

Creative Technology Futures

Policy pathways to 2035 and beyond

Using foresight to enable long-term approaches to creative technology policy

A ForesightLab Report

Dr Vicki Williams, Dr Ekaterina Tarnovskaya
and Prof Graham Hitchen

July 2026

The CoSTAR Foresight Lab

Driven by the UK’s leading Creative Industries experts, the [CoSTAR Foresight Lab](#) is researching the adoption, use and impact of new, emergent and convergent technologies in gaming, TV, film, performance and digital entertainment.

Our findings will inform research, development and innovation across the Creative Industries, including the R&D taking place through the convergent screen technologies and performance in real time (CoSTAR) programme, the UK R&D network for creative technology.

[CoSTAR](#) is a £75.6 million national R&D network of laboratories that are developing new technology to maintain the UK’s world-leading position in gaming, TV, film, performance, and digital entertainment. Delivered by the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council, the programme is supporting new innovations and experiences that will enrich the UK’s creative industries, economy, and culture. The network comprises the National Lab, the Realtime Lab, the Live Lab, the Screen Lab and the Foresight Lab. CoSTAR is funded through UK Research and Innovation’s Infrastructure Fund, which supports the facilities, equipment and resources that are essential for researchers, businesses, and innovators to do groundbreaking work. You can find out more by visiting www.costarnetwork.co.uk.

Foresight Lab partners and contributors

Core Partners:

Prof Jonny Freeman; Jac Sanscartier; Cimeon Elteron-Kay (Goldsmiths, University of London)
Prof Frauke Zeller; Prof Melissa Terras MBE; Dr Suzanne R Black; Gavin Inglis; Dr Vikki Jones (University of Edinburgh)
Prof Graham Hitchen; Dr Ekaterina Tarnovskaya; Dr Vicki Williams (Loughborough University)
Rishi Coupland; Keir Powell-Lewis; John Sandow; Brian Tarran; David Johnston (BFI)

Delivery Partners:

Florence Mansfield (Arup)
Prof Hasan Bakhshi MBE; Dr Tom Cahill-Jones; Prof Giorgio Fazio; Dr Sarah Najm (Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre)
Brendan Miles (Data Thistle)
Chiara Badiali; Natalie Highwood; Alison Tickell (Julie’s Bicycle)
Noemi Ponzoni; Anna Stewart; Lewis Turner-Brown; Jodie Pearton; Arina Mnatsakanyan (i2 media research)
Leon Forde; Marta Moretto; Joshua Dedman; Emma Openshaw; Peter Cobb; Kiera Obi; Lili Ruzsiczky (Olsberg-SPI)
Patrick Bradley (Station12)

The Foresight Board:

Prof Dave Bull; Prof Darren Cosker; Sarah Ellis; Steve Jelley; Gaby Jenks; Prof Greg Maguire; Prof Alex McDowell; Prof Sylvia Pan; Dr Romana Ramzan; Bill Thompson; Dr Lincoln Wallen; Nell Whitley; Deborah Williams OBE

The Lab is administrated by Petra Lindnerova; Daniel McCarthy; André Sigrist de Toldeo Piza.

When citing this report, please use the following citation:

Williams, V; Tarnoskaya, E; Hitchen, G. (2026) “Creative Technology Futures: Policy pathways to 2035 and beyond. Using foresight to enable long-term approaches to creative technology policy”. CoSTAR Foresight Lab. DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.21100864](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21100864)

Table of contents

Introduction		01
04	Foresight in practice	
05	Why ‘creative technology’?	
07	Applying foresight in policy contexts	
09	Project overview	
01.	Setting the scene – the UK’s Industrial Strategy	11
13	Timeline commitments across the Industrial Strategy	
15	Regional devolution and new directions for R&D and Innovation	
02.	Methodology	18
22	Workshop design and foresight approach	
03.	Creative tech futures: Key findings and long-term action areas	26
27	Tensions across thematic areas	
33	2035 Scenarios and trajectories	
39	High impact themes and tensions	
Conclusion		48

Executive summary

Creative technology (also positioned as ‘Createch’) has been established as a frontier industry in the UK Government’s Creative Industries Sector Plan; it features widely across a range of UK-wide regional Growth Plans and is central to UK Research and Innovation’s (UKRI) Strategy for the Creative and Cultural Economy.¹

This report responds to the growing recognition of creative technology as a strategic growth opportunity for the UK and examines the future of the ecosystem through a distinctive policy foresight lens. It identifies key forces, tensions and decisions that will shape its long-term trajectory to 2035 and beyond, drawing on desk research, horizon scanning and a programme of national, regional and devolved stakeholder workshops across the UK.

The report represents methodological innovation, applying foresight and scenario-building approaches to enable policymakers to engage more proactively with long-term approaches. It identifies the critical interdependencies across national policy, sector-specific policy and regional devolution to ensure a cohesive strategic framework for long-term policy thinking.

The report transforms future scenario co-design and policy research into an actionable roadmap for shaping desired futures in creative technologies, addressing key tensions around four central themes:

- **Creative education**
The report recognises the urgency of redesigning the UK education and skillssystem to better adapt to, and align with, rapid technological change. Creative technology can and should play a critical role in this adaptation, if clear pathways into creative-technical skills are introduced from early education through to careers.
- **AI**
AI is a transformative opportunity and long-term risk for the Creative Industries; consistent challenges around AI impacts emerge, including: concerns around entry-level careers, IP management, fostering trust, uneven benefits for large and small firms, as well as the environmental impact of AI infrastructure. The report recommends proactive and resilient, long-term approaches to AI governance for the sector that respond to these challenges, whilst fostering innovation opportunity.
- **Growth**
Through the lens of Government missions, the work recognises that narrow or purely economic approaches to growth are not sufficient for the Creative Industries or growing creative technology ecosystem. Longer term, inclusive, distributed and purpose-driven growth models that maximise social, cultural and economic value should be prioritised.
- **International collaboration**
To strengthen the UK’s global position in creative technology, a coordinated approach to international engagement and collaboration is needed, leveraging both national and regional assets. This includes the enablement of regions to build direct and complementary partnerships and providing opportunities for SME’s nationwide to access new markets.

The pathways and aligned recommendations set out in this report provide a foundation for sustained, anticipatory action, positioning foresight as a practical tool for shaping creative technology policy. It is accompanied by a series of complementary materials, including a methodological toolkit.

¹ [UK Research and Innovation launches creative industries strategy – UKRI](#)

Introduction

Amidst a rapidly changing political landscape, catastrophic world events and the rapid flow of information in our everyday lives, it is increasingly more challenging to think beyond the present.

This challenge is central to the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, which focuses on a 10-year horizon. 2035 has been and remains a prominent reference point in policy and strategy – a year of focus where the missions, goals and efforts of this Government will be realised. Back in 2024, the UK Government published its *Plan for Change*, setting out a 'decade of national renewal'² built around five national missions:

Kickstart economic growth
Build an NHS fit for the future
Safer streets
Break down barriers to opportunity
Make Britain a clean energy superpower

These missions, the Plan outlined, meant "focusing on ambitious, measurable, long-term objectives".³ This provided the framework for a set of strategies and programmes which place an emphasis on long-term objectives and visions of the future – for the next decade and beyond.

This focus was also made clear across the Industrial Strategy and its associated publications. The year "2035" features 37 times across 'The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy' alone, following the 'Invest 2035' consultation in the run-up to its publication in June 2025. Alongside the Industrial Strategy, as part of a suite of strategic documents, Sector Plans were published to set out objectives for the eight identified growth sectors.⁴ The plans follow a pre-defined structure focussed on:

- ease, speed and long-term stability for business;
- supporting frontier industries;
- supporting the UK's city regions and clusters;
- and creating an enduring partnership with business.

These Sector Plans, in many ways, are positioned as visions of what these sectors might look like in the future.

² [Plan for Change – Milestones for mission-led government](#)

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ These sectors are: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Creative Industries, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Financial Services, Life Sciences, Professional and Business Services.

Take the Creative Industries Sector Plan, for example:

“By 2035, the UK’s position as a global creative superpower will be enhanced with the UK becoming the number one destination worldwide for investment in creativity and innovation”

And the Digital and Technologies Sector Plan:

“By 2035, our vision is for the UK to be one of the top three places in the world to create, invest in and scale-up a fast-growing technology business. We will aim to secure the UK’s first trillion-dollar technology business.”

These vision statements are used to ground policy in the long-term— what 2035 might look like, in a sectoral context, if policy and strategy goes according to plan. 2035 sets a future point in time where the steps, decisions and policies set out are put into action and lead to desired outcomes.

