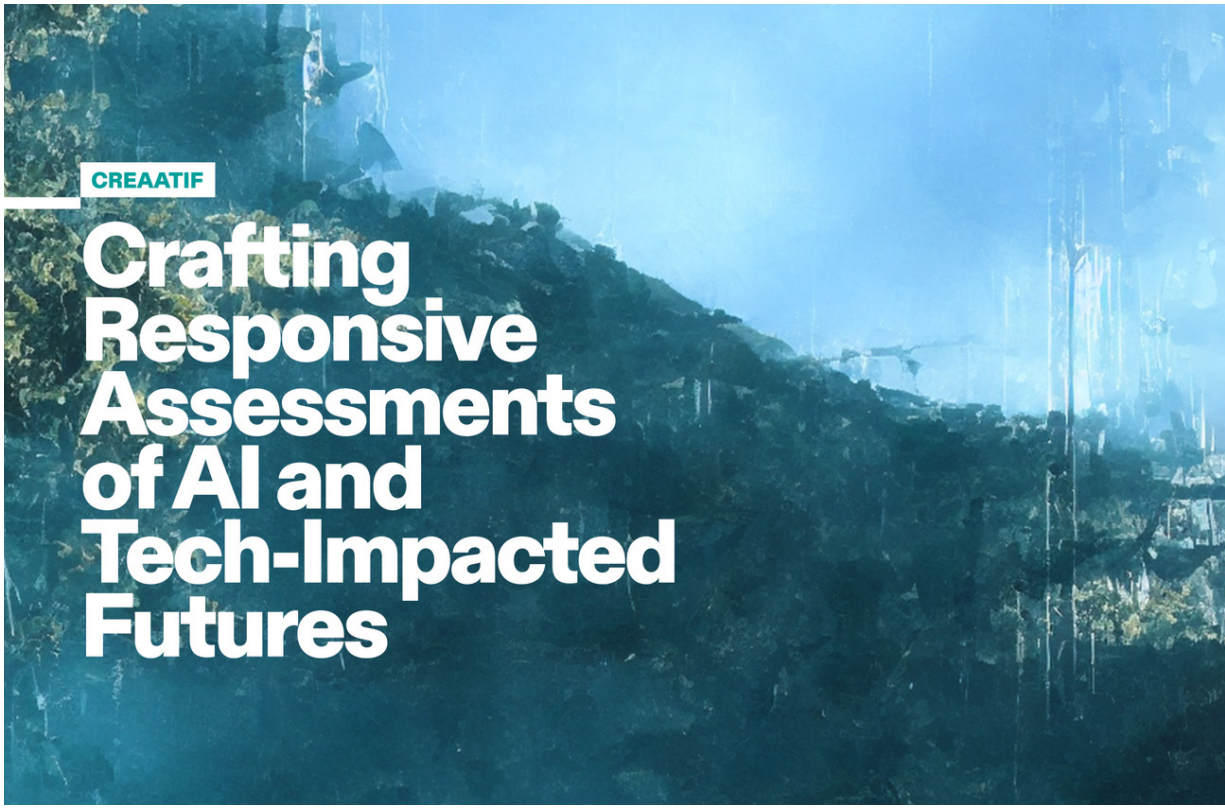
Institute *for the* Future of Work

Policy Brief

Creative Industries and GenAI

Policy recommendations to support an industry in transition

June 2025



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An industry in transition, requiring a new approach

Introduction

Creative work and the creative industries ('CIs') are at the sharp end of the technological and societal transformation currently being driven by generative AI ('GenAI') systems.

From artists to technicians, because of GenAI, workers across the CIs are experiencing some of the fastest and most fundamental changes to their work and lives, working conditions, quality and livelihoods.

This policy brief summarises key findings and policy recommendations from the 'Crafting Responsive Assessments of AI and Tech-Impacted Futures' (CREAATIF) project, a two-year collaboration between the Institute for the Future of Work, Queen Mary University of London and The Alan Turing Institute, which has interrogated the impacts of GenAI on creative work, workers and society. The project was funded by AHRC through the BRAID Programme, and has been conducted in partnership with UK arts and culture unions Equity, Bectu, Musicians' Union, and The Society of Authors.

The creative industries have historically been defined as those which have their origin in an individual's creativity, skill and talent, and have the potential to generate good jobs and prosperity through the exploitation of intellectual property, from IT software and computer games design to music, film, and the performing arts . This definition underpins an enduring approach to policymaking which rests on the protection of individual creativity, primarily through pre-existing, individual legal rights over creations of the human mind known as 'intellectual property'.

