



CREATIVE FRAMEWORK

WARWICK DISTRICT
2025-2030

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INTRODUCING THE CREATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Creative Framework is a five-year strategy that aims to accelerate creative sector growth and maximise its impact across Warwick district through partnership and collaborative working. It provides a collective vision for our creative communities to unite around and outlines how they can shape and influence how the sector is defined in the future.

Developed following consultation with over 400 creative business and organisations (2019 and 2024), and informed by a creative sector impact study, the framework highlights how the sector already contributes to the identity and prosperity of the district and proposes new ways in which stakeholders might support our creative industries to continue to grow.

Warwick District Creative Framework 2025-2030 aims to build on and enhance the incredible work that has already taken place in the district over recent years, examples of which feature in this document.

Every creative person and organisation has a role to play in ensuring that the district reaches its immense potential - where the creative industries can flourish and thrive, ensuring that Warwick district continues to be a great place to live, work and visit.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

By 2030, Warwick district will have built on its growing reputation as a thriving creative cluster of national significance. It will be known for its distinctive blend of rich cultural heritage and cutting-edge creative companies.

Residents in our towns and rural communities will continue to feel pride in their local area and be inspired by shared cultural experiences, which celebrate the dynamic, innovative character of the district.

In five years' time, Warwick district will be experiencing increased positive economic and social benefits of existing and planned creative regeneration.

Our thriving, interconnected creative sector will continue to play a crucial role in the prosperity of the area and support the ambition of Warwick district being the first choice for people to live, work, and visit.

WHY NOW

Warwick district's creative sector is vibrant, varied, and fundamental to the economy of the region. It also supports the wellbeing and ambition of the district's residents. Our impressive cultural assets and events programmes, as well as the wide range of organisations based here, attract visitors to our towns and a strong creative infrastructure entices highly skilled people to relocate here to work.

It is home to a considerable number of creative organisations and has many of the necessary elements to become a world class creative cluster, yet this has only been pursued through a dedicated growth strategy in recent years.

A refreshed enthusiasm and momentum was building in the region's creative communities for several years prior to 2019, which was captured and presented in Warwick District Creative Framework 2020 – 2025.

The impact of the global pandemic (2020 – 2022) changed the trajectory of growth in the creative sector – as people and businesses adapted to the challenges it presented. However, the Creative Framework, which launched two months prior to emergence of COVID 19, provided a reminder of the strength, ambition, and collective vision of the sector and a focus for growth activity against the backdrop of an uncertain future.

The work towards devolution and double devolution, and recent change in both local (May 2024) and national (July 2024) political administration continues to create both opportunities and challenges. The Creative Framework, therefore, remains a valuable tool in distilling and articulating the value of Warwick district's creative sector.

“ The creative framework has been an invaluable tool that has helped us demonstrate to funders how their funded activity can plug in to and benefit the wider creative community. ”

Kate Livingston, Festival Director, Art in The Park

Street Art on Arlington Avenue, Leamington

DEFINING CREATIVITY

The Framework aims to include all creative industries as described by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's definition of creativity, from across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

“Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.”

These include:

- Crafts
- Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography
- Museums, Galleries and Libraries
- Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts
- Advertising and Marketing
- Architecture
- Design: Product, Graphic and Fashion
- IT, Software and Services (including game design)
- Publishing

The Warwickshire Pride Festival (2024)
Pump Room Gardens, Leamington
Image courtesy of Jo Lewis

STIMULATING CREATIVE SECTOR GROWTH

CREATIVE COMPACT

Warwick District Creative Compact was established by Warwick District Council's Arts Section following the launch of the Creative Framework in 2020. It provides strategic leadership and drives growth in the region's creative industries. It aims to unite local stakeholders with a passion for culture and creativity, fostering collaboration among representatives from various sectors such as creative industries, business, academia, local government, and the voluntary sector.

Key Achievements:

- **Workstreams:** Piloted nine workstreams, including the creation of the Coventry and Warwickshire Creative Freelancer Portal, exploring digital solutions like a 'what's on' portal, and activating cultural assets such as Leamington Town Hall. It also contributed to the cultural programming for Warwick district's role in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.
- **Funding Applications:** Submitted a £2.23 million application to ACE's Cultural Development Fund, focusing on projects like affordable workspaces, skill development, and outdoor performance spaces.
- **Programme Development:** Supported five Spark Symposiums (2020-2024), promoting knowledge exchange within the creative sector.
- **Representation:** The Compact had a presence in key regional boards and steering groups, such as the Coventry and Warwickshire Creative Health Alliance, West Midlands Combined Authority Culture Officers Group, and the West Midlands Compact+ Network, helping to shape the regional cultural and creative agenda.
- **Publications:** Launched the WD Catalyst Newsletter and WD Catalyst Podcasts to promote and inform the region's creative community.

The Compact has played a key role in advocating for public and private investment, fostering partnerships, and communicating effectively with stakeholders. Following a strategic review by BOP Consulting (2024), the decision has been made for the Compact to continue, focusing on ensuring its sustainability and furthering its positive impact on Warwick District's creative sector.

Ian Gathard, CEO of Leamington-based Cogent, on stage at Spark 2024, the creative sector symposium at the Royal Spa Centre.



“ Warwick District Creative Compact has provided the opportunity for a group of leaders from across our sector and beyond, to regularly come together to share knowledge and intelligence in a way that was never previously possible. ”

Drew Wilkins, Co-founder and Head of Educational Content at fish in a bottle



Warwick-based Mechanismo team operating their Crawly Bots

LEAMINGTON TRANSFORMATION BOARD (LTB)

The Leamington Transformation Board (LTB) is the key steering and decision preparation body for the Leamington Transformation Framework (LTF), with key decisions then subject to approval by the Council Cabinet's and Committee's. There are 11 members of LTB across all three levels of Local Authority with an Independent Chair and an Advisory Forum Convenor. The Leamington Transformation process is intended to be a long-term programme lasting beyond the political timeframes and so individual membership of the Board will change over time as new Members are elected which will keep the Board fresh and accountable.

CREATIVE QUARTER PROGRAMME BOARD (CQPB)

The Creative Quarter Programme Board (CQPB) is the key steering and decision preparation body for the Creative Quarter Partnership between Warwick District Council (WDC) and Complex Development Projects (CDP). The Board includes the WDC Arts & Economy Portfolio Holder with the WDC Chief Executive and Head of Place, Arts & Economy alongside CDP's Managing Director. The Board oversees the day-to-day implementation of key Creative Quarter projects (page 63) such as Spencer Yard and Stoneleigh Arms / Old School.

STRATEGIC THEMES

Five strategic themes emerged following sector-wide consultation and research in 2019 and again in 2024. These outline the district's priorities to ensure sector growth and provide the focus for Creative Framework activity.

They are:

- Engagement
- Voice
- Pathfinding
- Place making
- Innovation



Interactive Futures 2024 (page 60), at the Royal Spa Centre, Leamington. Image: Kris Walton

ENGAGEMENT

It is a priority to improve the quality of life for all residents of Warwick district by diversifying the variety of cultural experiences and artistic programmes; to increase opportunities for people to participate in, and be inspired by, high quality creative activity.



Key Actions

Support grass-roots, community-led cultural activity in hard to reach, high priority communities that delivers social and health and wellbeing outcomes.

Provide opportunities for residents to get involved, participate and create – particularly through volunteering schemes.

Encourage cultural organisations and venues based in the district to programme ambitious, high quality, inclusive events which are immersive and provide inspiring experiences that exceed expectation and provide escapism and enjoyment.

Promote the use of the contemporary arts and innovative digital tools to engage with the district's heritage and tell its stories.

Examples of Sector Achievements

- ▶ Arty-Folks support residents in Lillington CV32, a multi-faceted neighbourhood which is scoring the highest deprivation in South Warwickshire. Even though much has improved in recent years in this small suburb of Leamington, its negative reputation seems to be clinging on. Arty Folks are working with residents to develop an inclusive and exciting programme of creative activities that will ignite Lillington's community spirit and restore pride of place. UK Shared Prosperity Funding (2024) has enabled this work to continue.
- ▶ Motionhouse engages over 180 residents weekly through dance and movement classes for ages 1 to 60+ alongside targeted community projects. One example is the 'Care to Dance?' initiative, which brings life-enhancing physical activity and inspiring performances to local care home residents. Through weekly workshops and professional performances, the project promotes mobility, social interaction, and inclusivity, helping to reduce loneliness and isolation.

- ▶ Several festivals and outdoor events in the area (page 51) rely on local volunteers and provide volunteering opportunities throughout the year, ranging from programming to event management. Similarly, local theatres (page 33) are also reliant on the skill, knowledge and experience of volunteers to fulfil duties ranging from marketing and promotion to performing on stage.
- ▶ Hill Close Gardens' (page 52) volunteers regularly run drawing and flower arranging workshops throughout the year.
- ▶ The Loft Theatre Company (page 39) introduced a new scheme in 2024 to encourage young theatregoers to get the 'theatre habit' and offer 16-25 year olds free tickets to all Loft productions. The intent is to grow and encourage future audience.
- ▶ Kenilworth Castle (page 50) has an active team of volunteers who undertaking roles which support visitor experience, guided tours, gardens, administration, and general maintenance.
- ▶ An ACE funded 'Lights of Leamington' feasibility study engaged over 300 people / 70 stakeholders from community groups, commerce, local businesses, and individuals, which informed the development of 2 new festivals, launching in 2025.

- ▶ Warwick – A singing Town (page 41) engages over 1,600 children every week.
- ▶ The Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth, won the NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) West Midlands 'Best Drama' award in 2024 - for the 2023 world premiere production of 'Pride and Prejudice' written by theatre patron and BBC screenplay writer Andrew Davies.
- ▶ The Lord Leicester Hospital has created new historical interpretation throughout their site, with specific trails and activities for children.
- ▶ Around 100 local visual artists engage with their surroundings during WOS Plein Air, presented by Warwickshire Open Studios (page 47) to produce a 2D or 3D creative piece. Visitors can wander around to watch the art in action and discuss the pieces with the artists.
- ▶ During the period of the last Creative Framework (2020-24), Live & Local (page 37) supported 55 live performances, film screenings or online events chosen and organised by voluntary organisations in rural areas of Warwick District.
- ▶ Armonico Consort's (page 41) 'Memory Singers' engages 50 Warwick residents living with dementia and their carers in high quality singing each week.
- ▶ Kenilworth Castle (page 50) offers free education visits, with workshops for KS1–KS4, praised for high quality learning by the 2021 Sandford Award.

- ▶ Leamington-based Lucy Tomlins, who is an artist and founding director of the Pangaea Sculptors' Centre (page 49) based between Coventry, Warwickshire and London, was commissioned by Complex Development Projects (2023/4) to create innovative state-of-the-art sculptures that reflect the history of the town's camoufleurs and today's digital technology. They were created using five-axis milling machinery - state-of-the-art digital technology - and then painted by hand.
- ▶ In 2022, Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum (page 46), in collaboration with RiVR (page 34), developed a new People & Places self-guided digital tour. The trail uses augmented reality and smartphone technology to place objects and artworks from the collection into significant settings around town. At each stop an audio commentary tells you a little bit more about the person, place and object.

VOICE

It remains a priority to raise the district's national and regional profile as a high quality 'creative cluster' and articulate the offer locally to residents, visitors, investors and business - advocating how it contributes to health and wellbeing, society and the economy.



Key Actions

Create a fresh narrative that showcases, celebrates, and promotes the district's vibrant creative industries.

Champion the creative industries and promote their social, economic, and intrinsic benefits.

Coordinate marketing resources and collectively promote creative organisations, heritage and cultural assets, activities and events to consumers.

Better promote the district's offer as a cultural destination and develop new high quality tourism products.

Examples of Sector Achievements

▶ In 2023, Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum curated and presented the 'Silicon Spa: Video Games in Leamington' exhibition, which traced the history of the gaming industry in the town and the surrounding area and provided a glimpse into the working lives of games developers. Leamington is the centre of one of the oldest and largest clusters of video games companies in the UK and makes a significant impact on the global stage and employ some 3,000+ people. They work in all kinds of roles, from concept art to coding, and sound design to community engagement.

▶ In 2023, Motionhouse hosted auditions in Leamington Spa Town Hall for over 300 dancers from the UK, Europe, Australia, and Canada, solidifying Warwick District's place on the international dance map. In November 2024, 42% of participants in the company's three-day professional training course were from outside the UK, with half traveling from North America and the rest from Europe, enhancing the district's reputation as a cultural destination and boosting high-quality tourism offerings.

▶ Warwick District Council developed the annual Spark symposium (page 61) in 2020 for the area's creative community to come together to connect, collaborate, and celebrate the wealth of creative talent across its four towns. Over five years, Spark has engaged over 1,750 people with its topical presentations and panel discussions, professional development workshops, and artists commissions.

▶ Interactive Futures (page 60), the district's annual gaming expo, has welcomed over 5,000 attendees since its inception and engaged over 2,500 aspiring creatives. The programme included more than 200 different speakers, demoed more than 30 local indie titles, attracted international audiences, and welcomed five new studios into the local cluster.

▶ Thanks to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Warwick District Council commissioned Earthen Lamp (Page 64) to identify cultural and creative sector marketing and promotional need, and subsequently developed a programme of support to address this, which included six, free, professional development workshop, attended by 55 participants from 36 organisations, and a marketing and promotion toolkit.

