be set aside for infrastructure set up costs and capacity-building programmes under CCIC.

Similar to [ScreenSkills](#), which is also part-funded by government, these would provide creators and comic businesses with access to training, mentorship, and industry events that foster growth and skills-building.

This tranche of the funding would cover:

- Time and resources for CCIC to establish itself as an **infrastructure organisation** with established governance, risk, assurance and business considerations, requiring the equivalent of four full time posts in the first year
- **Industry training workshops**: monthly learning opportunities for comics creators focused on critical areas such as IP rights, marketing strategies, governance, risk mitigation and professional networking
- **Mentorship programme**: Grant recipients would receive tailored mentorship from industry experts, with a focus on developing business practices and creative skills
- **Creator showcases and market readiness**: Funded creators would gain opportunities to showcase their work at conventions, with publishers, libraries, and cultural centres, in a similar model to the UK Gaming Fund's [London Games Festival](#) Partnership. This public engagement boosts visibility and audience interaction
- **Evaluation**: We would commission an external evaluation focused on measuring the impact of the fund on both individual creators and the broader creative economy. This would include assessing:
  - 1) economic impact via market penetration
  - 2) sectoral growth and innovation
  - 3) job creation and skills development
  - 4) diversification and representation within creators

Potential partners include organisations like [The Young Foundation](#) and [Economist Intelligence Unit](#).





# ECONOMIC RATIONALE FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Despite widespread public engagement and proven creative crossover into film, television, and games, comics remain one of the most structurally underfunded artforms in the UK. Unlike screen, theatre, or games, there is **no dedicated public funding stream** for comics — leaving the sector fragmented, undervalued, and disproportionately reliant on unpaid labour and international platforms.

A strategic investment of **£1.5 million per year** would address this gap — and unlock substantial returns. Modelled on successful creative industry interventions like the **UK Games Fund**, this funding could generate **£2–5 million in annual economic value**, stimulate **250–300 jobs**, and develop **scalable UK-owned intellectual property** for both domestic and international markets.

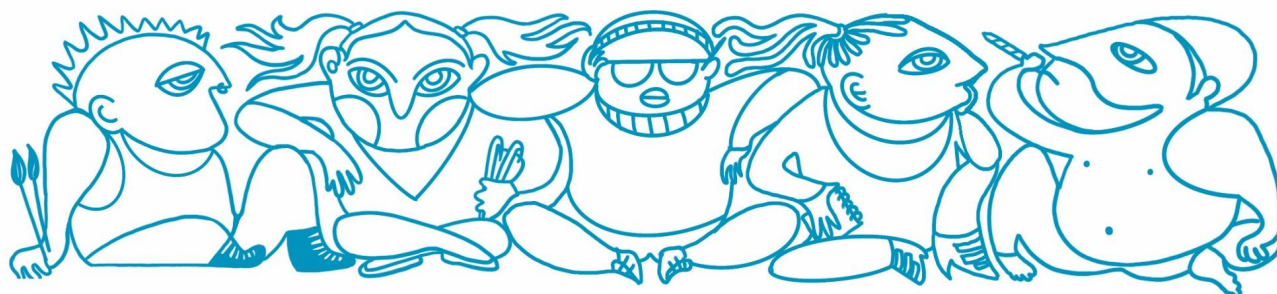
Metric	Estimated impact	Based on
Jobs created	250 - 300 <sup>20</sup>	Creative industry job multipliers (1.65x)
New comics published	60 - 100 titles <sup>21</sup>	Grant benchmarks from ACE & Kickstarter
Revenue growth	£2M - £5M	Domestic sales, licensing, export rights
Export growth	+10 - 20% in foreign rights sales	France, US, and Japan export benchmarks
ROI	£3 - £5 per £1 public investment	DCMS <sup>22</sup> and ACE cultural sector <sup>23</sup> models

<sup>20</sup> [UK creative industry - arts and culture - job multiplier](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Kickstarter](#) initiative result based assumption

<sup>22</sup> [Assessing the cost-efficiency of making grants](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Making Grants Efficiently in the Culture, Media and Sport Sector](#)



# ECONOMIC RATIONALE FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT

## Value creation pathways

### 1) Job creation and sector activation

The fund directly supports employment for creators (writers, artists, colourists, editors), and indirectly boosts jobs in distribution, marketing, and retail. Funding across the **InkSpark** and **StoryForge** grant streams is expected to create between **250 - 305 jobs annually**:

Grant type	Grants	Direct jobs	Indirect jobs (1.65x)	Total jobs
InkSpark (Early Stage)	40	40	66	106
StoryForge (Production)	25	75	123	198
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>305</b>

### 2) IP retention and licensing potential

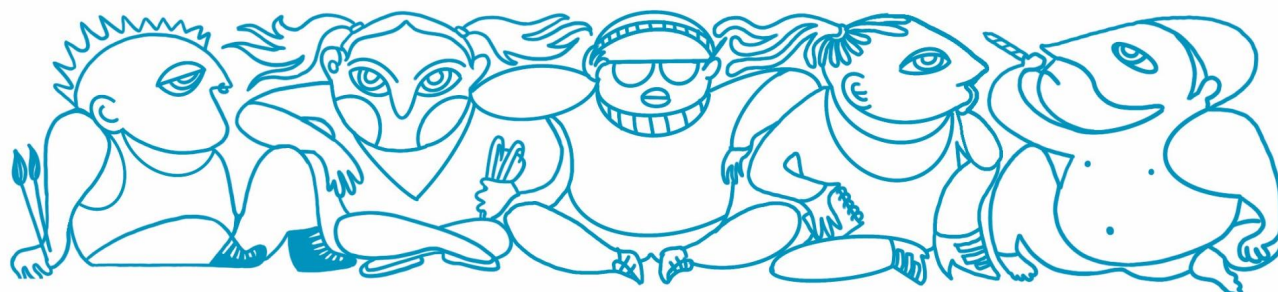
Unlike film or television projects backed by large studios, comic creators often retain their IP rights. The Fund incentivises UK creators to keep ownership in the UK — enabling downstream revenues from merchandising, adaptation, and screen deals.

### 3) Export growth and cultural soft power

With translation support and publishing partnerships, UK comics have export potential in key markets like France, Japan, South Korea, and the US. Based on foreign rights deal benchmarks, the Fund could enable 10–20% annual growth in overseas sales.

### 4) Strong returns per pound

Creative sector funding consistently returns £3 – £5 per £1 invested, due to knock-on effects in employment, production, tourism, and exports. Comics — with low production costs and high IP scalability — are particularly well-positioned to exceed



# ECONOMIC RATIONALE FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT

## 5 YEAR GROWTH FORECAST (if fund launches in 2026)

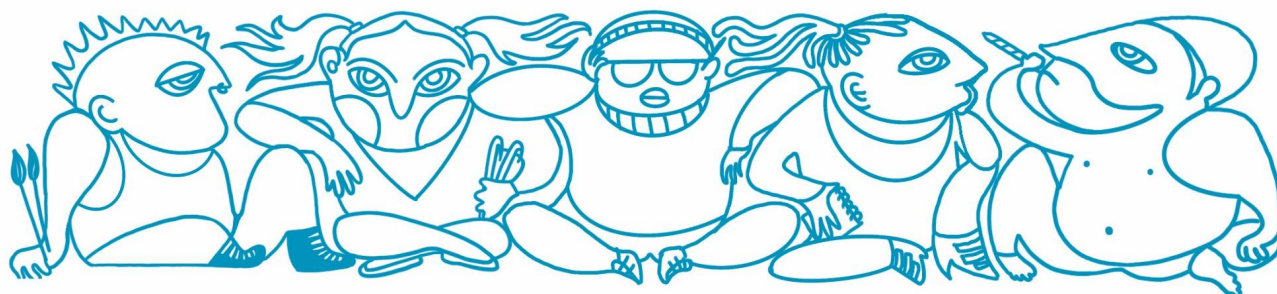
Outcome area	2026 estimate	2030 target
Economic return (p.a.)	£2M - £3M	£5M - £7M
Jobs created (annually)	250	350 - 380
Comics published	60 - 80	100 - 120
Export rights growth	10%	25%

These outcomes are consistent with the impact trajectory of the UK Games Fund, which helped develop an £8 billion domestic games sector with relatively modest early investment.

### Why it works

- **High-impact, low-cost:** small grants activate jobs, IP, and economic activity with minimal risk.
- **Scalable IP:** comics fuel cross-sector growth — from film and games to education and merchandise.
- **Export-ready:** UK comics have international appeal, but need infrastructure to scale.
- **Proven model:** mirrors the early success of the UK Games Fund, now backing an £8bn industry.

