



PRESS RELEASE

DESIGN COUNCIL LAUNCHES LANDMARK DESIGN ECONOMY REPORT

The Design Council has released Design Economy: People, Places and Economic Value, demonstrating the value of design to Wales and the UK.

Informed by a design economy steering group that includes the Design Commission for Wales, the report reveals the design economy is growing at twice the UK average, contributing £97.4bn in GVA to the UK economy with Wales seeing an increase of 18% in GVA to £2 billion.

Data also shows the design economy is a significant industry, employing 1.97 million people in 2020.

The Design Economy report focuses on six key pillars including economic growth, regional prosperity, digital innovation, exports, skills for the future and diversity within the sector. The report reveals that during 2020 one in twenty workers in the UK (1.97 million people), worked within the Design Economy. Sectors include architecture, product design, fashion, digital design, craft and graphics plus those working design roles in other sectors, such as the NHS and financial services.

In 2019, the design sector accounted for over £70bn in exports, including work commissioned for overseas projects from the UK. Alongside digital innovation, faced with the climate and biodiversity emergencies, the scale of what the UK needs to design – and re-design – to achieve net-zero targets by 2050 is immense. To achieve such goals investment in education and workforce will be paramount.

However, statistics across the UK, show that entries to Design and Technology GCSE have fallen by 68% - threatening a crucial career pipeline for designers.

Key data from Design Economy: People, Places and Economic Value report that has been published as a result of a wide range of leading design experts including Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive of the Design Commission for Wales, Doctor Jane Davidson, Pro Vice Chancellor Emeritus, University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Indro Mukerjee, CEO of Innovate UK reveals:

- The Design Economy contributed £97.4bn in GVA to the UK economy, equalling 4.9% of total UK GVA
- Design Economy accounted for over £70bn in exports in 2019, equalling one in every ten pounds from all UK exports and 18% of all UK service exports
- London continues to be a powerhouse for design, home to a third of all design businesses generating 29.5% of all design economy GVA
- Scotland has seen the fastest growth: its design economy grew five times faster than the Scottish economy at 33% between 2017 and 2019
- Digital Design is the faster growing design sector, increasing by 138% between 2010 and 2019, three times the rate of the UK's digital sector
- Rapid growth in digital design employment in the South West (110%), Scotland (88%), Yorkshire and the Humber (55%) and Northern Ireland (31%)
- The design economy is still disproportionately male: 77% of designers identified as male in 2020
- The design workforce needs to reflect the diversity of the world it designs for with 85.6% of managers in the UK Design Economy workforce being from a white background

Minnie Moll, Chief Executive, Design Council said: "We want as many people as possible, from the design community to design commissioners, the business sector to government, to really engage with the big messages from the research and recognise that design is a powerful tool to be used right now."

Andy Haldane, Chief Executive RSA and Chair, Levelling-Up Commission, said: "Design should be at the heart of driving jobs, skills and regional prosperity across the UK. Designers bring immense value to the places they are a part of,

be it in working with communities to shape our public spaces and services, creating affordable and good-quality homes, or in ensuring that our built environment and transport infrastructure are regenerative and benefit our planet.

“The RSA’s new mission – Design for Life – reflects the crucial contribution design makes in society, the economy and to the environment. We can see from this landmark research with the Design Council the growth, value and importance of the design sector across the UK and we must continue to advocate for the conditions needed to help design continue to thrive across the country.”

Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive of the Design Commission for Wales said: “Design economy is the most comprehensive assessment of the value of design to the UK and shows how our design economy in Wales has grown significantly in recent years. Valued at £2 billion GVA, our design economy is a key enabler of economic prosperity and social value. Its importance must not be underestimated, particularly given the central role that design plays in the built environment in reducing the huge and unnecessary costs of error in construction, reducing carbon and achieving net-zero. As a major contributor to a skilled workforce design education is critical and we support the call for governments, industry and educators to recognise the power of design.”

The full report and executive summary can be downloaded [HERE](#) via the Design Economy Website.