▶ BID Leamington delivers a wide range of strategic and creative marketing and communications in the region, including websites, apps, and numerous digital media platforms, to showcase local organisations, news and events. The Team also fosters creative partnerships and offer support across private, public, and third sector, and provide leadership and support to neighbouring areas.

▶ Shakespeare's England (page 25) has delivered multiple profile – raising campaigns to promote the area's creative and cultural offer to local and international audiences. Recent online campaigns have included extensive work with social media influencers, both domestic and international. They regularly attend overseas trade shows, in partnership with visit Britain, and have recently represented Warwick district at the UAE, Spain, India, and North America.

▶ The Loft Theatre Company (page 39) collaborated with Mark Ellis to create a film to mark the Loft's Centenary and showcase the theatre and its work.

Ongoing Key Actions

▶ Create a new online 'portal' which displays content about creative people, businesses and opportunities as well as providing residents with information about events in their area so they might learn more about where they live.

PATHFINDING

It is a priority to improve co-ordination and awareness of opportunities by fostering a culture of collaboration and communication - and to support creative organisations to be sustainable and financially resilient and increase levels of inward investment. It is also a priority to attract and nurture exceptional talent and to become a place where creative practitioners are welcomed and supported to build sustainable careers.

Key Actions

Support efforts to draw more investment and funding into the area for creative projects.

Better promote the opportunities available to the district's creative sector.

Investigate the feasibility of developing a creative 'hub' in the district.

Support existing networking events (page 57) and facilitate new initiatives to bring together different parts of the cultural and creative industries to share ideas, expertise and build a common vision.

Work with universities to deepen their support for the creative sector in district and increase graduate retention in the area.

Examples of Sector Achievements

- ▶ In 2020, Warwick District Council secured £10 million from the Future High Street Fund to revitalise Leamington Spa town centre and high street, aiming to boost growth, enhance experiences, and ensure sustainability. Projects include upgrading key sites to support creative sector growth, such as the Leamington Town Hall Creative Hub (page 62), The United Reformed Church (page 62), Stoneleigh Arms (page 66), and have worked with Invest Warwickshire to promote these opportunities on a national and international scale.
- ▶ Local arts and heritage organisations, including but not limited to Armonico Consort (page 41), Motionhouse (page 36), and Art in the Park (page 55), attract significant funding from charitable trusts and foundations into the district to support their engagement activities across the district's schools and communities.
- ▶ In 2022, Warwick District Council secured £3.5 million from the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Over £400k of this funding was used to address the strategic themes in the Creative Framework via a programme of sector development initiatives, managed by WDC's Arts Section.

▶ WD Catalyst, a new creative sector newsletter and podcast was established in 2023, which aimed to celebrate and showcase the area's creative talent, as well as signpost the creative community to news and opportunities. WD Catalyst builds on the success of Warwick District Arts News, which is distributed as a monthly email and a Facebook group with 1,800 members.

▶ 1 Mill Street (2020) and the Fold (2023) are two important creative hubs (page 62), and two further hubs, at Leamington Town Hall and Stoneleigh Arms (page 66), are in development. Each hub has its own unique selling point and contributes to the area's creative ecosystem.

- ▶ Established in 2019, Leamington Creative Mornings ran 13 hugely popular network meetings over a two-year period. When the initiative wound-up in 2021, the demand for regular creative sector networking events was met by the creation of Ignite (page 57), the summer social for the area's creative community.
- ▶ PechaKucha Leamington (page 60) has hosted over 80 presentations at 16 events over the last 6 years and continues to present an engaging programme of speakers.
- ▶ In 2023, Warwick Arts and Culture Network was established by Warwick's Mayor, with the aim of bringing together the town's arts, heritage and creative organisations to explore collaborative ways of working and to raise the profile of the town's cultural assets. The group continues to meet.
- ▶ In 2024, a new Creative Mixers programme (page 57) of events was established by Cogent. It takes place once a month in the Fold (page 59), a new creative hub in the Creative Quarter (page 63).
- ▶ Warwick District Council has run Spark (page 61), the annual creative sector symposium, for the past five years.

- ▶ The University of Warwick's Creative Futures is a gateway between the University and the region's creative industries. They inspire, educate & incubate on campus and at 1 Mill Street (page 62), the co-working space in Leamington Spa - offering business advice, mentoring and networking to support the growth of creative ideas, enterprises and innovation.
- ▶ University of Warwick's Creative Futures team have supported 45 creative & digital start-ups through their incubator programme supporting them to secure £3,25m worth of investment, win 203 clients and create 45 new jobs. A total of 30 students have been matched with businesses on the programme or in the Mill Street community in internships and work placements.
- ▶ The Universities of Warwick and Coventry are supporting the local creative economy through their cultural and creative partnerships and through management of the cluster management organisation of the UKRI funded Immersive and Creative Industries Launchpad (CWX). They have specific ambitions to encourage more graduates to stay in Royal Leamington Spa and Coventry. They are also actively supporting growth in digital creative and cultural partnerships.



Johnathan Branson and Cory Barratt, recording the WD Catalyst Podcast in Leamington Town Hall (2024)

PLACEMAKING

It is a priority to incorporate culture and creativity into the way we design and use our public spaces and use the creative sector to revitalise and enhance our town centres and rural areas; to protect, preserve and grow our historic architecture, heritage, and cultural venues.



Live & Local 'baby BIG Top' at Cubbington.
Credit: Leamington Courier



Leamington Studio Artists' Art Room, Leamington town centre

Key Actions

Support the use of non-traditional settings and accessible outdoor spaces, maximising the use of public spaces for creative activities which bring communities together.

Celebrate and build upon the cultural activities and opportunities afforded by the creative sector in the rural hinterland of Warwick District - that bring communities together and make the district a great place to live, work and visit.

Develop a public arts policy which should act as a 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' document to guide the contribution made by new development schemes.

Celebrate and build upon the concentration of successful cultural and creative-tech industries based in Royal Leamington Spa but ensure that the benefits radiate outwards and impact across the wider district.

Investigate the feasibility of using 'meanwhile spaces', popup spaces in retail, shop-front venues in town centres as temporary spaces to showcase the work of creatives.

Harness the benefits of the creative sector for regeneration. Deliver the Leamington Creative Quarter to support existing and provide new creative spaces that nurture cross sector interaction.

Examples of Sector Achievements

▶ Multiple world-class piece of public art have been installed across Warwick District, thanks to Brink (page 48) and the Mural Festival, and Warwick District Council public art commissions, which supported Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (page 27).

▶ In 2024, Warwick District Council's Arts Section engaged heritage specialist, Earthen Lamp, to conduct research to better understand how heritage buildings and assets in Kenilworth, Leamington, Whitnash and Warwick can support the visitor economy and wider creative sector.

▶ The area has welcomed new festivals, like Pursuits (page 56), and free outdoor performances across its parks and green spaces.

▶ Warwickshire Open Studios (page 47) regularly present artist and their work as part of their Summer Arts Week programme, with representation in rural areas of the district, including Radford Semele and Offchurch.

▶ The district boasts a wealth of creative, leisure and wellbeing opportunities of all scales across its rural communities. Music, theatre, films, dance, crafts, and other leisure activities managed by voluntary organisations, parish councils and businesses in our country parks and houses, churches, village halls, pubs and clubs and the open countryside.

▶ During the period of the last Creative Framework, Live & Local (page 37) supported 55 live performances, film screenings or online events chosen and organised by voluntary organisations in rural areas of Warwick District. Along with three 'Big Picture' Festivals in Warwick.

▶ In 2023, Warwick District Council engaged University of Warwick MA in Creative and Media Enterprises Students to research public arts policy and make recommendations on how Warwick District should develop a policy going forward.

▶ Multiple 'creative hubs' have been established in the district over the past five years. 1 Mill Street (page 62), a community-focused workspace created specifically for the needs of start-ups and fast-growing small businesses, launched in 2020, and the Fold (page 62), a previously unused Grade II listed United Reformed Church, has been transformed into over 19,000 sq ft of open plan co-working areas and office space for award-winning independent marketing group Cogent. Furthermore, Warwick District Council is currently (2024) using UK Shared Prosperity Funding to turn Leamington Town Hall into a creative hub (page 43).

▶ In 2022, Leamington Studio Artists (page 46) took over an empty retail unit in the centre of Leamington and created the LSA Art Room. Each month, the LSA presents a themed exhibition and has an artist in residence.

▶ Warwickshire Towns Network brings together place practitioners to enable high streets to take positive action to enable Warwickshire to be the best it can be, sustainable now and for future generations.

▶ Since 2023, Leamington Spa Photographic Society (page 48) has displayed an exhibition in a vacant unit at the Royal Priors shopping centre, creating interest for visitors and repurposing empty premises. The aim is to maintain this on a semi-permanent basis while the space remains unused.

▶ Leamington Creative Quarter developments (page 66) continue to progress, with several underutilised buildings being transformed into new creative spaces, such as North Hall, The Fold (page 62), Stoneleigh Arms, and Old School.

▶ Warwickshire County Council secured funding to refurbish Holly Walk House, providing an additional 6000sqft of flexible office space in Leamington town centre.

INNOVATION

It is a priority to attract innovative companies to the area and encourage existing innovators to use their skills and knowledge to introduce new ways of thinking and address challenges within the sector; to tangibly connect the 'digital' strength of the district with cultural organisations to create original ways of engaging with creativity.

A photogrammetry image of Kenilworth Abbey.

Key Actions

Seek to increase the amount of cultural activity that is captured, created, produced, shared and archived through digital technologies and platforms, and support partnerships which will enable more people to access this activity.

Explore potential funding streams to support the growth in digital creative and cultural partnerships and commission new work from across different art forms, to develop programming and reach audiences.

Work with universities to deepen their support for the creative sector in the district.

Influence arts and cultural businesses to collaborate across the more commercially driven parts of the sector.

Explore how digital technology can transform delivery, experiences and business models of how culture is produced and experienced.

Encourage inward investment for innovation, entrepreneurial development and fundraising.

Examples of Sector Achievements

- ▶ Local virtual reality and augmented reality specialists, RIVR (page 34), have been working with St Mary's Church (Warwick), The Lord Leycster Hospital (page 51), and Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum (page 46), to help them use emerging technology to engage and deepen levels of engagement with audiences.
- ▶ WD Catalyst, a new creative sector podcast, was established in 2023 to celebrate and showcase the area's creative talent.

- ▶ Warwick District Council won two rounds of funding to support the creation and development of Warwick District Creative Compact (page 6).
- ▶ Warwick District Council and Warwick District Creative Compact have supported over 20 local organisations to secure funding from Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund, and others, to commission new work.
- ▶ The Lights of Leamington project (2021-2024), led by BID Leamington and Whittle Productions CIC, has attached funding from UKSPF, ACE and NHLF.

- ▶ University of Warwick Students from the MA in Creative and Media Enterprises delivered consultancy for three Warwick district-based creative organisations in 2023.
- ▶ A representative of Warwick district's creative sector has been appointed a Regional Fellow at the University of Warwick's Institute of Engagement. The role help WIE build and strengthen links into the region.
- ▶ Creative Futures worked to secure £400k worth of Research England funding for the GAIN (Games and Innovation Nexus) project, designed to support the games and creattech cluster. Focussed on knowledge exchange, collaborative R&D, the team have worked to fund creattech prototypes and products whilst creating a Creattech Network of 140 academics and researchers ready to support businesses on innovative projects with cutting-edge research and talent.

- ▶ Leamington-based Salt Creative Movement Agency, established by two ex-Motionhouse dancers in 2024, are collaborating with global brands like Harrods and international music stars.

- ▶ Kenilworth Town Council is collaborating with local tech company to recreate Kenilworth Abbey using augmented reality (2024).

- ▶ The Coventry and Warwickshire Immersive and Creative Industries Launchpad, a partnership between Innovate UK, Coventry City Council, Warwickshire County Council, and the West Midlands Combined Authority, has secured £7.5m in grant funding to support innovation and entrepreneurship.
- ▶ CWX (Coventry and Warwickshire Exchange) was established in June 2024 as an Innovate UK-funded cluster management organisation supporting the Coventry and Warwickshire Immersive and Creative Technologies Launchpad programme. Led by the University of Warwick, in partnership with Coventry University, over the next 2 years CWX will work with all local authorities including Warwick District Council.
- ▶ Common Story (page 33), Motionhouse (page 36), Mechanismo (page 34), and Pangaea Sculptors' Centre (page 49) won Innovate UK funding to help their businesses develop and commercialise new ideas.
- ▶ Coventry University and the University of Warwick, with Birmingham City University, the University of Birmingham, and Royal Shakespeare Company, have secured £6.75m (2025-2030) to boost the West Midlands' creative industries through R&D, business support, and skills development for creative tech SMEs.

THE BIG PICTURE: WARWICK DISTRICT

“ Warwick District is a vibrant tapestry of creativity where the arts, culture, and innovation converge. From historic heritage to cutting-edge digital design, our diverse creative sector is not just a driver of economic growth but a reflection of the unique spirit and talent that defines our community. ”

Councillor Ella Billiald, Portfolio Holder for Arts and Economy at Warwick District Council

“ The creative sector in Warwick District is a cornerstone of the community’s identity and future. By fostering innovation, supporting local talent, and cultivating strong partnerships, we can unlock the full potential of our creative industries, driving economic growth and cultural vibrancy for generations to come. ”

Stacy O’Connor, Digital Creative Industry & Inward Investment Specialist at Invest Warwickshire

“ Warwick district is bursting with creativity and talent! Local partnerships, like the Creative Compact, are hugely valuable as they enable richer relationships, deeper connections, more understanding, and greater resilience. When we act together, we all achieve more. ”

Stephanie Kerr, Executive Director, BID Leamington



POPULATION

Current population
148,500



In 2021, the area was home to around

3.7 PEOPLE PER FOOTBALL PITCH-SIZED PIECE OF LAND

compared with 3.5 in 2011. This area was among the lowest 45% for population density across English local authority areas at the last census.