*This is not just arts funding — it's a strategic investment in the UK's next creative growth sector.*



# TARGET AUDIENCES & STRATEGIC VALUE

## Target audiences

The UK Comics Fund is designed to rebalance access to opportunity by prioritising:

- Early-career creators lacking access to industry networks
- Creators from Global Majority backgrounds, with 25% of total funding ringfenced for Black, Brown, and other racially and ethnically marginalised communities
- Regional creators from across the UK, especially outside London and the South East
- Underrepresented voices, including working-class, disabled, LGBTQIA+, and neurodivergent talent
- Independent publishers and youth-focused comic projects building new creative pipelines

*This fund isn't just inclusive by intent — it's inclusive by design.*

Strategic priority	Contribution
Equity	25% ringfence ensures systemic barriers are actively addressed
Levelling up	Directs funding to underserved creators and regions
Soft power & exports	Supports globally relevant, UK-owned storytelling IP
Education & skills	Comics strengthen literacy and creative engagement among youth

## Fund delivery at a glance

Element	Detail
Administered by	CCIC (Comics Cultural Impact Collective)
Equity commitment	25% of funding ringfenced for Global Majority creators
Application process	Two-stage: EOI - full proposal, with inclusive outreach & mentoring
Advisory panel	Cross-sector, with mandated Global Majority and regional representation
Monitoring	Annual reporting on ROI, diversity, regional spread, and IP development
Overhead	Admin costs capped at 10 - 12% (based on lean models like UK Games Fund)
Reinvestment	Successful grantees encouraged to mentor/co-fund future applicants



# WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Here is the future we can make, together, if the funding is in place:

## **Thousands of new jobs and, with great industry growth, the potential for thousands more**

- The Fund is designed to generate employment within the comics sector, from illustrators to publishers, from booksellers to festivals.
- Data from the UK Comics Creators Survey 2020 — and, coming soon, the 2025 iteration — can be used as a baseline to compare the increase in opportunities and financial and career development.
- We will track the number of new jobs created directly through the Fund's interventions, and how these positions contribute to the wider creative industries (feature films, series, games, etc).
- Impact metrics will include the growth in the number of businesses or freelance creators entering the comics industry and their retention in the sector long-term.

## **A much improved economic return and the influx of private investment**

- The success of the funded projects in attracting private investment and generating profits will be central to measuring the Fund's economic impact.
- The fund will track how many creators secure commercial contracts, publisher deals, or other forms of private investment post-grant.
- This will be carefully assessed to ensure workers' rights are protected.
- Reinvestment from creators will be encouraged, where profits from successful projects are reinvested into the next cycle of funding. This model ensures that the fund grows organically, driven by its own success and contributions from creators who have benefited from the fund.

## **A thriving comics culture in the UK**

- Our model aims to replicate the thriving culture of comics readership we see in France, Belgium and the United States. Government support and our own capacity-building will help kickstart a new cultural recognition and increase audiences for the form.
- Tracking the growth in readership, fanbase size, and audience engagement metrics (eg social media interactions, sales data, attendance figures for events and festivals) will be crucial to assessing how effectively the funded creators are reaching their audiences and how these projects increase the visibility of comics in the UK.
- Showcasing work at festivals, conventions, and through partnerships with cultural institutions will amplify this impact and serve as a metric for evaluating public interest and engagement in funded projects.



# WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

## Diversity and representation across the comics industry

- A core goal of the Fund is to foster a more inclusive arts and comics industry.
- Tracking how many projects are led by underrepresented groups (eg women, global majority, LGBTQIA+ creators, disabled creators, etc) will be critical to measuring the fund's success in promoting diversity.
- The Fund will also measure the success of initiatives that encourage marginalised voices, with a focus on whether these projects achieve commercial viability and are embraced by audiences and the industry alike.

## Sector-wide sustainability

- By encouraging reinvestment of profits into future funding cycles and building strategic industry partnerships, the fund aims to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that supports emerging creators long-term.
- Mentorship contributions from grantees to the next generation of creators will also be tracked, ensuring that funded creators play an active role in nurturing the next wave of talent and knowledge-sharing.

## IP Development and cross-media adaptation

- IP sales can be an important source of income, but we want to be clear that they are not the ultimate goal.
- Where offers for options or investments occur, we want to ensure creators are protected. There is also the potential for funds to be reinvested in individuals to build self-sustaining ecosystems.