A new, collective approach

The findings from the CREAATIF project show how and why this individualised understanding of and approach to the creative industries is no longer working. Our recommendations propose a different course which we propose should be chartered through a combination of participatory methods and approaches, regulatory innovation and experimental pilots focused on collective impacts and response. Our research and analyses suggest that this will be the route to driving an effective strategy and society-wide approach to the transformation of the creative industries over the next decade.

Reframing 'growth' for the creative industries

The creative industries have been widely recognised as one of eight 'growth-driving' sectors, which already add over £120bn of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy. These sectors have the potential to create one million new jobs by 2030, helped by regional creative clusters and advanced research labs, and targeted increases to public R&D investment [Invest 2035, Pissarides Review 2025]. Nonetheless, there has been a recent decline in real terms (a 3.5% GVA decline in 2023), representing the wide range of challenges and missed opportunities faced by creative workers, including much higher unemployment rates, increased precarity, and sharper regional and socioeconomic disparities across the UK.

A June 2025 report by Skills England highlights some of the sectoral challenges being faced:

> *The creative industries are undergoing a transformative shift driven by technological convergence, leading to the rise of "fusion" or "createch" skills that blend technological competence with creative thinking. Workers across industries must now develop capabilities*

that integrate AI literacy, digital and data analytics, with skills like creativity and problem-solving.

These transformations of skills requirements and challenges have been marked in some subsectors, including film, performance acts, fashion and IT related services, opening up dialogue about the real drivers and wider societal implications of new threats to the CIs – and what flourishing creative work and sectors, and sustainable 'growth' means beyond GVA [House of Lords Hansard Data Bill, 2025, Pissarides Review, 2025]. In this context, our research has revealed the importance of an inclusive, participatory, society-wide approach aimed at collective, as well as individual, flourishing, in and through the CIs. Furthermore, it sets out how this can be built into the CI strategy from June 2025.

Social partnership: a growing role

Across the globe, the unions representing sectors in the CI have a history of leading groundbreaking sectoral negotiations beyond minimum requirements, such as royalty payments. They have been at the forefront of increasing union-led activity, participatory research, and innovative solutions in response to new challenges and opportunities posed by GenAI, as activities long deemed the most resistant to automation were being automated. In 2023, the Writers Guild of America (WGA) five-month 'Hollywood strike' gained global attention by articulating the dangers of automating the most essential human ability or 'skill': human creativity. While the use of text generators to replace writers wholesale was a concern, WGA articulated a more nuanced complaint. Their members were seeing reduced compensation and inferior conditions for work, reduced agency over creative outputs, and reduced dignity and meaningfulness of the work they could secure. The WGA succeeded in negotiating compensation for reuse of creative material, rules around the use of AI in the writing process, the right to refuse use of their work for training and a process for jurisdiction over digital streaming platforms, as well as increased minimum pay, health and pension plans.

Fast forward to 2025 and the passage of the third draft Data (Use and Access) Bill in the UK: Equity has called for the introduction of new 'personality' rights to prevent reproduction of artists' identity or likeness and for attribution; and Bectu and the TUC have called, inter alia, for an opt-in system to protect creative work from commercial data mining and transparency of AI training data across the value chain.

Some of these policy innovations, originating from creative CI unions, have already drawn broad support across the House of Lords through passage of the Data (Use and Access) Bill, with cross-party interest in safeguarding the value of the UK's world-class creative content and capabilities. This has drawn attention to the importance and potential for the role of unions in new roles, as well as traditional ones, as civic institutions providing an existing infrastructure and mechanisms through which to anticipate, govern and respond to collective and social impacts of GenAI [IFOW, 2023].

Creative workers: the canaries in the coalmine

The transformation of the CIs reveals something significant about the process and impacts of technological disruption, responsible innovation and successful partnership working. But more than that, our project shows how it invites deeper reflection about the role of collective human work, in particular creative work and the CIs, for individual and societal flourishing. It provides new insight about collective and relational impacts, and the particular importance of surrendering workplace or 'industrial' data, as well as personal data.

Zooming in, an examination of GenAI use in our rich cultural sectors provides new insight into collective experiences and the multidimensional impacts of data-scraping, tacit knowledge elicitation, AI training and content generation. In each area, our project suggests that creative

workers are not only at the coalface of transformation. They are the 'canaries in the coalmine'. The experiences and consequences of GenAI for creative workers act as early indicators and warning signs of AI-driven economic and societal transformation. These changes have huge societal, cross-sector implications, from economic justice to creative integrity, and the value of creative work and content.