Grew **7.9%** in 10 years (2011-2021), more than national average in England and Wales

Population will grow to
177,119
in **2029**



The age structure of the population largely reflects the national averages:



A large proportion live in the district's villages and rural areas.



Source:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

DEMOGRAPHIC

Largely affluent area
Well-educated demographic.



However, in contrast there are pockets of deprivation in Royal Leamington Spa and Warwick.

Deprivation linked to education and skills is an issue, with three areas ranked within the top 10-20% most nationally deprived, and a further three in the top 20-30%.

“ Royal Leamington Spa was ranked the best place to live in the Midlands as part of The Sunday Times' 2023 Best Places to Live in Britain list. ”

“ More adults in England reported attending an arts event in 2023/2024 than in the previous year, research from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has found. However, during the same period, the number of people who engaged with the arts every week in person dropped, as did the proportion of people who took part in creative activities at home. The findings from DCMS's latest Participation Survey for 2023/24 show that audience appetite for attending live experiences - including theatre, visual arts and live music - is rising. ”
Arts Professional

HOUSING

Average House prices in the area (£367,000) are higher than the national average (£288,000).



In 2024, the area has the second highest average house price in the West Midlands.

Local Plan* has allocated sites for
16,776
new homes



* To be reviewed through production of a joint South Warwickshire Local Plan, to be adopted in 2027

ARTS ATTENDANCE

Overall, Warwick District has similar levels of cultural engagement to the national average:

Theatre: 44%
estimated to have attended in the past year

Popular/rock concert: 38%
estimated to have attended in the past year

Plays: 35%
estimated to have attended in the past year

16% of the population of Warwick district are classified as typically 'hard to engage', who rarely engage in cultural activity - which is **2%** below the national average.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

THE UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom has an international reputation for innovative ideas, flair, talent and imagination which comes from the combination of our rich cultural heritage and cutting-edge creative companies. In recent years the creative industries have gained increasing attention from central government as their significance to the UK's wider economy became clearer during the last recession.

- In 2022, provisional estimates show that included DCMS sectors (excluding tourism due to data lags) contributed £169.4 billion to the UK economy. This was 7.7% of total UK GVA, compared to 7.2% in 2019.
- The economic contribution of the UK creative industries grew by 6.8 per cent in 2022 to reach £124.6bn, according to official UK government estimates
- The creative industries grew more than twice as fast in 2022 as the UK economy as a whole.
- IT, software and computer services' comprises the largest subsector component of the creative industries by GVA (£53.4bn in 2022). It is more than twice the size of the next largest subsector, 'Film, TV, video, radio and photography' which contributed £20.8bn in 2022.
- The largest contributions to the increase in creative Industries GVA from 2021 to 2022 were the 'IT, software and computer services' subsector, the 'Publishing' subsector and the 'Film, TV, video, radio and photography' subsector, which grew by 7.3 per cent, 10.1 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively. All segments of the creative industries grew their GVA from 2021 to 2022, apart from the crafts subsector, which fell by 6.8 per cent.
- The 'UK Trade in a Global Creative Economy' report (March 2024) shows that the UK's creative service exports continued to rise over the 2010 – 2021 period "despite the headwinds from Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic".

In July 2024, the Culture Secretary declared culture, media and sport sectors crucial to national growth mission. In her maiden speech, Lisa Nandy sets out vision for unlocking growth and opportunity in the UK's £170 billion culture, media and sport sectors, which supports four million jobs. This builds on Labour's Plan for the Creative Industries, which was launched in March 2024 at the Labour Creatives Conference. The conference featured 250 leaders across the creative industries to discuss how together, with a Labour government, it can strengthen and develop Britain's creative sectors as a lynchpin for future growth.

Warwick's Birmingham 2022
Commonwealth Games Festival Site.
Image: Julia Aratoon

COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL (WDC)

The creative sector remains hugely important in fulfilling Warwick District Council's economic and social goals. Multiple priorities in Warwick District Council's Corporate Strategy (2030) align with the Creative Framework. It articulates how 'further strengthening the creative and digital sector will support business growth and the local economy' and how the 'increase in visitors to Warwick District will support the tourism and hospitality sectors.'

Furthermore, Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick District Council's 'South Warwickshire Economic Strategy' (SWES) sets out how the local councils will work with local employers and educational institutions and link with outside agencies, including government, for the broader benefit of the 488 square miles that comprise the area of South Warwickshire. At its heart are three themes - **People, Productivity** and **Place**, which comprise the main pillars of the South Warwickshire local economy. The strategy also identifies five key opportunity sectors, which includes Digital Creative, which will not only drive economic growth but help to deliver on ambitious climate change targets.

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (WCC)

WCC are working with partners across the county to deliver Heritage & Culture Strategy, which aims to create the conditions to enable a thriving, innovative and creative heritage and culture sector. Areas of delivery to date have included: A new Warwickshire Waterways Strategy in partnership with the Canal and River Trust; Shout Out for the Arts! Youth-led programme of activity across the county, with a current focus in Nuneaton & Bedworth and Rugby; Ongoing delivery of the Coventry & Warwickshire Creative Health Alliance; and support for Warwickshire Festivals. WCC have also established an Economic Growth Strategy 2024 - 2034 for Warwickshire underpinned by key sector growth plan which includes Digital Creative & Tourism and a commitment to continuing specialist support and partnership development.

SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Shakespeare's England is the Destination Management Organisation for South Warwickshire and a leading visitor destination and brand in the UK. The marketing and promotion of the area ensures that it is front of mind for visitors choosing their next day visit, short break or longer holiday. The internationally significant home of William Shakespeare, including the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Royal Shakespeare Company, draws 4.9 million people to Stratford District every year. Warwick has high brand awareness in the West Midlands region (3rd behind Stratford and Birmingham) with Warwick Castle being an attraction with particularly high recognition.



COVENTRY

Since the adoption of the ten-year Coventry Cultural Strategy 2017-2027 the city has celebrated the successful bid to become the UK City of Culture 2021. This led to over £180m of investment into the cultural sector & city infrastructure, as well as allowed exploration of the links between arts and culture as key components of the wider creative ecology. Going forward, arts, culture and creativity remain key to the future development of the city, and the next steps will include a refresh of the 2017-2027 cultural strategy, as well the relaunch of the Coventry Cultural Compact – Culture Works.

Culture Works will have the shared responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the cultural strategy, informed by the wider Future Works Open Forum. As a Cultural Compact, Culture Works will provide joint leadership at strategic level in supporting & consolidating the creative and other sectors. The purpose is to bring a wide range of partners together to ensure that arts, culture and heritage can continue to play a central role in the future development of Coventry.

Coventry has a long history in being in the forefront of technology and innovation, entwined with creativity. Centuries of innovation and creative making have combined to give the city and environs a unique technology-driven edge, with sectors such as advanced automation co-existing with digital, design and creative technologies. Going forward the city wants to continue to enhance its position as a creative hotspot to ensure it can reap the benefits from its existing creative economy, as well as develop new opportunities. Coventry has existing strengths in gaming, mixed media, design and software consulting, all areas where there is potential to expand on and maximise opportunities especially around film and TV production.

BIRMINGHAM

The ongoing development of Birmingham's creative sector faces both challenges and opportunities as the city navigates its financial and cultural future. Despite financial strain, the council has secured funding from Enterprise Zone, Shared Prosperity Funding, and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Commonwealth Games Legacy Funding to sustain cultural projects in the short term. This includes funding for new Cultural Action Areas, Cultural Engagement Projects, The Birmingham Weekender Festival, and cultural placemaking efforts such as renewing cultural strategies.

In addition to the above, the council and Culture Central initiated a new cultural partnership for the city, Birmingham Cultural Compact. The partnership is represented by key stakeholders from across the city including Corporate Business, Higher Education, Health, Community and Voluntary Sectors. Its primary purpose is to set the Cultural agenda and advocate for the cultural sector's importance to the city's economy and recovery. The Compact's first action has been to commission and deliver a new ten-year Cultural Strategy for the city 2025-35.

Whilst the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Legacy Impact Fund (CGWLEF) has ended, the impact of its investment across the West Midlands continues to be recognised including the development of The West Midlands Cultural Infrastructure Map and in-depth research of the economic impact of culture yet to be published.

Looking forward, the city is aspiring to support the development of local communities and the cultural economy through the new Placed Based Strategy 'Single Settlement' funding to be devolved through the WMCA from UK Government.

In addition to new major developments such as the arrival of HS2 at Curzon Street and the proposed multi-billion-pound development of a new Stadium complex for Birmingham City Football Club, there are significant cultural developments underway such as the opening of the new BBC Birmingham HQ at Typhoo Wharf and the Digbeth Loc Film Studios adding to the recently developed Creative Cluster at The Bond. These will all accelerate the city's cultural identity and economic growth.

Cultural organisations such as The Hippodrome Theatre have announced the feasibility of exciting new initiatives like establishing a National Centre for Musical Theatre in the city. Major events coming to the city include The European Athletics Championships in 2026, the 'Invictus Games' 2027 and hosting Euro Football Championships at Villa Park in 2028. Other major cultural events have yet to be announced.

Sources: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/birmingham-2022-contributes-870-million-to-uk-economy> and Warwick District Council Economic Impact Report

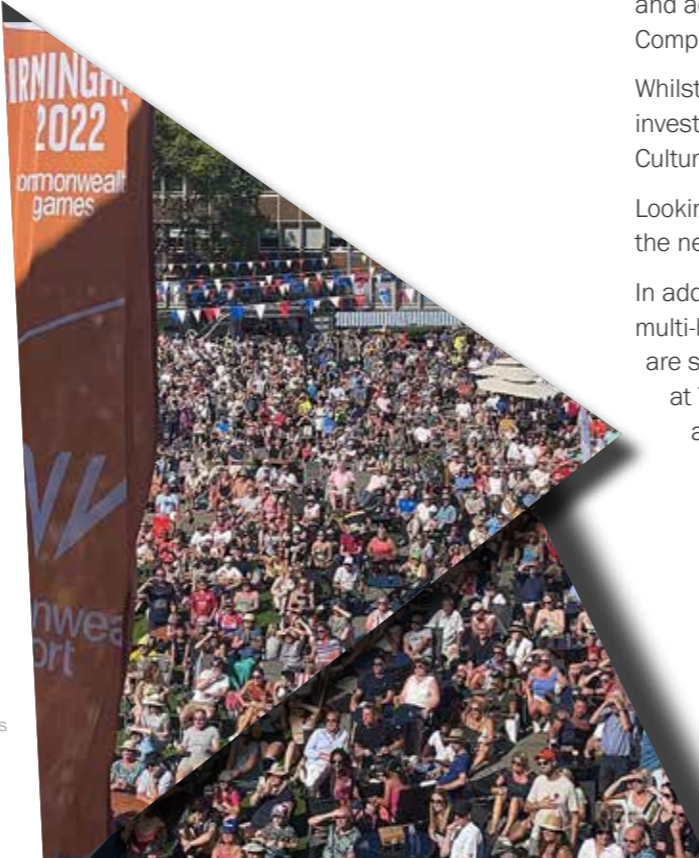
Sacey Bamfield and his Leamington Colour Palette, commissioned as part of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme in Warwick District.



Lawn Bowls and Para Lawn Bowls were held at Victoria Park, Leamington, during the Commonwealth Games. Getty Images on behalf of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games



Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Festival site in Warwick Town Centre. Image: Julia Aratoon



WEST MIDLANDS

WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY

Led by the Mayor of the West Midlands, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) brings together 18 local councils to oversee the transfer of powers and funding from Whitehall to the West Midlands. The WMCA is putting these new powers from government back where they belong, in local hands, bringing the region together to build a healthier, happier, better connected and more prosperous West Midlands.

WMCA's primary role around culture and creativity is as an enabler, champion, and influencer to support the cultural and creative sector to thrive in the West Midlands. WMCA work in close partnership with local authorities, government, arms-length bodies, universities, culture and creative industries sector partners, and regional and national bodies, to support culture and creativity across the region.

WMCA commission industry led sector body Create Central who bring together some of the region's most successful TV, film, games, and wider creative content business leaders. These leaders offer their time and experience to develop innovative approaches to turbo-charge the West Midlands creative content sector. Create Central was developed with national bodies to build on the region's existing creative and cultural talent and take it to the next level, helping to drive investment, growth and thousands of new jobs.

Warwick District Council is a non-constituent authority and has reduced voting rights but play a crucial role at board level, helping to inform policy and drive forwards the WMCA agenda.

WEST MIDLANDS CULTURAL COMPACT PLUS NETWORK

Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority. Cultural Compacts are a national initiative endorsed by the Department for Culture Media & Sport and supported by Arts Council England. The Compact Plus Network comprises of 13 compacts, including Warwick District Creative Compact (page 6).

