

1. Build regional design capability for good growth

Ask:

Mayoral Strategic Authorities and devolved administrations should establish Regional Design Growth Hubs to support regional growth, innovation and skills development.

Design growth is happening across the UK. Wales, the North-East and Scotland have seen some of the fastest increases in design GVA, while design's share of regional economies has increased almost everywhere in the UK. Regional Design Growth Hubs would connect businesses, public services and anchor institutions with design expertise, helping translate local talent into innovation, productivity and stronger places, while acting as a delivery mechanism for regional growth priorities.

2. Recognise design as a critical enabler of innovation

Ask:

Industrial Strategy implementation should explicitly recognise design as a core innovation capability, including through innovation programmes, business support, commercialisation initiatives, intellectual property creation and exploitation, and public procurement frameworks.

Design already contributes £136.7bn in GVA and accounts for £1 in every £20 generated in the UK economy. Two-thirds of that value (£90.6bn) comes from designers working outside the design industries, demonstrating that design creates value across the wider economy, not just within creative sectors. Embedding design alongside R&D and technology adoption, and using procurement frameworks and service standards to incentivise good design, would accelerate commercialisation, improve adoption and boost productivity across the growth sectors.

3. Grow the design workforce of the future

Ask:

Invest in a UK-wide design talent and skills pipeline, combining support for entry-level recruitment, employer-led training and the Design Council Learning Lab.

The design workforce has grown by 15% since 2020, adding almost 300,000 jobs, while digital design employment alone has increased by more than 222,000 roles. Yet employers continue to report skills shortages and graduates who are not fully industry-ready. A UK-wide design talent pipeline should combine early careers inspiration, support for entry-level recruitment, employer-led training and the Design Council Learning Lab. Working with design bodies across the UK, the Learning Lab would help designers develop skills in AI, green design, systems thinking, commercial capability and intellectual property literacy, while funding for in-work training would help employers turn local talent into business-ready recruits. Earlier engagement with schools and diverse role models would widen access to design careers.



4. Champion design exports and the UK's digital design advantage

Ask:

Government should establish a dedicated design export support offer within its trade and growth programmes, while supporting knowledge exchange with emerging design economies seeking to develop their design capability and policy frameworks.

Design is one of the UK's export strengths. Design service exports reached £71bn in 2022 and represented 17% of total UK service exports. Digital design alone accounts for more than £50bn of service exports. Targeted support would help design businesses enter new markets, scale internationally and strengthen UK competitiveness across priority growth sectors. This should include practical support to help SMEs protect and manage intellectual property in international markets. The UK could build future demand by helping emerging design economies develop their design capabilities and policy frameworks.

5. Put design at the heart of AI adoption in businesses and public services

Ask:

Launch a national Design for AI Adoption Challenge to demonstrate how design can accelerate the ethical, sustainable and effective deployment of AI across businesses and public services.

Digital design generates £81bn in economic value and accounts for 59% of design economy GVA. Yet, the biggest barriers to AI adoption are often organisational rather than technical: identifying the right problems, redesigning workflows and services, and building public trust. Design provides the bridge between technological potential and real-world impact.

The Challenge would focus on the human, organisational and service-design capabilities needed to translate AI investment into measurable productivity, public value and adoption at scale.

It would position the UK as a global leader in human-centred AI implementation, generating practical evidence on how design can help organisations deploy AI more ethically, inclusively and sustainably, while protecting public trust and ensuring technology strengthens rather than replacing human expertise. design economies develop their design capabilities and policy frameworks.