Foresight in practice

The CoSTAR Foresight Lab’s programme of work focuses on the emergent themes and complex issues likely to shape the long-term trajectory of the UK’s creative technology ecosystem. The Lab undertakes horizon scanning and tracks signals of change through primary and secondary research. Leveraging interdisciplinary approaches, the Lab works to cultivate more proactive and intentional engagement around what is likely to emerge in the next decade and beyond.

The Foresight Lab’s policy team has established a programme of work scanning ‘policy signals.’ We use the term ‘signals’ to refer to early indications of future change, that are either weak (very ambiguous and uncertain) or strong (less uncertain, stronger impact).⁵ Signals are collated across a number of relevant sources, including Government publications, announcements, press releases, research reports, and other grey literature. By monitoring signals over time, the team collates them to identify possible futures and long-term impacts. Stakeholder engagement also forms a critical part of this work: the team collaborates and engages across the ecosystem to understand developments – both planned and emerging – to inform our horizon scanning.

It is in this context that a programme of workshops with national policy partners was established, to explore and scope future ambitions of policy-makers and intermediaries across the UK, within the context of the Government’s ambitions for 2035 – and what 2035 might look like in the realm of creative technologies specifically.

5 This approach is set out in previous Lab publications, including ‘Introduction to Moments’ framework, Sanscartier et al (2024)

Why ‘creative technology’?

Whilst both the Creative Industries and Digital & Technologies have been identified as key growth sectors in the Government’s Industrial Strategy, the convergence of these sectors and the UK’s world-leading strengths in these areas, provide an underexploited opportunity for national growth and long-term value creation.

This is on the brink of being more broadly acknowledged – with ‘CreaTech’ being outlined as a ‘frontier industry’ in the Creative Industries Sector Plan, alongside recently published recommendations on ‘createch’ delivered by the CoSTAR Foresight Lab in collaboration with the Creative PEC, on behalf of DCMS and UKRI.⁶ In addition, the House of Lords ‘AI and Creative Technology inquiry’ in 2024 explicitly referred to creative technology as an area for significant growth potential in the UK economy.⁷

The CoSTAR Network, as the UK’s R&D Network for Creative Technologies, is spearheading the growth of this area – providing companies, which are adopting emerging and advanced technologies across creative subsectors, with support, funding and new opportunities to innovate. The Sector Plan sets out an ambition for the UK to be a “global leader in the emerging ‘createch’ sector embrac[ing] new technologies to drive intellectual property (IP) creation, maximising its value in the age of AI while protecting and incentivising human creativity.”⁸ It defines ‘Createch’ as the combination of “creative innovation and cutting-edge technology to generate novel products, services and experiences.”⁹ The CoSTAR Foresight Lab is further exploring what the “cutting-edge technologies” referred to in this definition might be – and how they are being adopted and diffused across Creative Industries businesses.¹⁰

Informing these broader efforts, this report – and all of the research and methodologies developed within the Foresight Lab – think through the lens of ‘creative technologies,’ ensuring emphasis on the specific kinds of technologies that the sector is adopting, their application and diffusion. This report aims to contribute to long-term thinking about this section of the economy, using novel methodologies and approaches.

6 [Future avenues for createch: insights and recommendations – UKRI](#)
7 [AI and creative technology scaleups: Communications and Digital Committee report - House of Lords Library](#)
8 [The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy - Creative Industries Sector Plan](#)
9 *Ibid.*
10 Future analysis will be published as part of the CoSTAR and Creative PEC ‘Creative Business Panel’

Applying foresight and futures in policy contexts

Foresight and futures methodologies in the policy landscape are not new. In order to adapt the approaches set out across the CoSTAR Foresight Lab’s publications to date,¹² this study consulted several existing approaches to foresight and futures thinking in a policy-specific context. This included EU policy foresight analysis,¹³ strategic foresight studies undertaken by the World Economic Forum (WEF)¹⁴, and the OECD Strategic Foresight Toolkit.¹⁵ More recent, specific methodological approaches were also consulted that focus on the ability of industry and policymakers to identify long-term and resilient courses of action towards desired futures. This included the GOS’ series of AI 2030 Scenarios published to aid UK policymakers plan for the future of AI.¹⁶

The Government Office for Science’s (GOS) first published its ‘Brief guide to Futures thinking and foresight’ in 2021, updating it in October 2025.¹⁷ The short report, delivered by the Technology Insights, Futures and Foresight (TIFF) team in the GOS, is part of a series of resources to “promote and embed strategic long-term thinking across government” and enable civil servants to “routinely consider future change and uncertainty in the decisions they make, the advice they provide and the investments they propose.”¹⁸ This programme of work took what the TIFF report refers to as “focus[sing] on the external context within which we [Government] deliver policy, taking account of the ‘big picture’”. We also used

11 [Government Office for Science, A Brief Guide to Futures Thinking and Foresight](#)
12 Please see reports ‘Introduction to Moments’, ‘Certain Uncertainties’, ‘Scenarios in Creative Convergence’ and ‘Future in Praxis’
13 [EU policy foresight](#)
14 [Using strategic foresight for government policy-making | World Economic Forum](#)
15 [Strategic Foresight Toolkit for Resilient Public Policy | OECD](#)
16 [AI_2030_Scenarios_Report.pdf](#)
17 [Futures thinking and foresight: a brief guide - GOV.UK](#)
18 *Ibid.*

“Policies which are based on assumptions of how the world is today can limit our choices and put us in a position of constantly responding to change, rather than creating the conditions to achieve the future we want.”¹¹

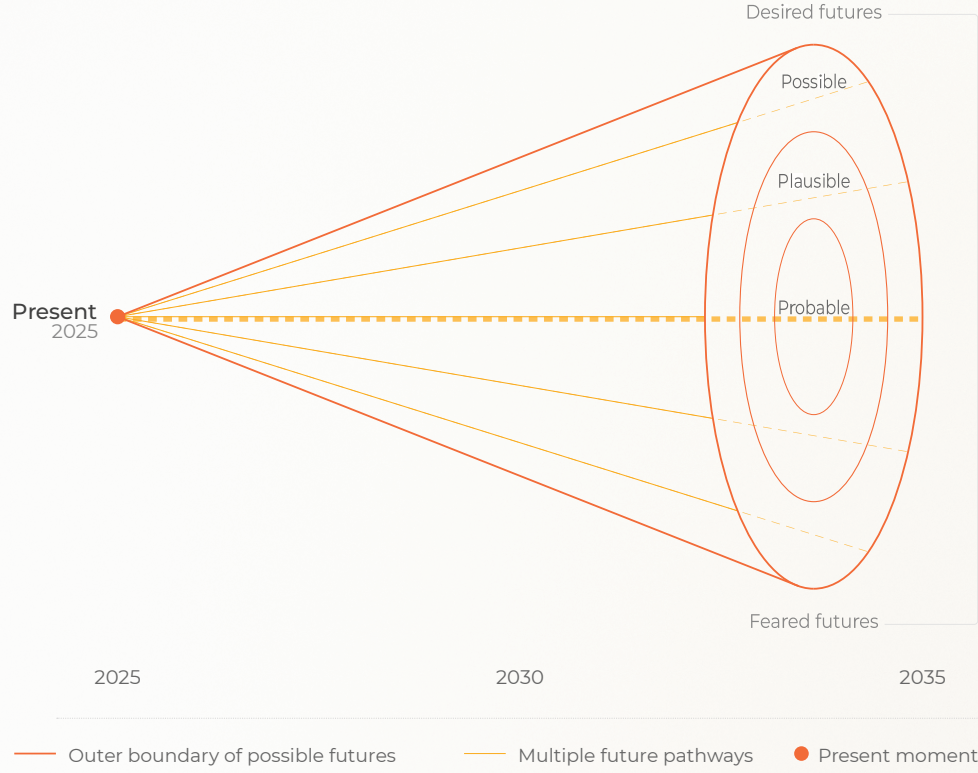
the “cone of uncertainty” as a reference point to illustrate multiple future possibilities in the workshop sessions hosted.¹⁹

Both of these references (the big picture and multiple future possibilities) become even more important in a policy context where devolution and devolved power are becoming more prominent in policy thinking: national and local policymaking intertwine and enable specific, contextual possibilities for the future of place and places.²⁰ Whilst the GOS’ resources are focussed on the implications of national policies, our approach was to consider ways of eliciting the multiple, possible futures that reflect different place-based contexts, combining national, regional and devolved long-term priorities.