HIGHER EDUCATION

UNIVERSITIES

Warwick District has very strong links to its two local universities with around 5,000 University of Warwick students living in Royal Leamington Spa. The University of Warwick is home to the largest multi platform Arts Centre outside of London and Coventry University is a leading provider of applied creative and cultural undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The Universities of Warwick and Coventry are supporting the local creative economy through their cultural and creative partnerships and through management of the cluster management organisation of the UKRI funded Immersive and Creative Industries Launchpad (CWX). They have specific ambitions to encourage more graduates to stay in Royal Leamington Spa and Coventry. They are also actively supporting growth in digital creative and cultural partnerships. The University of Warwick runs a creative incubator in Royal Leamington Spa, working in partnership with 1 Mill Street - a community focused workspace and venue in 'Old Town' created specifically for the needs of start-ups and fast-growing small businesses.

A Games Art student at Warwickshire College and University Centre

Coventry University has held the arts, design and creative practice, industry engagement and the university's contribution to the regional economy in its DNA from its inception in 1843. Warwick district continues to be recognised strongly as part of Coventry University Group's regional ecosystem and a site for cultural and creative partnerships through enterprise, learning and research. Through the College of Arts and Society, Coventry University continues to be a leading provider of applied creative undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Industrial Design, Film, Immersive Media, and Games - these often co-developed with local industry partners. Similarly, it has expanded its research in arts, culture and creativity with a fourth Research Centre for Creative Economies joining the Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities, Centre for Dance Research, and Centre for PostDigital Cultures. College and Research Centre staff continue to hold governance roles with Warwick district cultural organisations, support talent and skills development, jointly supervise doctoral students and undertake collaborative R&D. Such activity is combined with the provision of commercialisation and business support activities to support Warwick district's economic and social development as a thriving creative cluster.

COLLEGES

Warwickshire College and University Centre (WCUC) is based at Royal Leamington Spa College and offers degree courses that help students to enter the Creative Industry whilst completing a BA (Honours) and/or Foundation Degree qualification. The learning environment is set up as a co-working space with opportunities to collaborate with like-minded peers across different subject areas. Academic teaching frameworks are set within industry practice and include local, national and international connections who work with WCUC to provide a unique learning experience. WCUC proudly offers degrees in Games Art which are recognised by ScreenSkills, the industry-led skills body for the UK's screen-based industries.

in 2023, SAE established a new campus in the heart of Leamington's Creative Quarter. SAE bring their expertise and high-tech facilities to the Midlands. The site offers a totally new way of learning, alongside industry partners, to give students a true-to-life working environment, real-world training and the in-demand skills they need to work in creative media. Creative Courses include Audio Production, Content Creation and Online Marketing, Film Production, Game Design, Games Programming, Music Business, Visual Effects and Animation, and Web Development. The SAE Leamington campus sits alongside their industry partner – Cogent, who developed the Fold creative hub (page 62).

THE DISTRICTS CREATIVE ECONOMY

Warwick district's creative sector has much to celebrate; it has strengths in video game design, performing arts, design, visual arts and cultural festivals – all of which enhance quality of life and attract people to the area to live, work and visit. Royal Leamington Spa has a high concentration of creative firms and employment, especially the sub-sectors of design, the performing arts, advertising and software design. Royal Leamington Spa has a rich history of design and innovation – be it a leader in automotive design, abstract art or developing camouflage designs in World War II.

In March 2024, BOP Consulting were commissioned by Warwick District Council to update Creative Industries Data for the area. Headlines include:

- Over £600m of GVA to the District from the Creative Industries – with 86% of this comes from IT, Software and Computer Services.
- Creative Industries supports 830 businesses in Warwick District. Over half of these operate in IT, Software and Computer Services. This is the only creative sector in the district to contain medium-sized businesses (over 50 workers).
- An overall increase of 11% in Creative Industries employment between 2017 and 2022 – to over 8000 workers in 2022. Within this sector-wide increase, however, numerous sectors saw contractions in employment (Advertising and Marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Publishing; Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts). These falls may be linked to the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred during these years. The overall impact is to make IT, Software and Computer Services even more important to the Creative Industries employment of the District in 2022 than it was in 2017.

These Location Quotients in Creative Industries in Warwick District (2022) see strong clustering in IT, Software and Computer Services, as well as in Design – which has been driven by a 14% increase in employment in the District. This suggests that Design is an emerging sector of creative strength for the District.

DIGITAL CREATIVES

“ The sizeable and fast-paced video games industry in the West Midlands has the largest gaming and tech talent pools outside of London. Coventry and Warwickshire have a long gaming heritage, housing the longest-established games company in the country. ”

West Midlands Growth Company

The global video games industry is an economic and cultural success story:

Approximately 130 of the UK's 'best games businesses' are based in the Midlands – notably clustered in and around Royal Leamington Spa.

Royal Leamington Spa ranked 17th by NESTA in The Geography of Creativity in the UK (2016), higher than any other creative cluster in the Midlands.

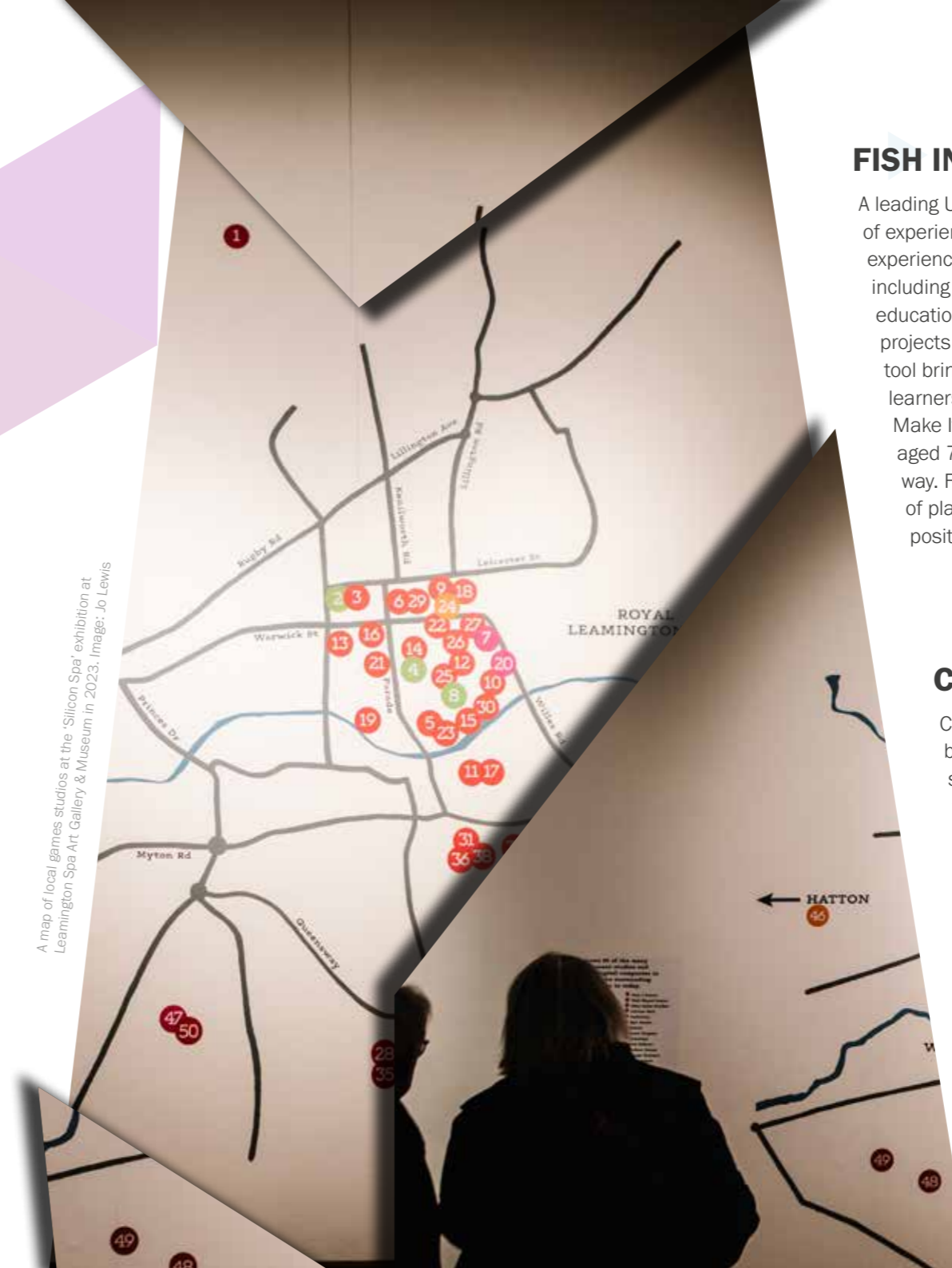
An established history in game development spanning 40 years, the local area can call upon a uniquely skilled talent pool drawn here by the presence of key industry names including EA Sports, Codemasters, Playground Games, SEGA and Ubisoft.

Over 3,000 employees across 60+ studios, Royal Leamington Spa has the largest games cluster in the UK outside of greater London, this equates to well over 10% of the total games development employment in the country.

Royal Leamington Spa town centre is home to a high concentration of world-class creative digital, marketing and communications agencies, producing work for the likes of Microsoft, Rolls-Royce and Disney along with media companies such as the BBC and Studio Canal.

120 design enterprises are based in the district.

A map of local games studios at the 'Silicon Spa' exhibition at Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum in 2023. Image: Jo Lewis



FISH IN A BOTTLE

A leading UK-based digital innovation studio with over 20 years of experience in crafting engaging games and interactive experiences. The studio collaborates with prominent clients, including the BBC, Microsoft, and Roblox, to develop educational and inspiring digital content. Its portfolio features projects such as BBC Bitesize: Atomic Labs, an interactive tool bringing science experiments to life for Key Stage 3 learners, and the Science Museum Group's Explore It, Make It!, a digital resource designed to encourage children aged 7-12 to engage with science in a fun and accessible way. Fish in a Bottle is dedicated to harnessing the power of play to create meaningful connections and make a positive impact.

COMMON STORY

Common Story is an independent production company based in Leamington Spa, specialising in factual storytelling across TV, video and radio. The company was co-founded in January 2020 by producers Beth Newell and Dom Sant. With a passion for storytelling across different platforms, they are exploring how emerging createch can enable them to tell local and global stories in fresh and innovative ways.

MECHANISMO

Warwick-based Mechanismo is a creative technology company who make tech to support artists and arts organisations with their various projects. Their work has seen them collaborate with universities and their students, and members of the community through Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games funding. Their latest funding from Innovate UK was part of their Creative Catalyst program, designed to help support businesses and talent in the creative industries. Mechanismo are using this opportunity to develop their musical robotic technology and develop performances in collaboration with local artists. Mechanismo's Crawly Bots can regularly be seen at local festival and events.

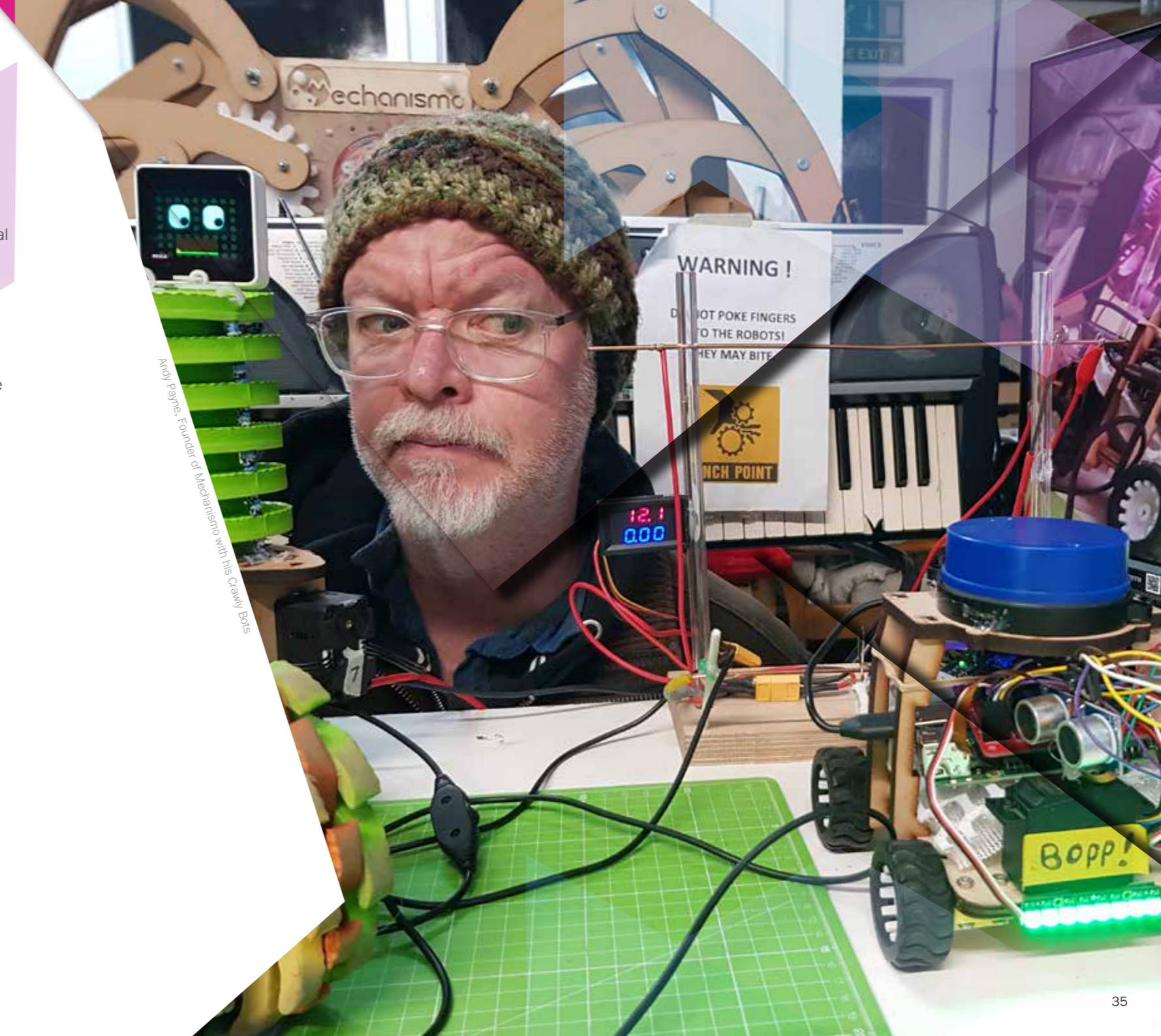
RIVR

Reality in Virtual Reality (RiVR) is a leading developer of immersive training solutions, specialising in the capture and creation of digital assets for 360° immersive video and lifelike, photorealistic, room-scale experiences. With unparalleled precision, the RiVR team can meticulously scan any real-world environment and transform it into a breathtakingly accurate digital replica, ideal for augmented and virtual simulations. This technology enables cutting-edge training and education to take place anywhere in the world, bringing real-world scenarios into the digital realm. RiVR empowers users to explore, interact with, and fully experience these recreated environments, revolutionising the way people learn, train, and engage with their surroundings.