## A settlement between AI and the creative industries

- The use of AI within the creative industries is a live conversation, and one that has not yet been resolved.
- We are in a time of rapid technological change. Within this climate, it is vital that artists' rights are protected, with CCIC's advice keeping up to date with the latest developments.
- CCIC's team has significant experience in this arena and has worked in both the government and grassroots sector researching the implications.
- While it is impossible to foresee, at this time, what AI will mean for comics creators, CCIC will be a strong and vocal advocate for creator rights.







# ENSURING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND SECTOR RESILIENCE

The UK Comics Fund is not just a cultural intervention — it is an investment in the long-term health, independence, and environmental responsibility of a vital but under-supported creative sector.

Our approach to sustainability is threefold: economic durability, sector infrastructure, and eco-conscious delivery. These pillars ensure the Fund delivers value not just in its first year, but in the decades that follow.

## 1) Economic sustainability: return-generating IP

- The Fund enables creators to retain ownership of original intellectual property (IP) — allowing future income from sales, licensing, adaptation, and merchandising
- Projects are selected for long-term market viability, including international appeal and rights retention potential
- Grantees who achieve success are encouraged to reinvest through co-publishing, mentorship, or matched funding, creating a circular model of creative regeneration
- Based on conservative estimates, the Fund will generate £2M - £5M annually in direct economic activity — a 3 - 5x return on public investment.

*This is not subsidy — it's seed funding for a scalable, IP-rich creative sector.*

## 2) Sector resilience: skills, infrastructure, and access

To ensure creators and publishers thrive beyond the grant cycle, the Fund will invest in:

- Skills training in business development, IP law, marketing, and financial planning
- Mentoring and peer-learning networks to embed sector knowledge and support
- National coordination through the Comics Cultural Impact Collective (CCIC), acting as a sector convenor to strengthen the industry's infrastructure — similar to the role of Screen Skills or the UK Games Fund

This model not only addresses creative output, but embeds self-sufficiency, professionalism, and growth capacity into the UK comics ecosystem.



# ENSURING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND SECTOR RESILIENCE

## 3) Environmental and ethical sustainability

The Fund will actively promote green creative practice, including:

- **Eco-conscious publishing:** encouraging sustainable print runs (eg recycled paper, low-impact inks) and digital-first formats to reduce material waste and emissions
- **Distributed production:** Supporting local print partners and reducing unnecessary shipping
- **Ethical labour:** Prioritising fair pay, creator rights, and inclusive hiring — especially for underrepresented creators
- **Carbon-aware operations:** Lean, digital-led fund management to minimise environmental impact

This aligns with the UK's broader climate goals and DCMS's commitment to making the creative industries cleaner, fairer, and future-ready.

Outcome: a creative sector that can stand on its own

The UK Comics Fund is designed to sunset dependency and build resilience — economically, culturally, and environmentally. It supports:

- British-owned IP and exports
- Creators with the tools to scale
- An inclusive industry with strong ethics
- A lighter environmental footprint for storytelling

*We are not only funding comics — we are building a greener, fairer, and more resilient future for UK creativity.*

# IN CONCLUSION

The UK Comics Fund's approach to commercial sustainability focuses on fostering diverse revenue streams, strengthening business acumen and facilitating publishing and media partnerships.

It aims to foster a long-lasting, ethical and self-sustaining comics sector in the UK. This will not only contribute to the cultural landscape but also strengthen comics as a key driver of economic growth within the creative industries.

We hope you agree.

**Thank you for reading. For further information, additional data and to ask questions, please contact CCIC on [helloccic@gmail.com](mailto:helloccic@gmail.com)**

## LICENCE AND CITATION

*This report is free for anyone to cite. Use it in your research, news, funding applications or wherever it can be useful in making the case for comics. The only condition is that you credit the Comics Cultural Impact Collective, CCIC, and link to our website at [www.thecomicsculturalimpactcollective.org](http://www.thecomicsculturalimpactcollective.org).*

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Image: Zara Slattery

**“A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS”**



# SUPPORT FOR THE UK COMICS FUND

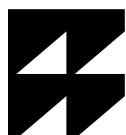
The following organisations and individuals  
have added their support for this proposal