Similarly, our political response to these changes and the development of more complex ecosystems of production in the CIs has the potential to either embed or reset our approach to responsible innovation and governance. Examining the impacts of GenAI in the creative industries thus provides a sharp use case and lens for understanding, anticipating and managing social and economic transformation. This reminds us that workers are also citizens and consumers, and represent different groups and communities – and that work is a site for societal change, as well as a lens through which it can be viewed [IFOW, 2024]. For these reasons, although we have taken an integrated approach, our project centres creative work and creative workers through our organising research framework: IFOW's Good Work Charter framework.

Key insights: opportunities and challenges

The IFOW Good Work framework sets out 10 dimensions of 'good work'. The framework or 'Charter' serves multiple functions and can act at societal, community, organisation and individual levels. It sets out ten fundamental principles or social rights of 'good work': work that has fair pay and conditions; work that promotes dignity, autonomy and equality; work where people are properly supported to develop their creativity and capabilities, and have a sense of community. The principles are interdependent and interrelated, helping to surface emerging, relational and collective impacts.

Through this approach and starting point, our work has unlocked new insights about society-wide and multidimensional impacts of GenAI. These are already being experienced by creative workers - past, present and future - who are conscious of the potential of GenAI to foster greater inclusivity, innovation, skills augmentation and development, and support. Our research findings consider impacts at the societal and ecosystem level, on social relationships and interaction, and on individual creative workers.

Our key findings on the opportunities and challenges of GenAI and our subsequent recommendations for action are therefore organised across these three levels. Here, we highlight relevant Good Work principles alongside the key findings.

Opportunities of GenAI

Societal / Ecosystem level opportunities

- **Broadening access to creative production.** GenAI lowers traditional barriers to work, such as cost, education, social and economic background and training time, and augments human skills and capabilities. This enables more diverse voices and perspectives to participate in the CIs and disrupts gatekeeping in the sector ***(Access)***.
- **New economic models and markets.** AI-generated content has spawned novel revenue streams and business models - exemplified by platforms accepting AI-created images and marketplaces offering AI-enhanced services that reshape value creation and distribution. Our recommendations will open up further new markets, such as licensing (***Access, Fair Pay and Conditions***).
- **Preservation and restoration.** Generative models can predict material deterioration in physical artworks and virtually reconstruct damaged or missing sections, supporting conservation efforts and ensuring the longevity of cultural heritage (***Learning, Equality***).

Organisational / Relational level opportunities

- **New methods to communicate.** Unions and union members are experimenting with use of GenAI tools for information sharing, training, organisation and collective expression (***Support, Participation***).
- **Improved teaching and education across the CIs.** AI-driven platforms offer interactive lessons in styles and techniques, generate creative prompts for students and provide automated and semi-automated feedback, making art education more accessible and personalised (***Learning***).
- **Community programmes.** These increase civic trust and empower historically marginalised social groups by amplifying local narratives to cultivate expression as agents of cultural production, resistance, and change driven by GenAI (***Dignity, Autonomy, Learning***).

Individual level opportunities

- **Increased efficiency.** Complex, time-consuming tasks, for example drafting storyboards, creating character designs, or making costume concepts, can be executed in minutes via prompts, benefiting less experienced creatives and accelerating ideation-to-production cycles (***Fair Pay, Autonomy***).
- **Overcoming creative and technical skills gaps.** Off-the-shelf GenAI tools empower individuals lacking formal training to bridge skill deficiencies and enable seasoned artists to integrate advanced AI capabilities into their practice, fostering rapid upskilling and innovation (***Learning***).
- **Productivity enhancing.** By automating repetitive tasks, such as generating initial drafts, sketches, or marketing copy, GenAI allows creative workers to devote more time to refining ideas and storytelling, driving significant productivity gains among professionals (***Pay, Autonomy***).

Challenges of GenAI

Through the Good Work Charter organising framework, research also unlocks insights into the challenges of GenAI, at societal, relational and individual levels. For example, an exploration of impacts on fair pay has surfaced insights on the distribution of work at a macro level. Our exploration of impacts on equality has similarly provided insights into social and economic inequities beyond protected characteristics and the reproduction of stereotypes in imagery.