PURPLE MONSTER

After the pandemic, Purple Monster transformed from a face-to-face events company into a 'virtual first' communications and engagement agency. Based in Warwick, they now use a fully equipped broadcast green screen studio to connect clients with audiences locally and globally through virtual, hybrid, and in-person events. Drawing on extensive experience in TV and performance, Purple Monster also offers tips and guidance to help clients improve their presentation skills for any event.

RiVR demonstrating how they are using VR to interpret and make accessible local historical assets at Hill Close Gardens



Andy Payne, Founder of Mechanismo with his Crawly Bots

PERFORMING ART

MOTIONHOUSE

Founded in Leamington Spa in 1988, Motionhouse creates and tours awe inspiring dance-circus productions across the UK and internationally. The company reaches approximately 120,000 people each year in theatres and at outdoor events with its world-class work. As well as touring the globe, Motionhouse offers fantastic cultural experiences for the local community, playing an important role in inspiring people to get involved in the arts – either by watching one of Motionhouse’s thrilling performances or by participating in its high-quality education and training programme. Regular classes, training days and holiday courses are delivered in Spencer Yard and Leamington Town Hall, where the company also develops its renowned touring work. Enhancing life in the community is a key mission, and Motionhouse is proud to deliver performances and workshops in local schools, helping children develop their creative potential, as well as in care homes and other community settings. Co-Founder and Artistic Director Kevin Finnan MBE is known for his distinctive highly physical style and his use of digital technology in his work. He was Choreographer and Movement Director of the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Motionhouse is supported by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation and is a WDC Creative Partner and a Birmingham Hippodrome Associate Company.

“ We believe in the power of great art to change lives and are proud to work in a district that values creativity. ”

Louise Richards, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Motionhouse

“ Live & Local helps our community breathe! ”
Voluntary Community Promoter for Live & Local

PLAYBOX THEATRE

Founded by Mary King in 1986, Playbox Theatre is one of the UK’s leading arts organisations, offering dynamic opportunities for young people aged 3 to 20. From humble beginnings, it has grown into a pioneering company with a purpose-built home, The Dream Factory, in Warwick—a vibrant hub for creativity, ambition, and performance.

Playbox Theatre was founded on a vision to provide a space where young people could explore their creativity, gain confidence, and experience the transformative power of the arts. This mission came to life in 1999 with the opening of The Dream Factory, Europe’s first theatre designed specifically to nurture young talent. Here, members develop skills in acting, stagecraft, dance, music, and film.

Playbox’s influence extends globally, with members participating in international collaborations, exchanges, and performances across the UK, USA, and Japan. Over its 38-year history, Playbox has worked with thousands of young people, many of whom have achieved success in diverse fields, carrying forward the confidence and creativity they developed.

Proudly partnered with Warwick District Council, Clean Planet Energy, Santa Monica Playhouse (Los Angeles), and Model Language Studio (Tokyo), Playbox Theatre continues to shape compassionate, engaged individuals through transformative arts experiences.

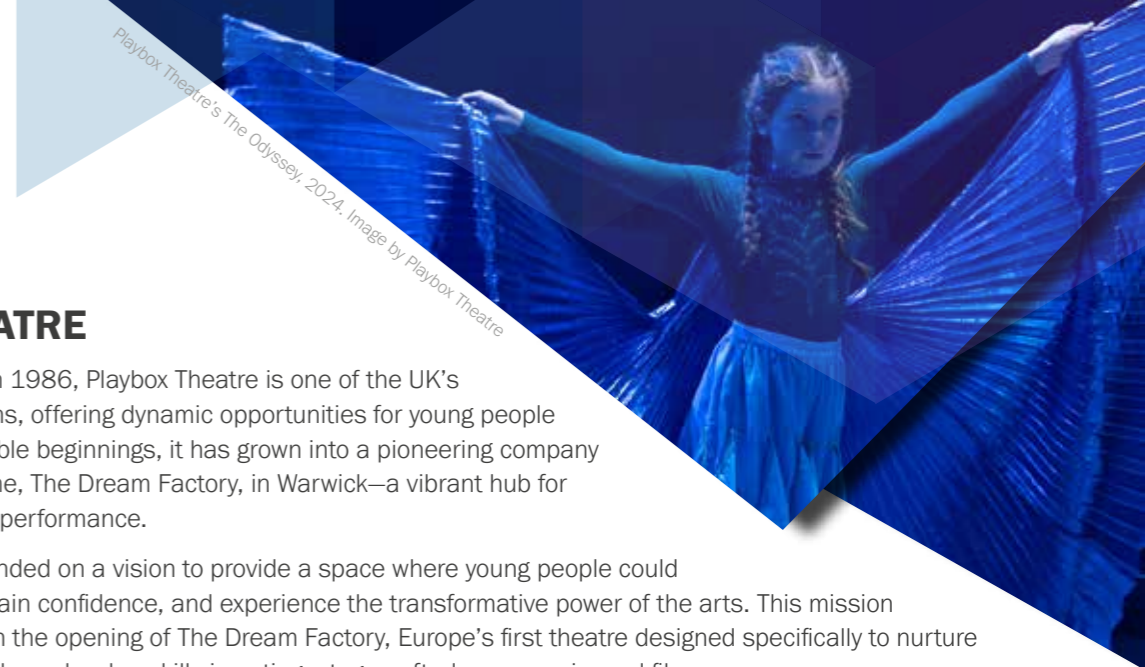
LIVE & LOCAL

A Warwick-based, not-for-profit, Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, working with a network of voluntary groups across Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. They provide practical support and advice by helping voluntary organisations to choose professional live shows, film screenings and other participatory arts activities for rural communities, through co-ordinating the bookings, subsidising events and helping them to attract an audience.

Since the launch of the Creative Framework Live & Local has been retained in the National Portfolio with a significant funding increase. The additional investment is for a new initiative to work in five market towns in levelling up areas across the east and west midlands, inviting people living and working in these communities to work in partnership to bring arts of all kinds to their local area. It is a new way of working for the company, focussing in depth and breadth across larger communities and in consequence Live & Local has grown its team by some 40% in the last year.



Motionhouse's Gravity at Art in the Park Leamington, 2023. Image by Motionhouse



Playbox Theatre's The Odyssey, 2024. Image by Playbox Theatre

Macbeth, William Shakespeare (2023) at the Loft Theatre Company. Image: Richard Smith Photography



THE LOFT THEATRE COMPANY

The Loft is an independent, non-professional theatre company, occupying its own architect designed theatre building, with an outstanding reputation nationally for the professional quality of its productions. It has been producing live theatre in Royal Leamington Spa since 1922, celebrating its Centenary in 2022. It is organised and structured along the lines of a professional theatre. The Loft produces nine shows a year in its main house 200 seat auditorium and a smaller number in the 50 seat studio theatre. It has a strong commitment to classic and contemporary plays, musicals and also to new work, regularly staging world premieres, new translations/adaptations and newly devised pieces. All of these are Loft Theatre productions, sourced entirely from within the company. The Loft has also hosted youth theatre companies for over 50 years. The theatre is run almost entirely by volunteers, receives no regular funding from any external source, supporting itself almost entirely through ticket sales, which continue to increase.

TALISMAN THEATRE AND ARTS CENTRE

The Talisman Theatre Company, Kenilworth, was founded in 1942 as a nonprofessional amateur company. In 1969 they moved from what is now Talisman Square to their present premises in Barrow Road. Their theatre seats 158 people, the foyer and bar hold regular community social events, and there's a studio for rehearsals and small-scale productions. Since 2022 the theatre launched monthly Fringe events which have gone from strength to strength. The theatre also hosts regular cinema screenings throughout the year. The theatre is run by a dedicated team of volunteers. The company includes and welcomes a diverse range of actors, directors, designers, technicians, backstage and front of house volunteers. They also have a vibrant youth theatre. 2023 saw the completion of Phase 1 of the theatre's development programme, with a newly extended foyer and bar area being completed, making the perfect welcome for an evening out at the theatre.

PRIORY THEATRE

A community-run theatre in Kenilworth, opened in 1946, that typically produces nine in-house shows a year. Their Youth Theatre offers younger members of the community a chance to develop their acting skills and build confidence. For over 25 years, the Priory Theatre has helped local charities and organisations use their facilities to raise funds.

The Talisman Theatre team with their NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) West Midlands 'Best Drama' award (2024) - for the 2023 world premiere production of 'Pride and Prejudice' written by theatre patron and BBC screenplay writer Andrew Davies



THE ROYAL SPA CENTRE

The Royal Spa Centre is the districts only professional theatre, run by Warwick District Council's Arts Section. As a medium sized receiving house, the Arts Section delivers a programme of theatre, drama, comedy, film, and community events in a 667-seat main house and 188-seat studio theatre and cinema.

BRIDGE HOUSE THEATRE (WARWICK SCHOOL)

Opened by Dame Judi Dench in 2000, the theatre has grown into one of the area's most popular venues. A mid-scale venue of 304 seats - it's beautiful interior of wood and brick creates an attractive and intimate space for performance. Their audiences enjoy a wide-ranging repertoire of professional productions, presented alongside local community events and stunning performances from the students of Warwick School and partner schools.

HEARTBREAK PRODUCTIONS

Heartbreak has been touring Open-Air Theatre across the UK and Ireland since 1991 from their base in Spencer Yard, Royal Leamington Spa. They create unique events with stories at their heart, inviting audiences into the world of the performance through collaboration with actors, designers, composers and crew. Heartbreak encourages audience interaction throughout their shows, bringing them into the centre of the action. In response to the pandemic, Heartbreak began exploring digital performance opportunities and are very proud to have won the Leamington Business Pivot Award in 2020 for their efforts in diversifying their usual Open-Air offerings. They created online concerts, ran a nationwide competition aimed at engaging young people in "Tell My Story" and produced 'Tinsel in my Pants', an original online pantomime for adults. Heartbreak continued exploring the connection between the live and the digital when COVID restrictions lifted, creating an Open-Air tour of Twelve Nights (Twelfth Night meets Love Island) which incorporated digital technology alongside live performance. Most recently, Heartbreak has taken the drama indoors, utilising non-traditional theatre spaces. Heartbreak's latest collaboration with Warwickshire Libraries makes use of avatars, face-filters and even nods to the future by using an AI powered virtual assistant to enhance the drama. 'Body in the Library' is a brand-new mad cap murder mystery for adult audiences which tours to libraries in Warwickshire in 2024.

THE WARWICK DISTRICT MUSIC PROMOTERS' FORUM

The Warwick District Music Promoters Forum was established in 1995 with the first issue of the Music To Your Ears diary being produced in 1996.. The Forum now has over 100 members representing choirs, orchestras, performers, promoters and festivals, reflecting the richness of the local music scene.

The Forum now produces the Music to Your Ears diary both in printed form and on the MTYE website at www.musictoyourears.org.uk. It lists details of up to a hundred concerts per issue and is produced three times a year. It is much valued by both the public and music societies. The Forum also operates an anti-clash diary to help organizations plan their concert dates reducing the risk of clashes of both programmes and venues.

LEAMINGTON MUSIC

Leamington Music, launched in 2006, provides a varied programme of concerts bringing in musicians of international standing, mostly chamber music with an emphasis on string quartets in Royal Leamington Spa, while Warwick is nationally acknowledged for promoting early music. The winter season has some twenty concerts each year with some groups brought in specially for their flourishing Education Programme, which with Warwickshire Music Hub support takes them into schools across the county. With its flagship Leamington Music Festival in May, Leamington Music plays to an audience of some 5,500 in the year and some 4,500 children benefit from the visits to schools.

LEAMINGTON AND WARWICK MUSICAL SOCIETY

Entertaining audiences since its beginning in 1921 has always been at the core of Leamington and Warwick Musical Society. Within local venues and with local performers, audiences have continued to be presented with professional-level amateur shows; an attribute that can only have contributed to their remarkable success across more than 100 years.