The Royal Society  
of Literature

National  
Literacy  
Trust

Change your story



Authors'  
Licensing and  
Collecting  
Society

DACS

wellcome  
collection

AFROFLOX

BEANO

Thought Bubble

THE  
CARTOON  
MUSEUM



W  
WATERSTONES

LDC Comics

Changing the world through comics

THE BOOKSELLER

AT THE HEART OF PUBLISHING SINCE 1858

GRAPHIC NOVEL READING ROOM  
GURRR



POSITIVE  
NEGATIVES

SCHOLASTIC

THE  
READING  
AGENCY

gosh!

hachette  
CHILDREN'S GROUP

# SUPPORT FOR THE UK COMICS FUND

The following organisations and individuals  
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faber



BLOOMSBURY



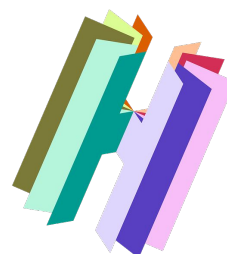
Penguin  
Random House  
CHILDREN'S



KNOCKABOUT



little, brown  
BOOK GROUP



Hay  
Festival  
Global

# SUPPORT FOR THE UK COMICS FUND

The following organisations and individuals  
have added their support for this proposal



**GRAPHIC  
MEDICINE**  
international collective

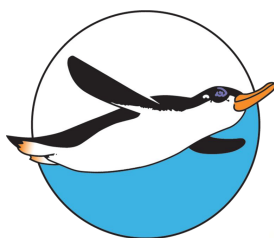


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ORGANISATION**



**COMICS  
YOUTH** CIC

myriad **m** <sup>∞</sup>



**d** **FICKLING** **b**

David Fickling Books







# SUPPORT FOR THE UK COMICS FUND

## The following organisations and individuals have added their support for this proposal

Nick Abadzis, graphic novelist  
Charlie Adlard, comics artist & Comics Laureate  
Patrice Aggs, writer, artist & graphic novelist  
Muna Al Jawad, University of Sussex  
Juice Aleem, Director, FluxCon/AfroFlux  
John Anderson, Publisher, Soaring Penguin Press  
Steven Appleby, graphic novelist  
Yomi Ayeni, comics creator & filmmaker  
Rachael Ball, graphic novelist  
Henny Beaumont, political cartoonist  
Steve Bell, political cartoonist  
Amy Bellwood, Festival Director, Thought Bubble Festival  
Tony Bennett, Managing Director, Knockabout Comics  
Angus Cargill, Publishing Director, Faber & Faber  
Katriona Chapman, Head of Marketing, Avery Hill Publishing  
Kate Charlesworth, graphic novelist  
Naomi Colthurst, Penguin Random House Children's  
Paul Cornell, comics writer  
Gareth Cowlin, Cartoon and Comic Arts, University of Staffordshire  
Dr Colleen Douglas, comics writer  
Liz Cross, Managing and Publishing Director, DFB  
Graham Dury, cartoonist & Editor, Viz  
Andrew Ettinger, Director of Education, National Literacy Trust  
Tom Fickling, Managing Director, The Phoenix  
Alex Fitch, Lecturer, University of Brighton/ broadcast journalist  
Tony Foster, Editor, Comic Scene  
Anna Ganley, Chief Executive, Society of Authors  
Dave Gibbons, comics artist & Comics Laureate  
Kieron Gillen, comics writer  
Clive Goddard, Chair, Professional Cartoonists Association  
Melanie Grant, Collections Development Lead, Wellcome Trust Collections  
Paul Gravett, comics historian and author  
Chloe Green, Festival Director, Thought Bubble, comics creator and academic  
Isabel Greenberg, graphic novelist  
David Ziggy Greene, cartoonist & bookseller  
Eve Greenwood, Publisher, Quindre Press  
Simon Hacking, Publisher, Breakdown Press  
Rich Hardiman, Comic Printing UK  
Barbara Hayes, Chief Executive, ALCS  
Emma Hayley, Managing Director, SelfMadeHero  
Debbie Hicks MBE, Creative Director, The Reading Agency  
Rachel Hill, Chief Executive, Association of Illustrators  
Stephen Holland, Comics Laureate & Owner, Page 45  
Kai Holmström, Dekko Comics  
Steven Ingram, Third Bear Press  
Nicola Jennings, cartoonist & Chair, The British Cartoonists' Association  
Rich Johnston, Editor, Bleeding Cool  
Helen Jones, Director, Yo Comics!