Societal / Ecosystem level challenges

- **Distribution of economic opportunities and concentration of market power.** Large tech firms appropriate the outputs of creative labour often without consent or fair compensation - shifting economic benefits and decision-making power to well-resourced industry enterprises, often exacerbating precarity for creative workers (***Access, Fair Pay***)
- **Perpetuation of discriminatory, biased and hegemonic views.** Generative models trained on datasets overrepresenting Western languages, geographies, cultural viewpoint, and values reproduce stereotyped imagery and marginalise underrepresented groups (***Equality***)
- **Loss of collective novelty through homogenisation.** Reliance on a few large industrial models leads to uniform outputs across tools and deployments, feeding back into training datasets and further reducing variation in creative practices. This leads to devaluation of creative work and erosion of quality. (***Dignity, Autonomy, Learning***)

Organisational / Relational level challenges

- **Loss of trust in creative authenticity and institutions.** Forgery, inaccuracies or low-quality AI outputs damage audience trust in creative work and in the relationship between creative workers, their audiences and cultural spaces. The lack of clarity over provenance and attribution, which arises when one cannot distinguish between AI-generated content and original human content, disrupts the link between the creative work and community building (***Dignity, Participation***).
- **Unreflective AI adoption with unanticipated externalities.** The absence of proactive, anticipatory risk assessments by AI developers and adopters results in avoidable harms to innovation and production ecosystems, without consultation or appropriate ex ante governance approaches (***Fair Terms and Conditions, Participation***).

- **Chilling effect on human-created art and culture, including sharing and distribution.** Fear of exploitation leads artists to withhold creating and sharing work from online platforms, reducing the flow of diverse content across the information ecosystem and increasing creative precarity (***Access, Fair Pay***).

Individual level challenges

- **Reduced opportunities to access good jobs and diminished work terms, conditions and quality.** As jobs and tasks are displaced, predatory, exploitative, or deceptive contracts granting unlimited rights to use their images, voices, or likenesses for AI training are frequently presented, with creatives pressured to waive moral rights and authorship as the only path to paid work (***Access, Terms and Conditions***).
- **Erosion of good job prospects and financial compensation.** The cost-efficiency of GenAI outputs undervalues human creativity, shrinking earnings for creative workers and relegating them to lower-paid tasks like fine-tuning or post-production (***Fair Pay***).
- **Deskilling and cognitive and creative atrophy.** Oversaturation and over-reliance on AI tools diminish core artistic skills – for example in writing, drawing, playing instruments - thus weakening creative identity, observational acumen, and independent idea generation (***Learning and Skills***)

Recommendations for action

Actions at Societal / Ecosystem level

- **Boosted transparency and accountability for collective impacts.**
  Lack of transparency is preventing redesign, recourse or other meaningful forms of accountability for the cumulative, collective and multidimensional impacts that we have surfaced. Higher levels of end-to-end governance and reporting are needed across the value chain, from model provenance, training data sets and opt-in protocols, to the monitoring and disclosure of legal compliance and impacts on work.

  This is best achieved through an overarching, principles-based Responsible Innovation Act developed and enforced an independent oversight body capable of delivering a cohesive, systems-wide approach in which collective and relational impacts are anticipated, interrogated and addressed. Domain and sector specific protection can be developed within this umbrella framework, for example banning buy-out clauses, sector-specific contract registries, mandated Good Work impact assessments.

- **New models for fair reward, with statutory backup, should be developed and tested now.**
  Creative workers are currently not being paid fairly for work done. Unions, civil society and community cooperatives should co-develop new models for collective licensing, labelling, filtering, and direct renumeration, compensation and revenue distribution schemes. These are likely to extend to tax schemes, R&D and regulatory measures which should be developed together and aligned. These should be developed and piloted at a local and global level, with multi-stakeholder involvement and the establishment of sector-specific councils that can address terms, conditions and quality of work, as well as wages. Civil-society led sandboxes, such as IFOW's sandbox, could provide a safe space to design, develop and test new models for fair reward.

  It has always been the UK government's approache that organisations benefitting from the use of copyrighted material should have the permission of a copyright holder who is appropriately compensated - this is a fundamental principal of intellectual property. the use of copyrighted creative works in the development of GenAI systems should fall under the same principled approach, and government should act to ensure that the law reflects this.

- **Renewed and active social partnerships should be funded by government to build capacity, and increase member and data access.**
  This would recognise the crucial role of unions to identify and address collective harms, deliver reskilling initiatives and promote societal participation more broadly.

  Unions should be involved in the design and implementation of new mechanisms for identifying, tracking, and redistributing the 'data dividend' associated with GenAI models. Sectoral bargaining architectures should be developed.

Actions at Organisational / Relational level

- **Companies designing, developing, deploying, procuring, or using GenAI and platform providers should work with civil society bodies, unions, industry bodies and regulatory bodies and other stakeholders.**
  This work should be across the value chain from design onwards to establish effective industry-wide protocols on integrating, screening for and signposting AI-generated

content. This would be supported by platform providers carrying out and publicly disclosing regular audits on the existence of synthetic content in their products and services.