Across many of these frameworks is an approach to policy development and implementation that prioritises future resilience and long-term thinking, applying scenario building and development as a core methodology for exploring alternative futures; they also recognise the importance of participatory and multi-stakeholder engagement in shaping futures insights and design. These approaches combine evidence gathering with imagination and creative thinking.

19 *Ibid.*
20 This turn, specifically in an RDI context, is explored further in the following chapter.

Cone of uncertainty
Creative technology futures, 2025–2035



From a single present moment, the cone opens toward multiple possible futures by 2035. Desired and feared can be classed as possible, plausible, or probable; degrees of certainty narrow inward toward the probable.

Project Overview

This report provides a framework through which we will seek to develop further collaborations across the UK to assess areas of high impact for the future of creative technology, premised on ‘policy foresight’. We have established a novel methodology that brings together foresight, policy and future scenario road mapping – which we foresee evolving through further collaboration and co-creation over time.

This work presents a series of policy pathways to 2035 and beyond that have been designed by, and with, policy leaders and policy intermediaries working in creative technology across the UK, accompanied by analysis of broad ranging insights collated across the workshop series and accompanying desk research. Key themes and plausible trajectories that are likely to have the biggest long-term impact on the UK’s creative technology landscape have been distilled through clustering and analysis.

Chapter 1 sets out the evolving policy context around creative technology innovation and R&D, tracking changes in priorities and funding mechanisms – particularly in the context of increasing regional devolution. It outlines timeline commitments of relevance set out by the Government to 2035, setting the starting point for this work and the pathways presented in later chapters. It then outlines policy priorities relating to the broader R&D and innovation landscape, with a particular focus on the Creative Industries and Digital and Technologies sectors. Finally, it explores the increasing intersection of emerging policy and strategy around R&D and regional devolution – signalling changes likely to shape the long-term of R&D and innovation investment and policymaking.

After setting the scene, Chapter 2 outlines the top-level project methodology, including the development of the research questions informed by the context set out in Chapter 1. This chapter is accompanied by a complementary methodological toolkit that has been designed as a practical guide for implementing the methodology in different contexts.

Chapter 3 outlines the creative technology policy pathways to 2035 and beyond co-created during the workshop sessions. It offers an analysis of central themes and tensions, followed by an outline of the long-term sectoral and technology priorities identified. The chapter analyses the scenarios designed in the workshops, outlining both desired and undesired futures for the creative technology ecosystem in the UK. Finally, the chapter focuses on four high impact themes likely to shape the long-term trajectory of the sector, including: creative education; artificial intelligence; ‘growth’; and international collaboration. For each thematic area, the chapter outlines a series of policy levers and key takeaways for policy and industry stakeholders to provide a roadmap of actions and recommendations.

01

Setting the scene: the UK's Industrial Strategy

As identified in the introduction, the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, published in 2025, sets the context for this work - in particular, the ambitions from the Creative Industries Sector Plan, the Digital and Technologies Sector Plan, and the Technology Adoption Review.²¹ The Strategy, informed by the earlier 'Invest 2035' whitepaper and consultation, establishes the Government's cross economy approach to its missions.²² This chapter outlines key ambitions of the Government aligned to creative technology R&D and innovation, providing an outline of developments and setting the scene for this project.

The Industrial Strategy sets out an approach to economic growth that focuses on eight identified growth sectors, including both the Creative Industries and Digital and Technologies. These sectors, referred to as the 'Industrial Strategy 8' (IS8), are defined as "highly productive, innovative, exporting sectors whose frontier industries create strategically important technologies and services deployed across the country." These sectors are estimated to add £152bn GVA to the economy by 2035 and create 1.1bn new jobs.²³

Across the IS8, there are a number of priorities that form the basis for consistent monitoring of the strategy-in-action across the next decade – with a central commitment to certainty, stability and long-termism. These include commitments to R&D investment (£86bn across the IS8 committed); skills and talent pipelines, enabling opportunities across the country; and key opportunity areas including AI and the net zero transition as mechanisms to "drive innovation and reshape global markets."²⁴ To date, quarterly updates on the performance of the Industrial Strategy have been published by the Government.²⁵ These quarterly updates focus on day-to-day delivery and implementation against the strategy's objectives, timelines and long-term ambitions.

In addition, since the strategy's publication, an independent Industrial Strategy Advisory Council (ISAC) has been established to monitor progress on its objectives and to advise on development and delivery. Most recently, ISAC has published a series of areas of research interest that captures the "most pressing questions [...] to strengthen the evidence base to deliver the Industrial Strategy and support growth of eight priority sectors" (IS8).²⁶ These areas of research interest span questions around the adoption of new technologies, overcoming barriers to R&D translation, accelerating innovation and commercialisation, through to skills needs, business dynamism in city region economies and maximising local growth.

21 [Technology Adoption Review - GOV.UK](#)

22 Outlined in the introduction, and set out in our methodological design in Chapter 3.

23 [ISAC areas of research interest - GOV.UK](#)

24 [The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

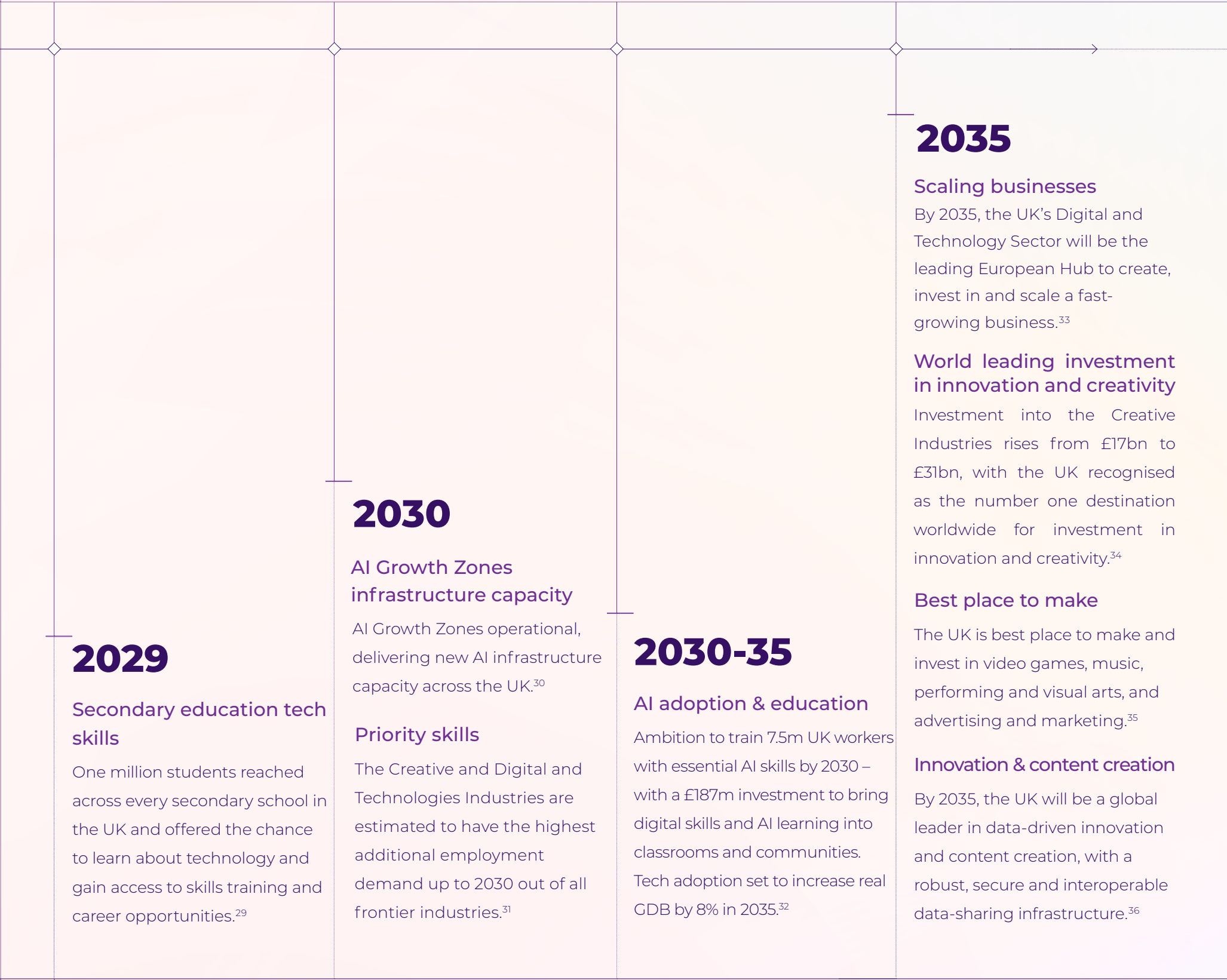
25 Latest update can be accessed at: [Industrial Strategy quarterly update: January to March 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