ARMONICO CONSORT

Founded in 2001 by Christopher Monks, Armonico Consort is a critically acclaimed choir, period instrument ensemble and music charity based in Warwick. It is especially known for innovative concerts of choral masterpieces including Supersize Polyphony – large-scale works performed surrounding the audience – rarely heard gems and new musical discoveries from the Renaissance and Baroque period. Armonico Consort has become the world's leading authority on the choral works of Francesco Scarlatti, described by *le Figaro* as “the classical music find of the century”. Through its education programme AC Academy, Armonico creates choirs in schools and trains teachers as choir leaders. Meanwhile, its Communities programme encompasses singing sessions in care homes and its first community choir, Warwick Memory Singers, for people living with dementia.

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN

Orchestra of the Swan, under the Artistic Direction of David Le Page, strives to captivate audiences through a blend of experimentation with both classical and non-classical music, embracing their role as storytellers. Their commitment to being distinctive drives them to push creative boundaries, offering performances that are both innovative and unique. They work with outstanding collaborators and international soloists, focussing on melding their unique orchestral sound with folk, jazz and world music, making ‘orchestral’ music more accessible to a wider audience whilst celebrating the art of storytelling with fabulous world-class narrators. To mitigate the appalling state of music education in our regional state schools, The Swan have set up a Swan Youth Orchestra, delivered an extensive programme of over 300 annual workshops within the regional community, released 32 albums, been in the Top 40 Classical Charts for their last 5 cross-genre albums, were nominated for a Grammy award in 2022, and enjoy a 14 million global audio streaming audience.

WARWICK A SINGING TOWN

Warwick - A Singing Town started in September 2021 as a unique three-year community singing project. Three years later and the journey has been fantastic - but the really good news is that the journey is going to continue! The generous funding from King Henry VIII Endowed Trust is guaranteed and thier health strand is set to develop enormously due the exciting new funding from the charity of Thomas Oken and Nicholas Eyffler. The wonderful benefits of singing are spreading and their second Singing Town programme in Bedworth is well under way, again due to additional new funding from the Nicholas Chamberlaine Trust in Bedworth.

MUSIC VENUES AND RECEIVING HOUSES

Several large venues present music programmes throughout the year. The district also benefits from a range of smaller more intimate spaces, including cafes, bars and pubs – where the local music scene also flourishes. Examples of music venues include:

WARWICK HALL (WARWICK SCHOOL)

Opened in September 2016, replacing The Guy Nelson Hall, Warwick Hall provides a first-class space for a wide range of events. The auditorium seats up to 1000, with enhanced acoustics and audience comfort derived from a flexible telescopic raked seating system and permanent balcony. Two new drama/dance studios offer smaller venues for performances and workshops.

ASSEMBLY LEAMINGTON

Built in 1926 the Assembly is a stunning, art-deco, multi-function venue in the heart of Leamington Spa. With its phenomenal stage and unparalleled site lines, Assembly Leamington offers a truly perfect setting for large scale events, live music, television recordings, private parties and special art events. With a longstanding live music heritage, it is particularly well set up for loading access with a vast backstage area and access to various dressing rooms.

THE ROYAL SPA CENTRE

The Royal Spa Centre is the districts only professional theatre. As a medium sized receiving house, we deliver a programme of theatre, drama, comedy, film, and community events in a 667-seat main house and 188-seat studio theatre and cinema. It has an annual footfall of 95,000.

THE ROYAL PUMP ROOMS (ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA)

The Grade II listed Royal Pump Rooms is owned and managed by Warwick District Council' Arts Section. Opened in 1814, it was the grandest of Leamington's spa buildings and remained in operation providing swimming and water treatments until the 1990s, when it was converted into a cultural facility for the town. This popular cultural and tourist attraction is home to Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum, Leamington Library, a café, and various event spaces.

LEAMINGTON TOWN HALL

Built in 1884 from John Cundall's designs, Leamington Spa Town Hall is a striking landmark on the bustling Parade, one of the district's most vibrant streets. Its distinctive pinkish-red brick, sandstone ashlar accents, intricate fish-scaled Welsh slate roof, and towering 44-metre clock tower make this Grade II listed building a cherished icon of the area.

Owned and operated by Warwick District Council (WDC), the Town Hall hosts a mix of hireable spaces and leased offices. The Assembly Hall is home to internationally acclaimed dance-circus company, Motionhouse (page 36). Here, they craft their world-class touring productions and run an array of community-focused classes, open rehearsals, and training projects, cementing the Town Hall's status as a national dance training centre.

The building also houses Leamington Music (page 40), Leamington Town Council, and key WDC corporate services. Its spaces include the historic Council Chamber (seating 80) and four versatile meeting rooms.

Excitingly, Leamington Spa Town Hall is now embarking on the first stage of a transformative development, poised to enhance its role as a cultural and civic hub.

Ignite 2024 at the Royal Pump Rooms. Image by Jo Lewis

The Royal Pump Rooms. Image courtesy of Mark Godfrey, ARPS, Leamington Spa Photographic Society.

WARWICK CASTLE

Warwick Castle hosts a variety of concerts and other music events across its outdoor spaces, which can accommodate audiences of 100 to 15,000 people. Chaka Khan, The Darkness, JLS, Craig David, Mika, and McFly have all recently performed, and the castle has also presented The Music of Zimmer vs Williams, Ministry of Sound Classical, and Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds.

TEMPERANCE

By day, a café and art gallery – by night, a bar and live music venue. Temperance is the beating heart of Old Town – a magnificent Grade II listed building, centrally located between the station and the Parade, repurposed for modern Leamington. Most nights from 7pm they hold events, from live blues and folk music to National Theatre and live comedy. Their high-tech rooms (kitted out with a professional PA and cinema screen) are also available to hire for private parties and corporate and charity events.

“ Leamington Spa is a live music hub, with venues like The Assembly, Temperance, and the Royal Spa Centre hosting a range of acts. Warwick's pubs, including The Four Penny and Blue Note Bar, feature tribute bands and major performers. Kenilworth and Whitnash also host local music at spots like The Kenilworth Centre and Whitnash Sports & Social Club. With events like the Warwick Folk Festival and regular touring acts, the area offers something for every music lover. ”

Paul Roberts, Arts Manager, Warwick District Council

Temperance, Art and Music Café Bar in Leamington. Photo courtesy of Johnathan Branson

VISUAL ARTS

The district has a strong and vibrant visual arts scene. Many of the area's artists are active members of support networks, groups and organisations, and a wealth of art galleries, both public and commercial, exist in our towns. Examples include:

LEAMINGTON SPA ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum cares for Warwick District Councils collection of over 14,000 artworks and historical artefacts. Collections include fine and decorative arts; local and social history; world cultures; coins and medals and archaeology. The art gallery and museum occupy the original swimming pool and Turkish bath suite. These spaces are complemented by Haddie's Gallery for families and a purpose-built temporary exhibition gallery. The permanent displays are supplemented by a programme of three large scale temporary exhibitions, nine smaller displays and approximately 100 engagement activities per year. The building has an annual footfall of 150,000 of which visit the gallery.

LEAMINGTON STUDIO ARTISTS

Leamington Studio Artists' (LSA) mission is to celebrate and promote bold striking diverse visual art. By challenging perspectives, sparking dialogue, and igniting imaginations, they aim to enrich the lives of the local community and beyond. LSA has cultivated a vibrant artistic community, uniting over 600 artists and supporters. The LSA is operated as an entirely volunteer-run organisation, leveraging a dedicated network of individuals who generously contribute their time and expertise. They welcomed over thirty thousand visitors to their East Lodge Gallery and The Art Room in one year. LSA embraces artists at all stages of their careers, fostering a welcoming and inclusive community. Our commitment to making art accessible to everyone is reflected in our diverse exhibitions and programmes.



“ Leamington Studio Artists (LSA) wholeheartedly supports the Creative Framework. Its comprehensive approach aligns seamlessly with our mission to foster a vibrant visual arts community. By championing public education, interest, and appreciation, the framework provides a strong foundation for our work. ”

Mike Patrick Chair Leamington Studio Artists

WARWICKSHIRE OPEN STUDIOS

Since 2000, Warwickshire Open Studios (WOS) has gained an outstanding reputation for helping visual artists and designer makers across the Warwickshire and Coventry area connect with art lovers who enjoy, buy, commission and participate in their work. During their 16-day Summer Art Weeks, their aim is to make art accessible for all – therefore welcome artists of all ages / abilities / mediums and encourage a diversity of venues. They also offer a bursary scheme to support artists early in their creative journeys to get involved.

WOS started life as the Arts and Heritage Week and was developed by the County Arts Service. In 2023 they became a CIC and is a self-funded organisation, run entirely by volunteers who are all artists themselves or art enthusiasts. Since its formation, over 1800 different creatives, many of which are based in the Warwick District, have had the opportunity to present their work to the art-loving public of the region.

KENILWORTH ARTISTS ASSOCIATION

A collective of artists in Kenilworth who create a variety of work, including ceramics, glass, painting, prints, cards, textiles, and calligraphy.

THE ATTIC

Based in Smith Street, Leamington Spa, the Attic provides an incubator space for creatives. Colleague skills and activities range from fine arts to ceramic art, furniture repurposing, and model making. The creative environment supports individual creativity and encourages collaborative conversation. The Attic shares desk space with the project team for a community garden initiative and the Leamington High-Line aerial garden and walkway.



LEAMINGTONS SPA PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Leamington Spa Photographic Society (LSPS) is a photography club based in Leamington Spa, but with members from throughout the area. Established in 1887 as the Leamington Amateur Photographic Society, it is now the fourth largest photographic society in the Midlands. Its members range from beginners to those with Royal Photographic Society distinctions who are always happy to pass on their expertise. In addition to hosting a number of expert speakers throughout the year and staging a regular series of competitions, LSPS has several special interest groups catering for specific genres and interests ranging from abstract and nature photography to portraiture, landscapes and street photography. It stages exhibitions at All Saints parish church in Leamington, which are free to the public, as well as working with other local cultural and artistic groups, including Leamington Studio Artists and the Leamington History Group.

MERCIA MURALS

Mercia Murals is the parent company of Leamington Mural Festival (page 57). Established in 2023, it aims to explore new creative opportunities in the region, including Kenilworth Public Art Trail. Mercia Murals has been established by Tim Robottom of Brink Contemporary Arts and Barnabas Luxmoore of Jabberwocky street food company. Tim has an impressive portfolio of street art commissions, spanning over 15 years. He has been responsible for bringing some of Leamington's most iconic pieces of work to the streets of Old Town. His work also features on many private businesses in the area, most notably the Birmingham International Railway Station and Royal Pug Pub, and schools, including Milverton School, Clapham Terrace, and Shrubland Street. Tim's work has gained regional and national attention in the press, including the BBC. Barnabas, who looks after business development and day to day management of Mercia Murals, recently won funding for Brink to run artwork development workshops with Shrubland Street Primary School and to install an impressive 33-metre-long mural in Leamington.

Hitchman's Abbotetum - mural by Mercia Murals, on Tachbrook Street, Leamington.

PANGAEA SCULPTORS' CENTRE

All about sculpture. From idea to installation, Pangaea Sculptors' Centre offers a 360° sculpture service. Pangaea Sculptors' Centre offers a complete sculpture service, from concept to installation, across Coventry, Warwickshire, and London. Their art advisory refines ideas technically and conceptually, while their fabrication team manages design, production, and installation using diverse techniques, from digital sculpting and 3D scanning to traditional carving and mould-making. Post-installation, Pangaea supports projects with community engagement and educational programming to broaden participation and impact. Committed to accessibility and diversity in contemporary art, Pangaea develops public art programmes and commissions through research and collaboration with artists, creatives, and communities. They also provide sculpture courses for all ages, including technical training for professionals. Their "Adventures in Material and Space" programme introduces children aged 6-11 to sculpture and creative thinking through hands-on workshops run in half-term and holidays from Warwick Prep. From bespoke sculptures to community-focused programmes, Pangaea delivers exceptional results while expanding understanding and engagement with the artform.

Sculpture and the Body Children's Sculpture Course (2024), Pangaea Sculptors' Centre, Warwick



HERITAGE

Visiting heritage sites and castles is by far the main reason for visiting Warwickshire. Some examples of heritage sites include:

WARWICK CASTLE

Warwick Castle proudly stands as Britain's Ultimate Historical Experience, providing an extraordinary experience for each and every guest. Across the year, visitors can be amazed by a range of stunning shows, from spectacular live jousting, the UK's largest Birds of Prey Show, and fantastic events including the spooktacular Halloween and enchanting Christmas at the Castle. Those looking to extend their experience can enjoy a stay at the Knight's Village in a cosy Woodland Lodge, Glamping Tent, or the brand-new Warwick Castle Hotel. Centrally located in the Midlands, Warwick Castle is easily accessible. Located just off Junction 16 of the M40, Warwick Castle is just 1 hour 40 from London by car – or just 86 minutes from London Marylebone by direct train.

KENILWORTH CASTLE

Nestled in the charming town of Kenilworth, Kenilworth Castle has long been a must-visit attraction in Warwickshire. Once one of the county's most formidable medieval fortresses, the castle was transformed into a magnificent Elizabethan palace by Robert Dudley in an ambitious effort to impress Queen Elizabeth I.

Today, visitors can delve into the castle's rich history, uncovering tales of epic sieges and royal scandals. They can also explore the stunning gardens and enjoy breathtaking views from the Tudor towers. Throughout the year, the castle hosts a variety of exciting events, from thrilling displays of knights testing their strength and skill in battle to family-friendly quests and falconry demonstrations. Kenilworth Castle promises an unforgettable day out in Warwickshire.

NATIONAL TRUST

The area surrounding the district is home to several notable National Trust properties, including Baddesley Clinton, Charlecut Park, Coughton Court, and Packwood House.