- **Corporate monitoring, disclosure and reporting should be increased by law and best practice standards.**
  Much higher levels of end-to-end governance and reporting are needed across the value chain, from model provenance, training data sets and opt-in protocols, to the monitoring and disclosure of legal compliance and impacts on work and society. Secure media provenance tools and standards should be co-developed and adopted to enable audiences and consumers to verify creative content credentials. Mandated watermarking and labelling of machine-generated outputs across creative media should be piloted and introduced.
- **Support and fund collaborative and participatory forms of creative production that help members of society build relational bonds within and across different social groups through collective expression.**
  Further research on the impact of the spread of GenAI across creative work domains on the social functions of art is needed, including examinations of the effects of GenAI on social solidarity and civic trust.. This could be organised as a resilience fund for the social function of the creative industries.

Actions at Individual level

- **Minimum standards for human content/input in AI workflows.**
  Unions, industry bodies, standards organisations, tech firms, and regulators should define hybrid human–AI workflow standards that specify minimum quotas for human creative input, protect teaching and mentoring responsibilities and establish oversight roles, including for fair compensation. These could be further supported by instituting AI-free skills-preservation sprints and manual-technique sessions to refresh foundational creative abilities.
- **Systematic, participatory and socio-technical approaches to governance and innovation should be developed and embedded across the value chain.**
  This should be done through the participation of impacted creative workers and domain experts throughout GenAI design, development, and deployment. Co-developed, sociotechnical safeguards to prevent unauthorised replication of living artists' signature styles should reinforce respect for individual expression and IP integrity. Skills, training and literacy clinics in AI governance and participation would support this.
- **Boosted and new labour, data and IP rights should include boosted transparency, consultation, workplace or 'good work' impact assessments.**
  This would mitigate increasing precarity, decreased pay and job displacement, along with new 'personality' rights to protect against unauthorised image, style and identity use, perpetuated by coercive contracts. IP and copyright laws should be extended and enforced rigorously, for example, consultation on developing a 'right to remove' and strengthening moral rights. These could be developed through sectoral councils.

  Enforcement can be boosted by establishing protection clinics, covering, for example, takedown procedures, adversarial defences and open-source plagiarism detection. Creative worker-led networks offering workshops on digital self-defence, negotiating contracts, and audience engagement best practices also play an important role.

Acknowledgements

CREAATIF is a collaboration between IFOW and Queen Mary University of London and The Alan Turing Institute, working in partnership with four major unions: Equity, Bectu, the Musicians' Union and the Society of Authors.

Through the project, the team:

- Conducted workshops and surveys reaching 335 freelance creative sector workers on the frontline of the GenAI revolution, highlighting major changes to the quantity and quality of their work.
- Focused on cross-sectoral challenges, examining the effects of AI on all stages of cultural production, from ideation, through to production and distribution.
- Spoke to performers, writers and musicians and to workers including technicians, producers and translators who aren't always seen as 'creators' but play key roles in the creative economy.
- Examined our findings in light of the rapidly evolving policy and regulatory environment to develop a coherent set of responses.
- Acknowledged creative workers aren't confined to working in a single sector, and many supplement one area of creative practice with other forms of work in the creative industries.

We are grateful for the time taken by all from the creative workforce who contributed their expert insights, to those from the unions involved for input into this work, and to all on the research teams across the different partner organisations for their invaluable contributions.

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Claddagh Niclochlainn
Kester Brewin

The work of CREAATIF is dedicated to the loving memory and lifework of Dr. Michael Katell, esteemed Senior Ethics Fellow at the Alan Turing Institute and Visiting Senior Lecturer at DERI.

Mike acted as CREAATIF's project lead until his sudden and untimely death in August, 2024. He was a prominent interdisciplinary AI ethics and critical data studies scholar, who made significant intellectual contributions to the fields of data justice, critical platform studies, and AI policy and governance. As a champion of advancing social justice, equity, and inclusion amid expanding processes of datafication and digitisation, Mike significantly influenced the international discourse on responsible and equitable AI futures. His research and advocacy work in the fields of digital justice and labour rights stands as a torchlight of intellectual integrity, societal sustainability, and human liberation.

Institute for the Future of Work

IFOW is an independent research and development institute exploring how new technologies are transforming work and working lives, co-founded by former employment barrister Anna Thomas MBE, Nobel prize-winning economist Sir Christopher Pissarides, and technologist Naomi Climer CBE.

Our core team at Somerset House works with a growing network of strategic partners striving for systems change.

Our mission is to shape a fairer future through better work.

Our goal is a good society in which everyone can flourish through this new technological revolution.

Our belief is that creating and sustaining good work is the best way to achieve this goal and ensure that innovation and social good advance together.

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