26 [ISAC areas of research interest - GOV.UK](#)

Timeline commitments across the IS

The Industrial Strategy, alongside recently developed Regional Growth Plans,²⁷ show an increasing focus on long-term ambition and establishing trajectories and pathways that provide steps towards success in 2035. It is evident that, across the UK, there is emphasis on creative technology as a high-growth potential area. Investments have been committed, and the decade ahead will likely see innovation translate into realised growth and opportunity, as creative technology increasingly interfaces with more people across more places.²⁸

The methodology developed for this work programme took central aims, ambitions and commitments from across the Industrial Strategy and associated documents in order to inform key areas of enquiry. The commitments outlined below, drawn from Government Sector Plans and strategies relevant to creative technology, are presented as a baseline timeline to 2035. The timeline on the right provides the top-level foundation from which the foresight exercises in the following chapters develop and build:



27 Please refer to the complementary *Growth Plan Primer* published alongside this report, which outlines key commitments and objectives aligned to creative technology across all UK-wide growth plans.

28 The focus on RDI in place is explored further later in the chapter.

29 Digital and Technologies Sector Plan - GOV.UK
30 Ibid.
31 Assessment of priority skills to 2030 - GOV.UK
32 Technology Adoption Review - GOV.UK
33 Industrial Strategy - GOV.UK
34 Creative Industries Sector Plan - GOV.UK
35 Ibid.
36 The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK

Regional devolution and new directions for R&D and innovation

The Government has identified R&D and innovation as key drivers of growth across the UK. As part of these efforts, new UK-wide approaches have been prioritised across UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). This aligns with a broader policy context of devolution, explored in further detail in the [Creative Tech Growth Plan Primer](#), which has been published as a complementary resource to this report.

Commitments and investment via UKRI signal a long-term emphasis on expanding innovation opportunity across the UK, ensuring that all regions and nations feel the positive impacts of R&D – from new jobs, skills development opportunities and improvements in local infrastructure. This topic continues to be central in recent policy debate.

In March 2026, the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee published a series of recommendations as part of a new report focussed on innovation-led growth across the regions.³⁷ The report recommends a more rigorous focus on transparent measurement of regional impact across public and private R&D spending. In addition, the report also suggests the appointment of special ministers to champion innovation in each region across the UK – to ensure that regional needs, opportunities and interests are considered in decisions on investment and infrastructure. The report also considers the evolving interactions between regional and national innovation policy, and considers avenues through which devolved national, regional and local authorities play a greater role in funding early-stage businesses through mechanisms like match funding against UKRI awards.

In addition, it also sets out the opportunity for UKRI to map existing capabilities, identify underserved regions and prioritise infrastructure development that supports economic resilience and long-term growth across regions of the UK.

37 [Innovation, growth and the regions - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

“Responsive, targeted innovation policy designed to support the emergence and growth of innovation clusters can benefit both individual regions and the entire UK.”³⁷

It is in this context that UKRI has streamlined its approach to funding, aligning it to identified national priorities, with designated funding now attached to the IS8 sectors and aligned to their respective Industrial Strategy Sector Plans. This approach, the UKRI Chief Executive Ian Chapman outlines, will enable efficient UKRI-wide programmes instead of programmes within disparate research councils.³⁸ A recent town hall on the forthcoming UKRI strategy outlined that all UKRI activities will be underpinned by four key enablers, including: investment in regions; infrastructure; international partners; talent and skills.³⁹

A focus on place-led growth and delivery has been further emphasised through the development of a new programme model that puts place-led decision making at the heart of R&D funding. The Local Innovation Partnerships Fund (LIPF), announced by UKRI in late 2025, marks a significant new approach to funding distribution, with £500m committed to developing and scaling high-potential innovation clusters across the UK. The Fund invites places to put forward propositions that enable existing and established clusters to scale and deepen their impact, or to enable the growth and maturation of emerging clusters with significant potential to generate economic value, committing £30m specifically for each of the Mayoral Strategic Authorities.⁴⁰ The programme has been designed to foreground “locally empowered decision making and co-creation” to ensure the alignment of both local and national policy priorities – aligning national Government policy with Local Growth Plans. The programme brings together local governance (via Combined Authorities and Devolved Administrations) with local civic institutions, universities, businesses and industry.

38 [Open letter from Ian Chapman to research and innovation community – UKRI](#)
39 The full UKRI strategy is due to be launched in June/July 2026.
40 [Local Innovation Partnerships Fund – UKRI](#)

The LIPF marks a significant shift in models for place-led R&D and innovation activity – aligned closely to Government mission areas and priorities identified in the Industrial Strategy, with a specific objective of delivering regional economic growth through R&D.

UKRI's sector specific "R&D strategy for the creative and cultural economy" was launched in January 2026. With a focus on growth, the strategy identified a series of priority areas including:

- The development of a skilled workforce
- The adoption of new 'createch'
- Advances in intellectual property fit for the age of artificial intelligence (AI)

As part of the funding commitments published alongside the strategy, this includes £27 million of additional investment in a new wave of Creative Industries Clusters to support place-based R&D that will drive commercial opportunities and capabilities set to enhance regions across the UK. This builds on the success of previous Creative Clusters, many of which have focussed on technology R&D and innovation including XR Stories (York), StoryFutures (London), Creative Informatics (Edinburgh) and most recently Createch Frontiers (West Midlands) and MusicFutures (Liverpool). In addition, a further £25m has been secured to expand the CoSTAR Network, under the banner 'Createch Futures'.⁴¹ These commitments illustrate the increasing focus and investments into place-based and national capability in creative technology and innovation.

These evolving priorities and the increasing intersection of regional devolution and R&D and innovation in the UK, have shaped the methods, design and research questions underpinning this report and broader programme of work; the following chapter, and accompanying methodological toolkit, set out the development of the research questions and methodology in detail.

41 [Regions set to benefit from new creative industries funding - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regions-set-to-benefit-from-new-creative-industries-funding)

02

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology developed for the wider programme of work, building on the policy context set out in Chapter 1. A foresight-led approach shaped the research design, bringing together desk research, horizon scanning and workshops to support long-term creative technology policymaking.

A complementary toolkit encompassing this project methodology has been published alongside this report and can be accessed [here](#).

This project set out to explore and develop future scenarios and visions of the UK's creative technology landscape in 2035 and beyond, and to identify long-term and impactful policy interventions that could enable desired futures in creative technology. The methodology was developed with this objective in mind, whilst also addressing the five UK Government mission areas and policy objectives set out in the Industrial Strategy, including devolution and R&D programmes as set out in the previous chapter. Recognising the limitations of short-term policymaking in the context of rapid technological and cultural change, the research applied a foresight-led approach to support long-term and anticipatory policy thinking.

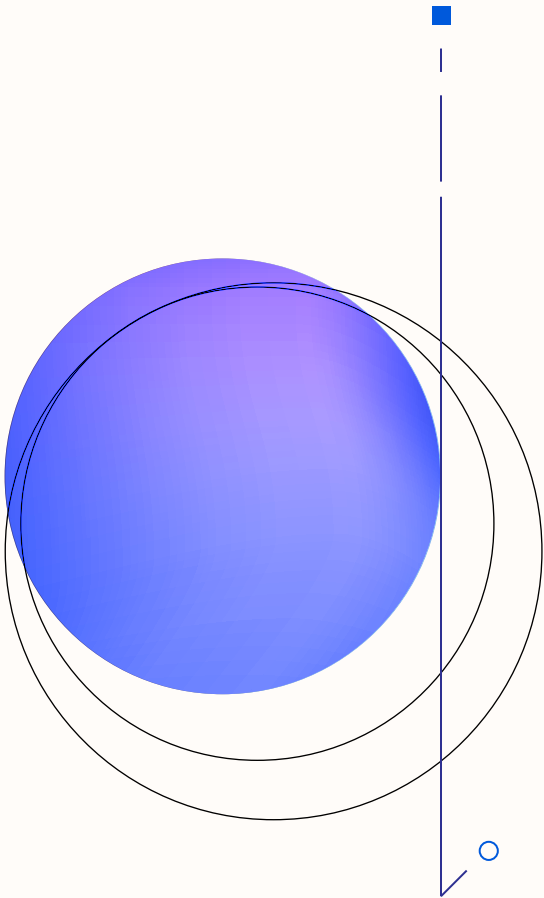
The research was guided by three core research questions:

1. What are the emerging trends and signals of change shaping the UK's creative technology landscape?
2. What future scenarios and visions of creative technology development are envisioned by UK policymakers, and policy adjacent leaders in creative technologies across the UK?
3. What policy interventions should be adopted to enable desired futures and avoid undesired futures?