Image courtesy of English Heritage.

STONELEIGH ABBEY AND COUNTRY PARK

Inhabited since 1154 when King Henry II granted the lands to a community of Cistercian monks, Stoneleigh Abbey is a beautiful Stately home set in stunning Warwickshire parkland. It caters for special events and weddings and welcomes over 25,000 visitors throughout the year.

LORD LEYCESTER HOSPITAL

At the top of the list of most important authentic medieval buildings in Britain, the Lord Leicester is beautiful and evocative of the middle-ages. As an enduring community of 700 years, for the last 450 years it has been home to the Master and Brethren who live within the half-timbered buildings. Visitors can experience the Guildhall, the medieval wall of Warwick, the Brethren's communal living rooms, chapel, the Masters House, and the 500-year-old gardens. Recently restored and improved from a Lottery grant this site has seen significant improvement in foot fall over the past year with laudable comments from heritage visitors. A new Gift shop, ticket office and café in the Great Hall add to the fascinating and unique experience of this precious heritage site.

Local people, passionate about the heritage of the district, have formed groups to protect its character and promote the towns historical assets; the Leamington Society, Friends of Leamington Spa Art Gallery, Leamington History Group, Guy of Warwick Society, and Kenilworth History & Archaeology Society, to name but a few.

The Lord Leicester Hospital, Warwick

MARKET HALL MUSEUM

Market Hall Museum is a 17th century landmark in the heart of Warwick operated by Warwickshire County Council's Heritage and Culture Warwickshire team. Refurbished in 2017, the museum tells the story of Warwickshire, and how the shifting natural, built and human landscapes have shaped the county to the present day. The café and shop support local suppliers and makers and entry is free. The museum runs events and activities for adults and children. The museum attracted over 90,000 visitors in 2023-2024.



Warwickshire County Council's Market Hall Museum, Warwick

ST JOHN'S HOUSE

St John's House has a history spanning almost 900 years. The land on which it stands was originally used as a hospital in the 12th century. The house has been used as a private residence, a school, a museum, and administrative offices of the War Department. The building is used by Warwickshire Heritage Learning to run education workshops for visiting school children and the house is also used by Warwickshire Ceremonies. The house and garden are available for hire for events and has meeting rooms.

HILL CLOSE GARDENS

Hill Close Gardens is a gem in the heart of Warwick. Their unique attraction boasts a collection of 16 restored pleasure gardens, each with its own unique character and charm. Visitors can step back in time and experience the elegance and romance of the Victorian era. In addition to its rich history, Hill Close Gardens also offers a range of activities and events throughout the year, including guided tours and workshops to family activities and picnics.



Hill Close Gardens, Warwick

HERITAGE & CULTURE WARWICKSHIRE

In 2020, Heritage and Culture Warwickshire's Learning and Engagement team started a three-year journey to reinvigorate its schools learning programme. Using new methods of delivery, the workshops offered at venues across Warwickshire and in schools are now more focused on local history stories and enquiry led learning. As part of the three-year journey, the schools learning programme rebranded as Warwickshire Heritage Learning and took a more strategic approach to marketing the offer. As a result, the team has seen a rise in bookings from schools, reaching more children and generating more income.

THE FUSILIER MUSEUM

The Museum safeguards and promotes the 350-year history of history of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and its successor, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. At St. John's House, Warwick, for 60 years, the museum relocated to Pageant House in January 2023 presenting new and inter-active displays with a WW1 trench experience and a valued family history research service. The displays include historic uniforms and soldiers' artefacts, including items related to WW1 artist Bruce Bairnsfather and WW2 commander Field Marshal Montgomery and also covers recent conflicts. The Museum's Friends hold regular talks on military history. Recent successes have included a creative learning project with Westgate School, a popular exhibition on military embroidery and a high-profile D Day 80 commemoration programme. The museum is part of Warwick's Military Heritage Trail, within an easy walk of the Castle, and aims to add to the town's tourist offer. There is a small entry charge although its free for under 16s.

WARWICKSHIRE YEOMANRY MUSEUM

The Museum was established in the Court House, Warwick in 1981 to safeguard the heritage of those who had served with the Regiment since its formation in 1794 and to learn the importance of the past through its history. In 2012 the Museum was closed to enable repairs to be made to the Court House with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It was reopened in August 2014 to coincide with 100th Anniversary of the Great War. It has continued to improve time lined displays covering the period 1794 to 1969, which provide a glimpse into the Military Heritage of the Warwickshire Yeomanry and most recently the Warwickshire Gunners who fought with distinction in both World Wars. The Museum is a Charitable Trust funded by voluntary donations and reliant on volunteers who act as guides.

FESTIVALS, PUBLIC SPACES AND EVENTS

There is a busy events programme in the district, with over 150 planned outdoor events occurring annually in town centres, parks and green spaces. This impressively broad range of high-quality arts festivals attracts a great deal of community support, both in terms of attendance and in helping to deliver them. The widespread support for volunteering shown by the creative sector reflects a robust ethic of volunteering within the district and makes a significant social contribution. Examples include:

WARWICK FOLK FESTIVAL

A highlight on the British music calendar, attracting people from across the UK and beyond. Live music and dance are programmed at the Warwick School site and around Warwick town centre, with a free concert and dancing in Market Place. It also features workshops, storytelling, and theatre as well as a real ale & cider festival, wine bar and craft market. The festival runs over 4 days in July and has a daily capacity of 5,000.

LEAMINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Leamington Music Festival, held over the first weekend in May, was launched in 1990 and has taken place in the Royal Pump Rooms since 2000; an ideal venue for chamber music. Leamington Music's flagship takes a strong theme, often making a Czech connection following the Free Army's time in the area 1940-42 and Radio 3 has several times taken recordings to make a week's lunchtime concerts.

KENILWORTH ARTS FESTIVAL

Featuring ten days of events, workshops and exhibitions, held in different venues around the historic town of Kenilworth. The festival brings together award winning, internationally-acclaimed writers, musicians and visual artists from around the country, transforming everyday spaces into intimate arts venues and offering one-off live experiences to audiences.

WARWICK WORDS HISTORY FESTIVAL

A week-long festival of history, hosting around 50 events which takes place across the historic town of Warwick every October. Celebrating historical writing, fact and fiction and meet the authors, where audiences can discover and discuss their work. Talks, walks, workshops and seminars for both children and adults feature strongly in the festival's programme which attracts over 5,000 to the town. The Festival was delighted to be chosen as one of Warwick District Council's four Creative Partners and we were pleased to have been working with the Council to deliver and develop our creative goals.

LANTERN PARADE

The Lantern Parade was established in 2010 and is inspired by the illuminations which used to feature in Jephson Gardens in the 1950s. Each year the community are invited to come together and light up Royal Leamington Spa with thousands of unique and beautiful hand-made lanterns of all shapes and sizes. The parade also includes free lantern making workshops. The event is organised by BID Leamington, with funding from town centre businesses and benefits from the help of local artists and many volunteers. This popular event attracts over 1,000 families and brings around 3,000 people to the town each year.

ART IN THE PARK

A free, curated arts festival that showcases, promotes and provides live demonstrations from over 280 visual and performance artists and craftspeople in Warwickshire and the Midlands. The programme includes live music, dance and theatre from the creatives based in district alongside nationally and internationally renowned companies. The festival takes place over the first weekend in August in the beautiful surroundings of Jephson Gardens. The festival has grown exponentially in recent years, becoming a flagship event for the region's creative community. It now attracts approximately 40,000 people over the course of the weekend, generating an estimated £2.2 million million of additional economic activity.

Leamington Lantern Parade. Image courtesy of BID Leamington



PURSUIITS FESTIVAL

Warwick Pursuits festival is a new (2024), two-day, community event at St Nicholas Park, Warwick. It focuses on history and literature, music and dance, theatre and art, and sports and wellbeing, which offers various activities for families to enjoy for free. The weekend is filled with live music, food, drinks, workshops, demonstrations, and local information.

WOS SUMMER ART WEEKS

This event is a celebration of the variety and quality of visual art available locally and is open to all – from passionate amateurs to professional artists, across all mediums. Over 300 artists at 100+ venues exhibit their work across 16 days. It is a free event for visitors, which attracts around 30,000 visits every year and more than £300,000 in art sales. The audience look forward to this annual event as it provides a fantastic opportunity to meet the artist, often in their own workshop, to discuss their inspirations, techniques and background.

SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE LITERARY FESTIVAL

#SWLitFest - the little festival with the big heart - aims to encourage local writers of all genres and nurture and support reading and writing through a community event that is accessible to all.

The first event, in 2022, was made possible through independent funding and the generosity of authors, speakers and volunteers. Local businesses and organisations are gradually becoming involved through sponsorship, advertising, and sharing of skills and experience.

In 2024, their writing competition, judged by international award-winning writers, raised almost £1,000. Competition winners are invited to share their work at the festival. #SWLitFest also host the Warwickshire Young Poet Laureate, while relatively unknown local writers share a stage with best-selling authors with local ties. Now in its third year the 2024 festival will present over a dozen speakers and other guests who will offer a range of talks, interviews, and workshops.

LEAMINGTON MURAL FESTIVAL

The Leamington Mural Festival is an annual, visual arts festival in Royal Leamington Spa. The festival aims to enhance 'place' and celebrate creativity through public art, including murals, street art, and graffiti installations. The festival also includes a Street Art Trail that features over 20 public artworks, including a 7-meter art nouveau-style mural. The festival is part of a program that aims to promote creativity, wellbeing, and regeneration in the town. The festival is managed by Mercia Murals and Brink Contemporary Arts.

LEAMINGTON FOOD AND DRINK FESTIVAL

Created and delivered by BID Leamington, the festival attracts around 25,000 people to the town, involves over 40 town centre businesses and a further 75 traders from the wider region, and benefits from the support of local volunteers. Now in its seventeenth year, the festival includes cookery demonstrations, kid's cookery school, and live music and brings the very best food and drink from across our region.

KENILWORTH FOOD FESTIVAL

The Kenilworth Food Festival is a free festival that celebrates the town's food and drink scene. The festival in 2024, featured local and national food and drink, live music, and children's activities.

WARWICKSHIRE PRIDE FESTIVAL

The Warwickshire Pride festival, which takes place once a year in the Pump Room Gardens (page 59), is a colourful celebration of LGBT+ life and culture. It also highlights the injustices that LGBT+ people still face locally, nationally and around the world. Pride started as a protest and Warwickshire Pride is an event rooted in that protest.

Of course, it does have lots of fabulous things happening too. You can expect a Pride March, a rainbow marketplace of stalls, live performances and entertainment on stage throughout the day, food and drink from around the world, fairground rides, a trans chillout zone, bi zone, youth tent, women's tent, a quiet zone, dog show, family area and much more.

Warwickshire Pride Festival 2024 at the Pump Rooms Gardens, Leamington Spa. Image courtesy of Jo Lewis.



ECOFEST

EcoFest aims to encourage people to make positive changes, that are good for them and good for the planet. It takes place once a year in the Pump Room Gardens, Leamington. It celebrates everything eco. Visitors are invited to learn how to decrease their carbon footprint, increase healthy eating, and step outside more to explore beautiful local green spaces. The festival includes live entertainment, food stalls, and much more.

MARKETS

The district hosts a range of weekly and monthly markets, including a Charter Market and Farmers' Market in Warwick, a traditional market in Kenilworth, and a Producers' Market and Eco Market in Royal Leamington Spa. Royal Leamington Spa also hosts festive markets every October to December.

CARNIVALS

Kenilworth Carnival has taken place once a year in the town for over 125 years, and Warwick Mop takes place every October, and has been running since they laid the first stone for the castle 1,100 years ago.

The Runaway MOP takes place the following week.

PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

CHRISTCHURCH GARDENS

The three-acre area known as Christchurch Gardens (CG) at the top of the Parade was first laid out in the 1820s with Christ Church, which gave the gardens their name. The Friends of CG worked with the Town Council to establish a mini art gallery (the Art Box) for local schools to exhibit their pupils' work in a disused telephone box.

PUMP ROOMS GARDENS, LEAMINGTON SPA

The Pump Room Gardens opened in 1814. At first, they were private gardens for patrons visiting the adjacent Royal Pump Rooms (page 43) but now they are a valuable area of open space for local people and visitors to the town. The gardens regularly host EcoFest (page 58), Warwickshire Pride Festival (page 67), Leamington Food and Drink Festival (page 67) and many more outdoor events throughout the year.

JEPHSON GARDENS AND MILL GARDENS, LEAMINGTON SPA

First laid out in 1831 as informal riverside walks along the River Leam, the land was renamed Jephson Gardens and developed into formal gardens after 1846. They were named in honour of Dr Henry Jephson, a famous doctor who had promoted the town as a spa. The gardens are open to members of the public and host Art in the Park Festival (pages 55).

VICTORIA PARK, LEAMINGTON SPA

Victoria Park was opened in 1899 to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and provide more recreation space for the growing town. Throughout the 19th century it was the venue for galas, military parades, flower shows and circuses. The park regularly hosts the annual Leamington Spa Fake Festival.

ST NICHOLAS PARK, WARWICK

Originally a meadow, St Nicholas Park in Warwick was laid out in the 1930s. Formal gardens and a Children's Corner were created. After the Second World War, the ground to the east was laid out as playing fields. Later, the leisure centre replaced outdoor swimming pools in the park. The park now hosts a range of festivals, concerts, and events, and recently (2024) hosted Pursuits Festival (page 56) and the Ibiza Orchestra Experience.