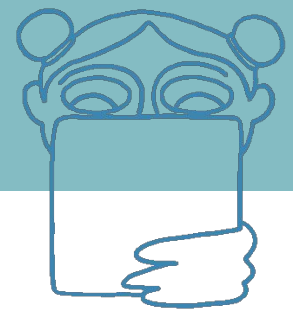


# SUPPORT FOR THE UK COMICS FUND

## The following organisations and individuals have added their support for this proposal

Phillip Jones, Editor, The Bookseller  
Rob Jones, comics writer/letterer  
Martha Julian, Festival Director, Thought Bubble  
Cat Laird, CHIP Collective  
Ashling Larkin, CHIP Collective  
Sarah Lambert, Head of Fiction, Bloomsbury Children's Books  
Imogen Mangle, illustrator  
Nina Mickwitz, Senior Lecturer, London College of Communication  
Hannah Miller, Director, Yo Comics!  
Ricky Miller, Publisher, Avery Hill Publishing  
Pete Morey, comics creator  
Professor Chris Murray, University of Dundee  
Kirsten Murray, Editor  
Gary Northfield, Publisher, Bog Eyed Books  
Lauren O'Farrell, Director, Yo Comics! & inQ! Queer Comic Fair  
Florence Okoye, FluxCon/AfroFlux  
Tom Oldham, Publisher, Breakdown Press  
Andy Oliver, Editor-in-Chief, Broken Frontier  
Josh Palmano, Publisher, Breakdown Press  
Corinne Pearlman, Creative Director, Myriad Editions & First Graphic Novel Prize  
Luke Pearson, comics creator  
Woodrow Phoenix, comics creator/designer  
Warren Pleece, graphic novelist  
Owen D. Pomery, graphic novelist & illustrator  
Gabi Putnoki, Graphic Novel Reading Room  
Paul B. Rainey, graphic novelist  
Molly Rosenberg, Director, Royal Society of Literature  
Kate Rosser-Frost, Head of Communications & Engagement, DACS  
Martin Rowson, cartoonist  
Roger Sabin, Professor of Popular Culture, Central Saint Martins  
Alison Sampson, comics artist  
Posy Simmonds, comics artist/graphic novelist  
Rachel Smith, comics creator  
Lisa Smosarski, Editorial Director, The Beano  
James Spackman, Literary Agent, The bks Agency  
Lizzy Stewart, author & illustrator  
Rossie Stone, Dekko Comics  
Dr Nicola Streeten, Director, LDComics  
Joe Sullivan, Director, The Cartoon Museum  
Lucy Sullivan, comics author & artist  
Leonard Sultana, An Englishman In San Diego & The Convention Collective  
Dr Emma Sutton, historian  
Brian Talbot FRSL, Hon. Litt. D, Hon DA, graphic novelist  
Dr Mary Talbot, comics writer  
Emma Vieceli, comics writer & artist  
Loesja Vigour, Collections Development Librarian, Wellcome Trust Collections  
Dr Ian Williams, comics creator & Director, Graphic Medicine International Collective

# APPENDIX



## ECONOMIC IMPACT MODELLING

This appendix provides a detailed cost-benefit analysis (CBA) for the proposed **UK Comics Fund**, using comparative data from successful UK cultural funding initiatives (eg the UK Games Fund and Arts Council England's National Lottery Grants) as well as international benchmarks from Canada and France.

The modelling outlines projected **job creation**, **publishing outputs**, and **revenue generation** resulting from a **£1.5 million annual investment**. Both conservative and optimistic scenarios are included to reflect potential variability in uptake and market performance.

### 1) Job creation modelling

The fund's tiered grant structure (InkSpark for early-stage development, StoryForge for production) is expected to directly support employment across the comics creation pipeline — from writers and illustrators to editors and designers. Indirect jobs will be created through spillover effects in printing, marketing, distribution, and retail.