To address the research questions, the project employed a qualitative methodology, structured across desk research and workshops.

Horizon scanning desk research

Desk research formed the foundation of the analysis, involving a structured review of policy documents, sector reports and relevant foresight literature to build an evidence base. This included examining government publications, strategy papers, consultation documents, and grey literature, alongside academic and practitioner work on foresight methodologies. The process identified key themes, emerging signals of change, and established drivers shaping the creative technology ecosystem.



Workshop programme

Building on this evidence base, a programme of national and regional workshops was delivered between March and July 2025. Participants were recruited from UK and Devolved Government Departments, Local and Combined Authorities, UKRI, the Creative Industries Council, and other significant bodies working across Creative Industries and technology policy, innovation and R&D. The workshops took place in the following locations:

- London (Loughborough University London campus, Here East)
- Online workshop
- Edinburgh (Edinburgh Futures Institute, part of Creative Tech Scotland Gathering 2025)
- Bristol (University of Bristol, delivered in collaboration with MyWorld)
- York (University of York, in collaboration with XR Network+ and the Creative PEC).

The workshops applied foresight and co-design approaches to bring together diverse perspectives and place-based insights, ensuring future scenarios reflected both national priorities and regional contexts. The methodology was built around the following principles:

- Must enable insights on current policy priorities through the framing of long-term ambitions;
- Must speak to outlined Government priorities and mission areas;
- Must enable creative thinking around long-term objectives and success measures;
- Must align cross-economy opportunities and challenges specific to place;
- Must use an inclusive, participatory, co-design approach to futures design and policy design.

Workshop design and foresight approach

Defining priority areas: early participatory pilot

To undertake early scoping work, we delivered a piloting workshop with the CoSTAR Foresight Lab’s Creative Technology Policy Forum, a group of policy leaders working across Screen, Games, Performance and Digital Entertainment. Following an introduction to the foresight methodology, we asked Forum members to reflect on the biggest uncertainties and challenges that are likely to have the greatest long-term impact on creative technology innovation in the UK. During this pilot workshop, there was a recurrent focus around **skills, education and talent pipelines**, and **R&D, innovation and technology adoption**, including:

- Challenges around regulatory uncertainty, skills and lack of tech diffusion
- R&D investments not followed up by the required skills investment
- Talent pipeline for tech and creators is under threat from poorer grassroots and education
- Digital skills are portable and work is being done outside UK

As such, these areas became our points of focus in the design of the project methodology as themes that would capture high-impact areas.

This pilot workshop and evidence review informed the design of the workshops and led to a shortlist of focus areas:

1. R&D, innovation & technology adoption
2. Education, skills & workforce.

The workshops that followed were structured around a three-part design:

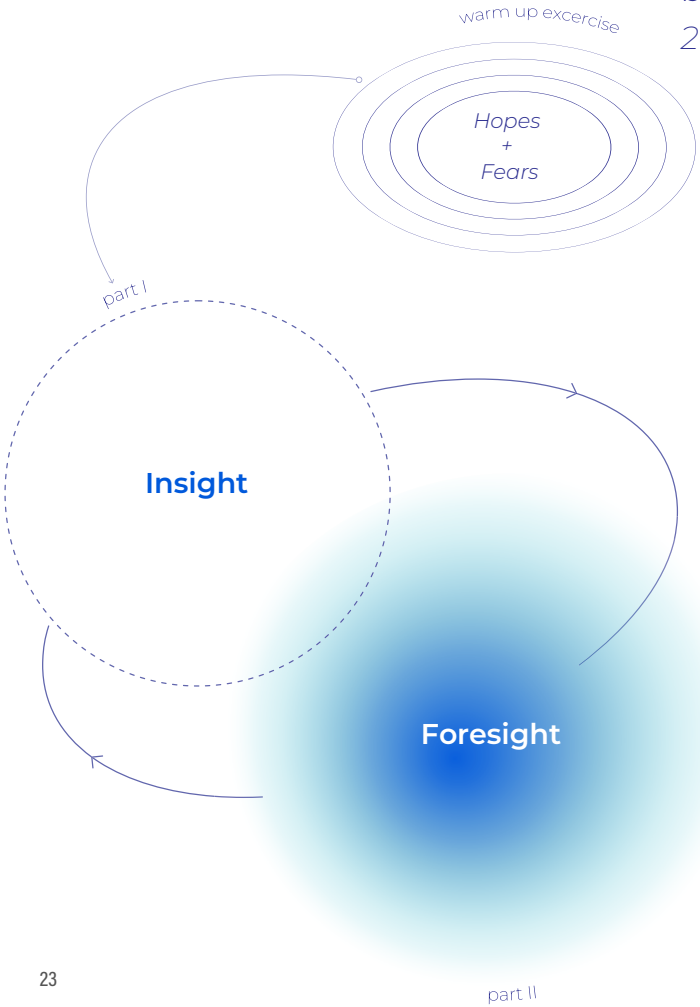
Hopes & fears: participants articulated expectations and concerns for the future, surfacing shared uncertainties

Insight: participants explored current policy priorities, sectoral challenges and regional/devolved policy priorities and dynamics

Foresight: participants developed future scenarios using a series of structured exercises. Using prompts and timeline tools, groups developed narratives and mapped the sequence of policy interventions that might lead to different outcomes in 2035.

As part of the foresight segment of the workshops, sub-groups were tasked with undertaking one of the following activities:

- a. *roadmapping towards a dystopian future* (start from today and map forward)
- or
- b. *backcasting from a utopian future* (start from 2035 and work backwards)



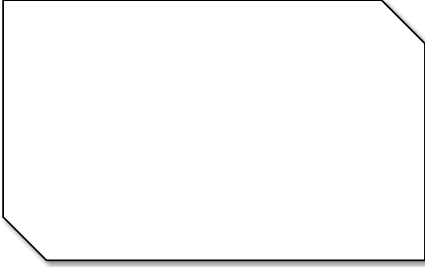
2035 SCENARIO DESIGN



ForesightLAB

Scenario title:

Draw a picture that captures a snapshot of the world



Describe the world in one sentence:

Use the prompts below to guide your thinking

In 2035, the UK has prioritised

On the global stage, the UK is now

A new National Government strategy related to

_____ has been published.

Concurrently, a local/regional strategy focussed on

_____ has been developed.

The people/companies/organisations benefitting most from these strategies are

The people/companies/organisations missing out are

Local ecosystems are

The local creative technology landscape feels

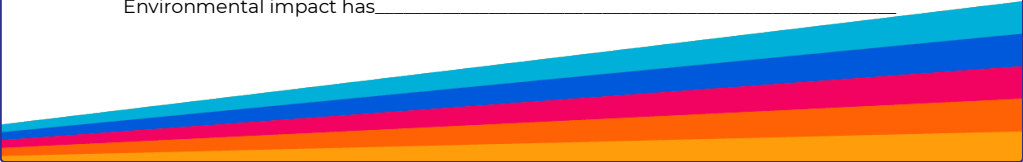
Growth has

Communities are

Infrastructure is

Public services are

Environmental impact has



Example of the narrative worksheet used to structure participant reflections and scenario development during the workshops. For further information on the project methodology please see the complementary [methodology toolkit](#) published alongside this report.

Synthesis

The final synthesis combined workshop outputs with findings from desk research using a thematic analysis approach. Workshop discussions and scenario outputs were systematically reviewed to identify recurring themes and areas of consensus or divergence. These insights were then triangulated with evidence from policy documents and foresight literature. The analysis was structured across different themes, enabling the identification of structural tensions, policy interventions and trajectories. Coding and synthesis were conducted using qualitative analysis tools, supporting the organisation and refinement of themes throughout the process. The synthesis led to a series of future scenarios and pathways, high-impact themes and policy recommendations, outlined in the following chapter.⁴²

Methodology toolkit

A complementary [methodology toolkit](#) has been developed alongside this report, offering a practical guide for applying the foresight approach developed for this project. The toolkit includes all workshop templates and facilitation guidance, and can be used and adapted across different contexts to enable long-term policy thinking and design.