PRIORY PARK, WARWICK

Opened in 1953, Priory Park is named after the Priory of St Sepulchre which was built on the site in the 12th Century. Today, Priory Park offers natural open space with meadow and woodland walks; perfect for getting away from it all. The park now features several tree carvings and has hosted two Pixie Door Trails, which aimed to encourage families and young people to explore the site.

ABBNEY FIELDS

Abbey Fields is set in the dramatic valley of the Finham Brook and enjoys views of the historic town and Kenilworth castle. Grassy slopes, a lake, historic buildings and veteran trees recall Abbey Fields' past as the farmland of St Mary's Abbey, whose ruins adjoin the park. It now hosts Kenilworth Food Festival (page 57), Kenilworth Arts and Crafts Festival and many other events throughout the year.

FOUNDRY WOOD

A managed access community woodland between Leamington and Warwick. With a focus on wildlife and educational events, the wood also hosts a range of creative activities including regular outdoor theatre performances, storytelling, crafts and more.



WILD by Motionhouse at EcoFest. Image by Motionhouse



Bandstand, Leamington. Image courtesy of Keith Roberts, LRPS, Leamington Spa Photographic Society

CREATIVE TALKS AND EVENTS

The creative sector comes together in a number of monthly and annual events, which include:

INTERACTIVE FUTURES

Now in its sixth year, Interactive Futures is a large gaming expo based in the district that showcases the latest developments and opportunities in the video game industry. It brings together the UK's games community, games enthusiasts, the next generation of games designers, and creative powerhouses. The event highlights key issues facing the industry, shines a light on career opportunities and provides a platform for networking and collaboration between businesses – home to industry leaders including Playground Games, EA Sports and SEGA HARDlight.

LET'S TALK GAMES

Let's Talk Games is a FREE educational games conference dedicated to providing expert insights into the art and design of video games. It has taken place at the Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, in 2023 and 2024. Whether you're curious about breaking into the industry or wondering what discipline to study, the annual conference is an essential event for any student eager to dive into a career in the games industry.

THE FOLD: CREATIVE MIXERS

The Fold, Leamington, host monthly Creative Mixers, which bring together a network of like-minded, creative individuals to collaborate, share and learn from industry experts and peers.

TEDxLeamingtonSpa

TEDx is a grassroots community run initiative launched to honour TED's original mission of 'Ideas Worth Spreading'. TEDxLeamingtonSpa provides a global platform for our community's ideas. Ideas curated, coached, staged and filmed in our community, have been viewed over 10 million times online, making us one of the UK's most watched events with a volunteer team that is often showcased for its excellence within the global TEDx community. The team also hosts regular screenings of annual TED Conferences providing opportunities for inspiration.

PECHAKUCHA LEAMINGTON

PechaKucha's 20x20 presentation format restricts speakers to showing 20 chosen images, each for 20 seconds only. In total speakers have just 400 seconds to tell their story, with visuals guiding the way. PechaKucha means "chit chat" in Japanese. Three million people have attended PechaKucha events worldwide. PechaKucha Leamington is incredibly popular and has a loyal following of attendees and speakers. Royal Leamington Spa's PechaKucha has now been running for over 5 years and has so far had 2,450 audience members enjoy the joys of others' stories, journeys and adventures. The event itself has been on a journey, first starting out at the local Irish Club in Leamington, over to 1 Mill Street and now based at The Fold - one of the newest additions to the creative quarter, perfectly situation in our town, a co-working space and community hub, designed for imaginative and innovative events.

SPARK

The Spark Symposium has been a key event in Warwick District's creative community since its inception in February 2020. Over five years, it has attracted more than 2,000 participants from across the district's four towns and beyond, with the goal of turning creative ideas into action and promoting the growth of the creative sector. The symposium has hosted 42 panel discussions featuring over 100 influential speakers on topics pertinent to the local creative industries. It has also offered more than 15 professional development workshops, designed to meet the needs of the sector, along with several artist commissions. The event's marketplace allowed local creative individuals and organisations to showcase their work, while free lunch and refreshments fostered networking opportunities.

IGNITE

Ignite is the summer social for Warwick district's creative community. Now in its third year, the event, which is held at the Royal Pump Rooms in Leamington, aims to celebrate the vibrant local creative community, offering a platform for individuals to share their work and connect with fellow creatives. While the event primarily focuses on the Warwick district, it welcomes anyone interested in learning more about the area's creative scene and exploring ways to celebrate, promote, and foster growth within the sector. In 2023 and 2024, a new programme of Ignite grants was developed to commission new work from local creatives to present at the event.

THE ARTS SOCIETY ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA

The Arts Society Royal Leamington Spa (TAS RLS) is part of a leading national arts education charity which brings people together through a shared curiosity for, and appreciation of, the arts. The Arts Society's vision is the belief that the arts have the potential to enrich peoples' lives, and this is at the heart of everything we do.

Founded in 1993, and with over 550 members today, they are an inclusive, sociable and friendly organisation, providing education through their lectures where world class speakers share their specialist knowledge. They preserve heritage for the future through volunteering. As a charity, they give financial support to local artists, makers and projects through community grants, and they organise events that give both social and educational benefits to their members.

TAS RLS believe that the efforts of TAS RLS create a better, healthier and more connected society.



CREATIVE HUBS

Over the past five years, the district has seen the emergence of creative hubs. These hubs are crucial for fostering the local creative community by offering dedicated spaces for collaboration, business development, and networking opportunities. They also provide a platform for community engagement, helping creatives connect with each other and with broader audiences, which can lead to more vibrant local culture and economic growth.

1 MILL STREET

1 Mill Street is the home of authentic community and collaboration, providing its members with the tools and entrepreneurial support they need to thrive. It offers highly flexible work arrangements, beautiful meeting rooms, a podcast studio, a bustling coffeehouse, Fluters bar, two hireable event spaces, and its in-house 'do good' department, Make Good Grow. Mill Street's coworking space is designed for tomorrow's game-changers, offering memberships, team offices, and plenty of private spaces for creative brainstorming, calls, and get-togethers. Alternatively, the Urban Garden offers guests a place to relax and catch up with friends before blurring the lines between work and play at Fluters bar.

THE FOLD

The Fold, based in Leamington, is a creative workshare space for inspiration, education and creation. It's a sanctuary for creativity that provides hot desks, cosy hideaways and meeting rooms. They have every kind of workspace you could imagine, in the calming surrounds of a renovated 19th century church. A state-of-the-art sound and virtual production studios, edit and innovation suites are tucked away in the old church crypts, and the Fold hosts a range of courses, keynotes, mixers and more.

1 Mill Street, Leamington Spa

“The emergence of creative hubs in Warwick District over the past five years has been hugely beneficial to me as a creative freelancer. I am now able to work in beautiful creative environment, where I can meet clients and connect with professionals who live and work in the area.”

**Chris Knight, Choreographer and Director
of Salt Creative Movement Agency**

LEAMINGTON TOWN HALL CREATIVE HUB

Thanks to funding from the Future High Streets Fund, Leamington Town Hall is undergoing a transformative redevelopment, marking it as a key milestone in the creation of Leamington's Creative Town Centre. Construction commenced in June 2024, signalling the first phase of restoration and accessibility enhancements for this historic landmark on its path to becoming a vibrant creative hub.

The project will deliver improved public access, including the installation of a new accessible lift, upgraded welfare facilities, and a refurbished reception area. These updates will ensure the Town Hall is more functional, welcoming, and inclusive, allowing it to remain a vital cultural cornerstone for the district.

Currently, the Town Hall serves as home to Motionhouse (page 36) and Leamington Music (page 40), underscoring its ongoing contribution to the region's dynamic artistic and cultural scene.

FORTY4

Founded in 2015, Forty4 was Leamington Spa's first exclusively creative co-working space, that champions creative talent, inspires the unique and re-imagines the norm. Working spaces are designed to bring creative souls together in a place where imagination can flow, created to work for you.

The official opening on the Fold, Leamington in 2024

CREATIVE SECTOR SUPPORT

Warwick District's creative sector is fortunate to have a range of specialists and organisations based in the area to support with resilience and growth. Some examples include:

FRESH SEED

Fresh Seed is a people and culture business supporting Video Games and the wider Creative Sector, delivering best practice HR and Organisation Design and Development support to the sector. Established in 2019 they have grown to become a sector leader in HR, culture and training with their growth set to increase in the next five years. Their work is widely accredited with changing the way the sector perceives HR and how it engages with developing the skills in the sector. Fresh Seed's skills work is set to establish better skills sustainability for the future of the sector as they forge alliances with research bodies to create better best practice models. Fresh Seed is a fundamental part of the creative ecosystem, supporting sector growth and helping it navigate the creative path to continuous success.

EARTHEN LAMP

Leamington-based Earthen Lamp are a research led consultancy that exist to bring bright thinking to cultural and heritage organisations and creative businesses. What sets them apart is their straight-talking approach, experience, and determination to tackle any challenge with gusto. Earthen Lamp believes that simple ideas and solutions can light up the darkest corners and solve complex issues. At the heart of their work is a deep knowledge and understanding of the arts and culture, the policy context and the creative industries. Since 2011, they have provided market research and feasibility

studies, training, impact assessments and strategy development support to clients such as local authorities, heritage and cultural bodies contributing to their development, tourism, business partnership and regeneration priorities. Earthen Lamp's team of experts help you make informed decisions and gain new perspectives, and they do this in keeping with their values of agility, integrity and simplicity.

BID LEAMINGTON

Established in 2008 and funded by local businesses, the Business Improvement District (BID) in Leamington Spa town centre invests around £1.7 million into the area over each 5-year term. The BID provides a valuable connection between business and community and is respected as a leader and influencer at a local, regional and central government level. Their commitment to best practice, creativity, collaboration and innovation is valued far beyond the town centre. BID Leamington delivers a wide range of marketing, events, placemaking and business support activities. Various 'national firsts', events and creative promotions, have extended the reach of the town, ensuring it remains one of the most desirable places to live in the UK. The spirit of collaboration and supporting creative endeavours informs their approach and the team are active members of Warwickshire Towns Network offering their expertise and support to nearby places, with the understanding that greater resilience comes from strong connections.

CWX

This new Exchange is designed to empower creators, innovators, and pioneers to explore and develop groundbreaking ideas. By fostering collaboration and providing access to support, opportunities, community, and resources, CWX helps unlock the potential of the Coventry & Warwickshire region, positioning it as a leader in the UK's creative economy.

Local creative organisations provide a range of highly regarded sector development programmes:

ARMONICO CONSORT (page 41) collaborates with schools nationwide to train teachers as choir leaders, enabling thousands of schoolchildren to perform choral music and commissioned pieces on prestigious stages like the Royal Albert Hall.

PLAYBOX THEATRE (page 37) with its home at The Dream Factory in the heart of Warwick, holds an international reputation for excellence in young people's performing arts. Working with over 1,000 children every week through workshops, performances, and outreach programmes, Playbox nurtures imagination, confidence, and self-esteem, empowering them to become creative thinkers, talented artists, and broad-minded individuals.

MOTIONHOUSE (page 36) delivers a nationally acclaimed development programme, offering targeted training for students, educators, and professionals. Their initiatives include regular professional development courses for dancers, daily company classes, teacher training, a well-established mentorship scheme, and comprehensive arts management training.



Earthen Lamp delivering a professional development workshop. Image by Hayley Salter

REGENERATION

Warwick District Council has had long term aspirations to develop a Creative Quarter for Leamington Spa in order to support the thriving creative economy, regenerate the area and support communities in the 'Old Town' area of Royal Leamington Spa. Old Town, located south of the river Leam, is the site of the original village of Leamington Priors. It was here that the spa resort developed in the late 18th century. As the town grew in the 19th century, investment, and the centre of prosperity, moved north of the river. Areas within Brunswick ward in particular became amongst the most deprived in the district, and across Warwickshire. This led to a number of regeneration initiatives focusing on the Old Town area including a major project with government funding which took place in the early 2000s. The Council has a number of land and building assets in this area, and it is committed to regenerating these to support the Creative Quarter. Complex Development Projects (CDP) was appointed as the Council's regeneration partner in late 2017.

In 2021 Warwick District Council secured £20M (£10M government, £10M match funding) from the Future High Street Fund. This was to deliver key regeneration projects within the Creative Quarter including Spencer Yard (completed September 2023), the Town Hall Creative Hub (due to complete early 2025), redevelopment of the former Stoneleigh Arms and Old School (due to complete early 2025) and one other landmark project. Taken together, these projects are now leading the way for the town centre wide regeneration under the wider 'Transforming Leamington' programme which is also updating the Town Centre Vision and preparing a masterplan for the Parade. You can find out more and follow developments at www.leamingtoncreativequarter.co.uk and <https://transformingleamington.co.uk/>

FIND OUT MORE

To find out more about Warwick District Creative Framework visit www.warwickdc.gov.uk/wdcreativeframework

Construction work in Spencer Yard, Leamington in 2022.
Now home to Cogent and The Fold (page 62) and SAE (page 30)

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Author of Warwick District Creative Framework 2025-2030:
Johnathan Branson, Warwick District Council

Author of Warwick District Creative Framework 2020-2025:
David Guilding, Warwick District Council

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Jonathan Todd, BOP

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St. Mary's, Warwick. Image courtesy of Andy Bridgestock, Leamington Spa Photographic Society

ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA



Image courtesy of Paul King, LRPS, Leamington Spa Photographic Society

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Image courtesy of Richard Earp, LRPS, Leamington Spa Photographic Society