Summary table: annual job creation estimates

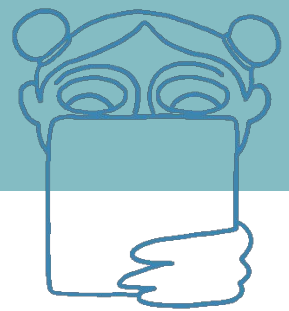
Grant type	Total funding	Number of grants	Grant amount (est.)	Direct jobs	Indirect jobs (1.65x multiplier)	Total jobs
<b>InkSpark</b> (early stage development)	£250K	40	£5,000 - £10,000	40	66	106
<b>StoryForge</b> (content production)	£750K	25	£30,000	75	123	198
<b>Total</b>	£1.0M	65	-	115	189	305

### Assumptions:

- Each InkSpark grant funds at least one creator
- Each StoryForge grant supports a team of three (eg writer, artist, editor)
- UK creative sector standard multiplier of 1.65 used for indirect job estimation (per ACE & DCMS reports)



# APPENDIX



## 2) Publishing output estimates

Based on the fund's available project budget (£1M allocated to grants) and average grant sizes from comparative schemes, we estimate the fund could support **60 – 100 new comics annually**.

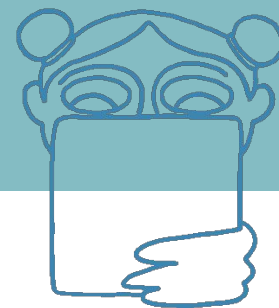
Publication volume scenarios

Estimate type	Projects funded	Basis
Upper bound	33 projects/year	£30,000 per project
Lower bound	200 projects/year	£5,000 per project
Likely range	60 - 100	Mix of grant sizes (comparable to ACE and UK Games Fund patterns)

### Comparators:

- ACE Project Grants fund 80 – 100+ projects annually within similar ranges (£5K – £20K).
- UK Games Fund supports 90 – 100 projects with £25K – £30K grants.
- Kickstarter (2023) showed 1,666 UK comics launched — demonstrating high creator demand and viability.

# APPENDIX



## 3) Revenue impact modelling

The fund is expected to generate between **£2.3M and £5M** in total economic return annually through direct sales, foreign rights, and licensing/merchandising.

Revenue projections by source

Revenue source	Low estimate (£M)	High estimate (£M)	Basis
Funded comics sales	£1.2M	2.8M	Avg. 5,000 - 7,000 units @ £10; 60 - 100 titles; 60% discounting for non-published baseline
Export & foreign rights	£0.5M	£1.0M	10 - 15 titles securing £50K - £100K in deals
Merchandising	£0.6M	£1.2M	Merch (£5K - £15K per title) + screen licensing (4-6 titles @ £100K-£200K)
Total revenue	<b>£2.3M</b>	£5.0M	-

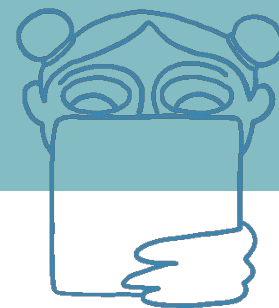
### Assumptions:

- Based on performance of international comparators (France, Canada)
- Only a portion of comics would reach high sales or adaptation potential
- Licensing deals benchmarked on modest indie adaptation rates, not Marvel-style scale

## 4) Return on Investment (ROI)

Using the total revenue projections above, the fund is projected to deliver a return of **£3 - £5 for every £1 invested**, placing it in line with — or above — the ROI range documented for UK cultural and creative sectors.

Investment	Estimated return	ROI RANGE
£1.5m	£2.3M - £5.0M	£3 - £5 PER £1



## 5) Five-year growth scenario (2026 - 2030)

If launched in 2026, and allowed to scale steadily with ecosystem and export support, the UK Comics Fund could reach the following targets:

Indicator	Year 1 (2026)	Year 5 (2030)
Economic returns	£2M - £3M	£5M - £7M
Jobs created annually	250 - 300	350 - 380
New comics published	60 - 80	350 - 380
Export rights growth	10%	25%

## 6) Risks and limitations

While the above projections are based on sector-appropriate comparators and conservative estimates, several structural risks may impact delivery:

- Lack of UK distribution infrastructure may limit domestic reach
- IP leakage to US or international publishers if UK creators are not supported to retain rights
- Uncertain adult readership data limits full market forecasting, though youth engagement is strong
- Competition from global markets, including Japanese manga and Franco-Belgian comics

These risks reinforce the need for a public funding mechanism to anchor the UK comics sector — and prevent further creative and commercial attrition.



# APPENDIX

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**Special Thank You to Adrija Dutta, Pro Bono Economics**  
[Pro Bono Economics](#)