⁴² Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Loughborough University. Identifiable information (e.g. names and contact details) was collected only for consent and coordination purposes, processed on a public task basis, and accessed solely by the research team. While names may have been visible during workshops, participants were asked not to share personal information. All data were securely stored on University systems, with identifiable data retained only for the duration of the study. No identifiable information is

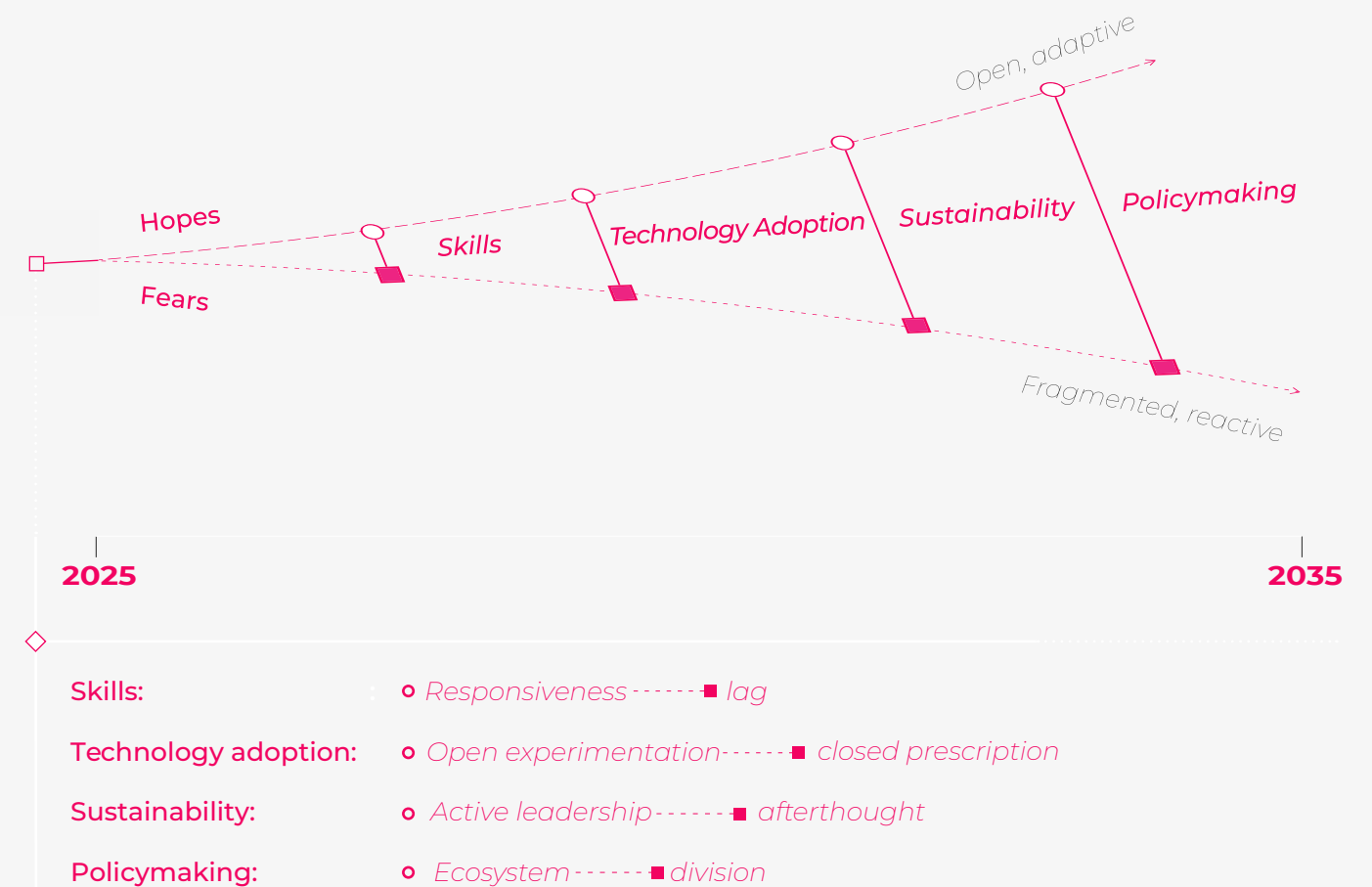
03

Creative tech futures

This chapter presents from the national and regional workshop programme and horizon-scanning research. The findings show pathways to 2035, informed by recurrent hopes and fears for the future that are likely to have high impact on the future of creative technology R&D and innovation. It illustrates examples of the specific scenarios developed by participants – demonstrating key areas of high impact across imagined futures.

Tensions revealed across all thematic areas

By using the utopian and dystopian futures approach,⁴³ the workshops revealed recurring thematic areas for participants' hopes and fears. This section explores the emerging structural tensions across recurring areas raised in all sessions, alluding to possible futures. These tensions can be viewed as pathways to guide strategy and long-term development.



43 Explored in more detail in the [Methodology Toolkit](#)

Skills

Responsiveness Vs Lag

Participants expressed a desire for an open ecosystem which prioritised hiring of talent with multiple skillsets, with the biggest concern being that the talent pipeline fails to keep pace with the speed of technological change and innovation.

Insights revealed a central tension: a focus on the high speed and efficiency of innovation versus a complex skills system that evolves slowly; where innovation responds to the long-term, the skills system responds to the needs of today. This tension must be addressed by investing in long-term action to better align innovation and skills systems – and enabling skills development that is more adaptive to cross-disciplinary application.

Potential levers:

- Incentivising RDI and education partnerships
- The alignment of skills investment & programme delivery with local cluster and R&D strength areas
- Piloting creative technology curricula modules in secondary education

Signal

'Create Talent' – North East Combined Authority

Mayor of the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, Kim McGuinness, has recently announced a £4m skills programme to help local people, prioritising underrepresented groups, get skills and support to work in the region's Creative Industries.

Signal

Building an AI-ready education system

Increasingly, reports are exploring how England's education system must adapt in the age of AI. There is growing emphasis on curriculum reform, teacher support, family engagement and stronger digital infrastructure, alongside the need to close AI literacy gaps among educators and build clearer pathways into AI-related skills. Ensuring fair access to training, resources and technology will be important, particularly as countries that begin this work early may be better positioned in the global AI economy.

Technology adoption

Closed prescription Vs open experimentation

AI, immersive tools, and digital infrastructure are already transforming how creative work is produced, distributed, and monetised. Future growth depends on ensuring equitable access to these tools, addressing digital poverty, and embedding technology across education, business support, and regional development. Participants stressed that technology adoption should not be framed purely as being concerned with efficiency or productivity, but as a catalyst for creativity, inclusion, and resilience in local economies in particular.

Fears were largely concerned with creation and distribution moving further out of the hands of creators and instead being dominated by big tech platforms. In the same vein, there were consistent concerns about mistrust in technology leading to adoption and innovation lag, primarily driven by inadequate regulation, lack of transparency, and the management and use of creative IP in the evolving generative AI era.

On the other hand, participants' hopes relating to technology adoption focussed on the enabling of wide-reaching experimentation, access – and the democratisation of creativity.

Potential levers:

- Further enabling UK-wide access to facilities and technologies, particularly for small high-growth potential businesses
- In conjunction with the above, offering guidance for businesses to support the introduction of new technologies into workflows
- Best practice case studies

Signal

Public trust is central metric for tech adoption

There is a clear gap between the UK government's pro-AI agenda and public attitudes, with more people viewing AI as a risk than an opportunity and 38% citing lack of trust as a key barrier. This matters because low trust can slow adoption and undermine the legitimacy of AI-driven policies. Improving public confidence through transparency, safeguards, and clear benefits is essential for accelerating AI uptake and delivering positive social and economic outcomes.

Sustainability

Afterthought Vs active leadership

The critical importance of planning around sustainability and the carbon impacts of increasing technological adoption was raised across multiple workshops. Participants saw a central role for the Creative Industries to lead the way in sustainable technology adoption frameworks that could cascade and inform best practice across multiple sectors in the economy. This would build out of other work the sector has led on, including the Creative Climate Charter delivered by the Creative Industries Council in 2023.⁴⁴ A hope raised by participants was that financial support and drive for green innovation across the sector would be scaled up, ensuring that sustainability efforts remain central to creative technology innovation activity.

