

Powered by Design: A Blueprint for Economic Growth

Designers turn ideas into action.

The UK's design industries can be a powerful tool to deliver the government's national missions, drive regional growth, and create a thriving planet:

- **1.97m people** work in the design economy, directly contributing **£97.2bn** to in GVA, strongly supporting this governments overarching growth mission. This grows further to **£276bn** when you include the additional 2.5m people using design skills in their jobs.
- The design sector has been growing **twice as fast** as the economy overall, boosting innovation and creating jobs. This growth, often green, furthers the UK's global leadership in climate and grows its soft power influence.
- Every £1 a business invests in design yields **£20 return** on that investment. Businesses using **design were twice as likely to be in business** after 5 years than those that did not use it.
- With 80% of a product's environmental impact determined at design stage and **two-thirds** of designers already addressing environmental concerns through their work, design also has a vital role to play in **achieving net zero** and creating sustainable homes and infrastructure.

To supercharge growth in the UK, we will need to work together to leverage the power of the design economy. We are calling on regional and national leaders to give designers the skills, tools and infrastructure they need to thrive by:

1) Endorsing the Design Council's mission to upskill 1 million designers in green skills adding an additional 73,000 green jobs and £10.3bn GVA to the economy annually by 2030.

There is a green design skills gap. While 71% of designers think the demand for green skills is going to grow, only 43% feel they have the capacity to meet it. To address this:

- **Fund a national online green design skills course**, developed in partnership between Design Council and UK businesses, to provide comprehensive and accessible content for all designers across the UK including the micro-businesses (92.2%) and SMEs (7.6%) who would otherwise lack access to consistent CPD. Delivered through the [Skills and Growth Levy](#), this could reach 5.2 million UK-based learners over 5 years - upskilling 5,000 designers by end of Year 2 with the potential to scale further.
- **Implement the recommendations of our Blueprint for Renewal** to address the 67% decline in Design and Technology GCSE by prioritising design in the Curriculum and Assessment review. While 71% of designers think the demand for green skills is going to grow, only 43% feel they have the capacity to meet it so it will be vital to **further support the growth of green design skills** through the upcoming Clean Energy Workforce Strategy, Post-16 Skills White Paper, and through the refreshed Creative Careers Service.

2) Creating Regional Design Growth and Skills Partnerships that promote local green growth and upskill designers, businesses and public sector organisations.

The growth of the design economy is spread across the UK with growth across nearly all regions and each area generating at least £1.87 billion in GVA annually. To build on the importance of design in local economies:

- **Create Regional Design Growth and Skills Partnerships, drawing on funding from the Creative Places Growth Fund and Local Innovation Partnerships Fund** to deliver regional growth and meet net-zero outcomes. These place-based design partnerships would bring together Mayoral Combined Authorities, industry, and education providers to create and supply demand for green design skills, create jobs, deliver up to 40% growth for businesses involved, and apply design to immediate net zero challenges such as clean energy, transport and housing.
- **Invest in a Northern Green Design Cluster through the next phase of the Creative Industries Clusters programme**, driving world-class research and innovation in areas with a growing local design economy such as the North West (14% growth in aGVA), and the North East (9%) as well as boosting under-leveraged areas such as Yorkshire and the Humber (8% fall in aGVA).

3) Appointing a UK Chief Design Officer ensuring design quality in government, design excellence and value across the UK, as well as advocacy for the globally renowned £97.4bn industry.

77% of designers bring their vital creative training and skills to non-design industries - enhancing innovation, productivity, and growth in fields like construction, finance and retail, and plays a key role in the net-zero transition.

- **A UK Chief Design Officer** is needed to fully realise government ambitions in these areas, maximise the impact of the government's Public Design Evidence Review and Test, Learn, and Grow programme, and to deliver on this cross-government policy portfolio and opportunity.
- Co-ordinate between regional and national government through the further appointment of **Regional Heads of Design** to support the UK Chief Design Officer, ensure the sharing of best practice, and allowing for the benefits of design to be felt across the UK.

4) Introducing green tax incentives and strengthen pro-innovation green regulation, raising the bar on the UK's global leadership in regenerative design.

80% of a product's environmental impact is determined at design stage and 42% of design workers (compared to a 6% UK average) carry out innovation-related activities such as R&D. Harnessing the power of design we can get to net zero faster, building a circular economy and restoring biodiversity.

- Undertake **a government audit of legislation** in all design sub-sectors, assessing their alignment against environmental targets and the Planet-centred Design Working Group's principles, and rolling out updated or new green regulation and standards across the whole design economy.
- **Update R&D tax credit eligibility criteria** so that all design innovation activity is eligible, and lifting the exclusion on arts, humanities and social sciences.
- **Leverage public procurement** by introducing top-of-the-field carbon, biodiversity, and resource efficiency metrics into public sector commissioning, boosting the emerging private sector market for regenerative and green design.

5) Introduce a National Design Review Framework, ensuring we build a lasting legacy out of the government's 1.5 million new homes and 150 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

By implementing the recommendations from the Design Council Homes Taskforce's Design for Neighbourhoods report, government has an opportunity to place quality at the heart of its housebuilding and infrastructure programmes, ensure low carbon construction of new homes and maximise the upgrading of existing buildings. This would unlock unprecedented growth in sustainable housing development and refurbishment, while keeping within the UK's carbon budgets and delivering for communities:

- **Co-create a Design Review Framework** with industry ensuring that all design review panels are working to a common co-created framework with clear outcomes-based evaluation criteria and terms of engagement. Independent panels would be accredited to give developers confidence that the service is high-quality.
- **Mandate Compulsory Design Review for all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects** and large housing developments. Design Review is a constructive aid to the planning process, creating better outcomes for communities, and greater confidence in developments of all scales.

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