Many fears concerning sustainability centred on it becoming an afterthought – with new technologies and use cases emerging without strong guidance and support to enable sustainable best practice. This was particularly prominent around mentions of AI infrastructure, and the long-term impact on areas where AI Growth Zones are being developed. There was recognition of a need to balance technology innovation alongside sustainability frameworks – ensuring that resources required to power data centres and large technology infrastructure are transparent, empowering local communities, and sharing best practice frameworks.

Potential levers:

- Cross-governmental coordination in the development and deployment of new technological infrastructure
- The development of creative technology specific frameworks, use cases and accreditations
- Piloting sustainability initiatives aligned to technology innovation across regions and Nations, in particular attached to AI Growth Zones.

Signal

Risks of AI to the climate and environment

AI environmental impact is growing rapidly, with computing power increasing tenfold from 2018–2022 and inference now accounting for 80–90% of usage. Data centres consumed 1.5% of global electricity in 2024, projected to double by 2030, potentially driving up emissions (already at ~1% of global totals) and adding up to 1.6 gigatonnes of CO2 equivalent (GtCO2e) emissions by 2035. They also place heavy pressure on resources, with AI expected to use 4.2–6.6 billion cubic metres of water by 2027, raising concerns about sustainability, transparency, and local environmental impacts.

44 Creative Climate Charter - The Creative Industries

Policymaking and sectoral definition

Ecosystem Vs division

Hopes frequently pointed to more joined-up policy and decision-making around creative technology – where the relationship between the Creative Industries and Digital and Technology fosters further collaboration and opportunity. There were regular mentions of further alignment between devolved and national policy and strategy, forging closer partnerships. In particular, participants stressed that that micro and small businesses working with creative technology across the UK should be given a voice in policymaking at local, regional and national levels. One hope focussed on more open approaches to subsector definitions, remaining agile to encompass emerging frontier sectors set to have long-term growth potential.

Fears were similarly aligned to sector definitions, highlighting that the artificial divide between technology and creative sectors in current definitions and policy approaches is impeding creative technology in the long-term. In addition, there were concerns around the ability for policymaking to remain responsive to emerging technologies to ensure that the UK remains a world leader, as opposed to limiting scope to technologies with high impact in the present.

Potential levers:

- Further engagement and joined-up approaches across DCMS and DSIT, beyond the AI and Copyright consultation – using roundtables, for example, to enable long-term discussion and policy development around creative technology.
- A strong effort across Government, with support from the Creative Industries Council, to explore formal definitions of creative technology and, longer term, a recognition around the changing parameters of sector and sub-sector definitions

Signal

Co-occurrence of creativity and AI skills in job postings

A significant post-ChatGPT increase in job ads demanding both AI skills and creativity. This shows that skill hybridization is the new market standard. Employers are no longer looking for just an artist or just a coder, but a hybrid professional with both creativity and AI skills.

Strategic priority: Delivering on devolution

A recurring theme across the workshops was the misalignment between national policy frameworks and local needs. While national strategies have often emphasised London and large-scale clusters around city-regions, participants expressed concern that this neglects smaller organisations, rural microclusters, and the wider regions.

Local contexts were seen as vital sites for experimentation and innovation, yet under resourced. There was strong support for devolution of decision-making and funding, with investments curated around place and aligned with community priorities. Participants argued that national policymaking needs to become more agile and collaborative across government departments, embedding regional voices and addressing challenges such as transport, housing, and digital poverty that directly shape the creative economy.

Participants also recognised the potential for regions to play a more active role in international partnerships. Involving regional ecosystems in global relationship-building was seen as an opportunity to strengthen both local and national standing.

2035 Scenarios and trajectories

Summary: Utopias Vs Dystopias

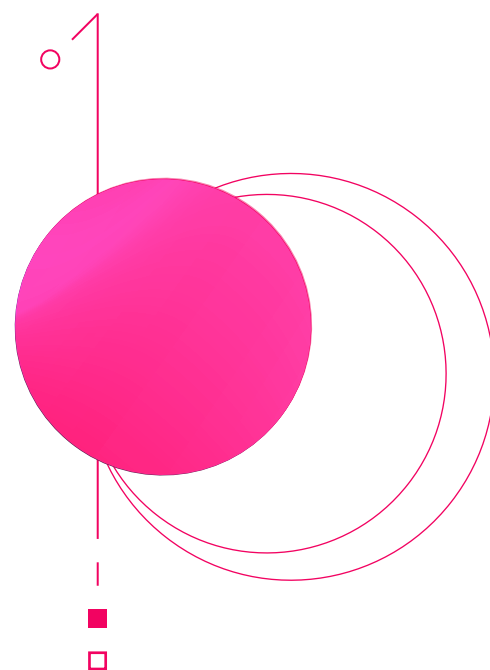
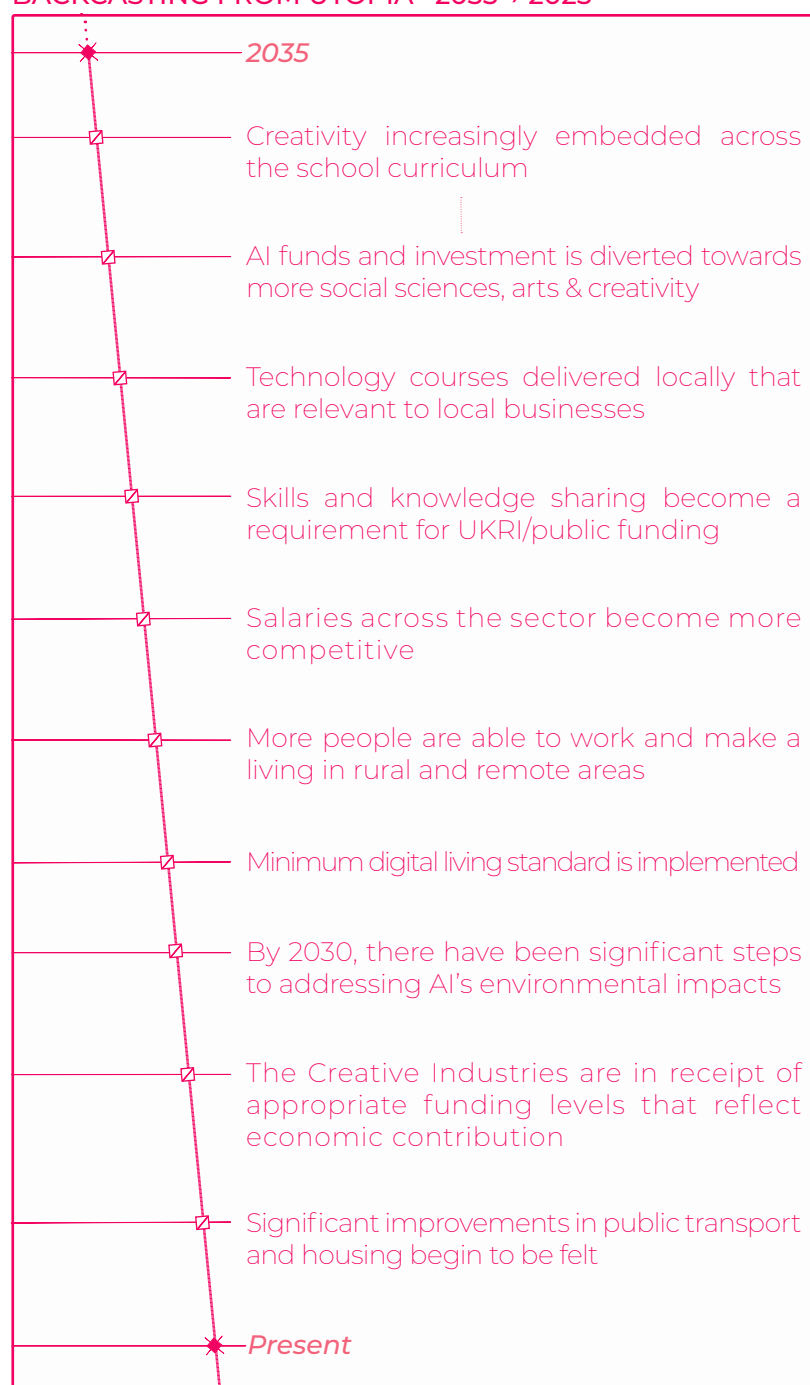
The utopian scenarios developed in the workshops provide a rich mixture of imagined futures for the UK in 2035. While each emphasises different dimensions, focusing on either Theme 1, *R&D, innovation and technology* adoption, or Theme 2, *Skills, education and talent pipeline*, they converge around shared values: inclusion, diversity, accessibility, sustainability, and the recognition of creativity as a central driver of progress and growth. These visions suggest a radical redirection of national priorities, where creativity is no longer peripheral but becomes a foundational value across the economy.

The dystopian scenarios for 2035 present a warning of what the future of R&D, innovation, & creative technology in the UK could be if the current technological, political, and economic imbalances proceed to be unconstrained. The scenarios reveal a state in which AI becomes an instrument of control, inequality, & environmental destruction. The interests of big tech corporations and centralised power override the interests of people and communities. In the dystopian discussions, the UK loses its creative leadership, its education system is hollowed out, and its regions are stripped of agency and opportunity. Innovation becomes synonymous with surveillance, automation, and profit concentration, while creativity and cultural value disappear from public life.

Agency for All

In 2035, the UK created a skills system that prioritised creativity of everybody. Based on principles of rights and sustainability, education programmes were designed for societies rather than industries. The UK became a leader in creative education prioritising creative potential of citizens and communities. Being empowered and connected, citizens were the main beneficiaries of this system, while big corporations were missing out. The creative sectors were the main drivers of growth, innovation and new technology.

BACKCASTING FROM UTOPIA · 2035 → 2025



South East Super Cluster

In 2035, the UK has prioritised the interests of big tech corporation located in London and South East. On the global stage, the UK is subservient and no longer creatively leading. A new national government strategy is developed that focuses on building even more data centres around the UK built to support London based tech super clusters. Big global tech giants are the main beneficiaries of these strategies, while creatives, SMEs and freelancers miss out. Local ecosystems slowly deteriorate with no support, and the central Growth mission fails to be distributive, inclusive or make a difference to people's lives. Communities across the UK feel no benefits, whilst large firms continue to profit.

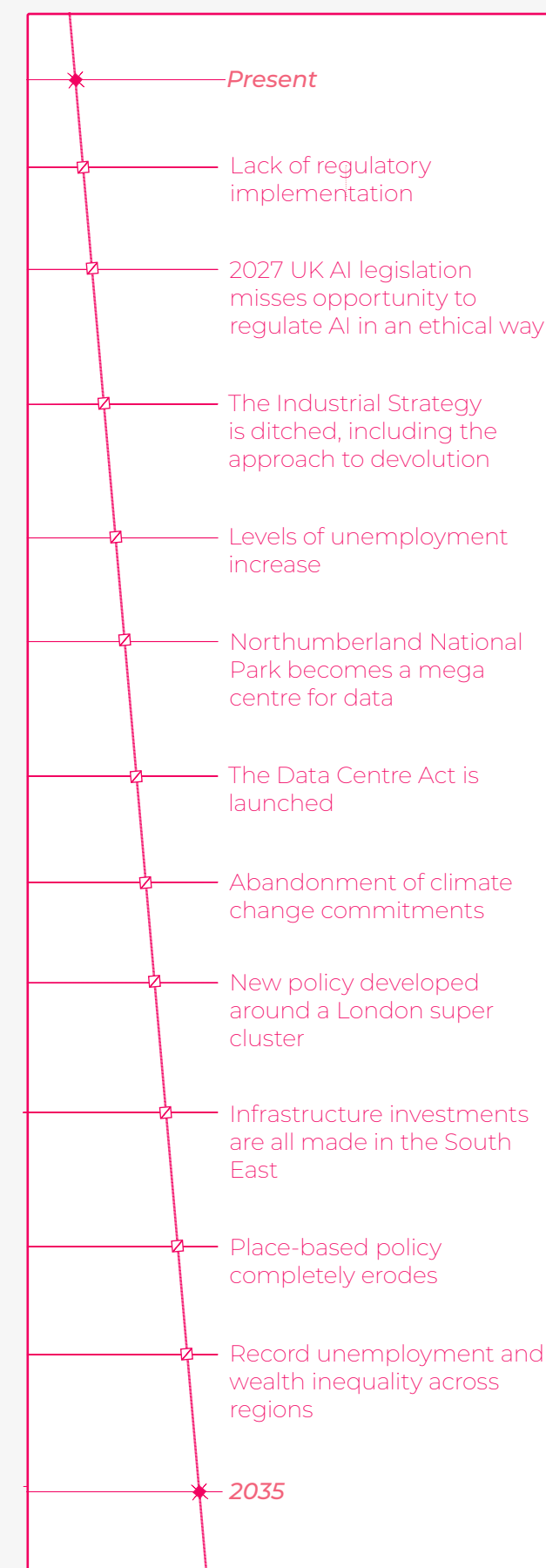
Deregulated AI growth is accompanied by significant investment in big tech and AI companies, and there is no investment in ethical or CI-driven AI companies. The outcome of the UK government consultation on AI prioritises big tech over CIs.

New creative IP depletes, and creative professionals lose jobs to generative AI. The creative workforce is completely overlooked in policies, and as a result, people leave the industry.

This system does not provide any support for startups, or for innovation. Nor does it provide any investment into R&D for the CIs or offer any tax relief for the sector. The system reinforces existing inequality of opportunities contributing to a growing digital skill gap.

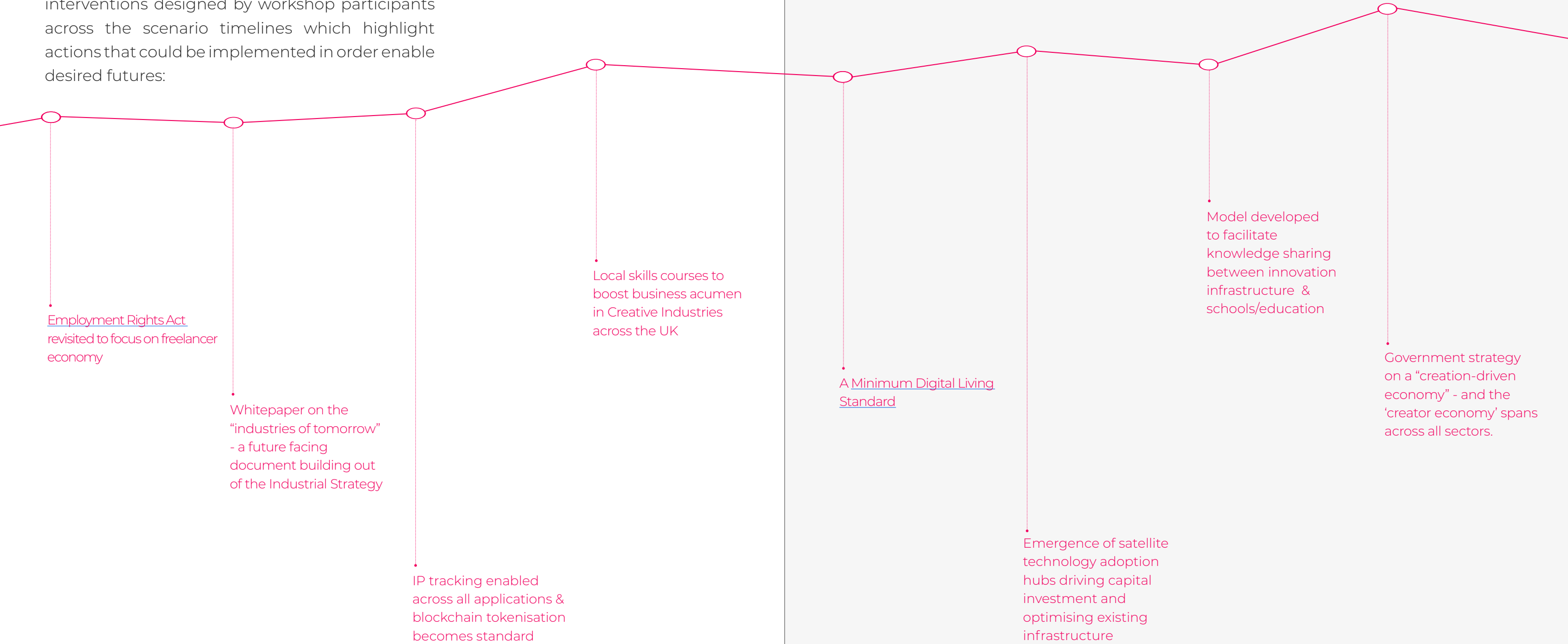
Over the decade, UK policy continues to focus on London providing no investment in regional / rural infrastructure. R&D is instead focused on national priorities for the CIs and located and delivered in London.

FORECASTING TO DYSTOPIA · 2025 → 2035



Trajectory timeline

Across all of the utopian and dystopian timelines created during the workshops, a number of different initiatives, approaches and actions were developed by participants that would enable those trajectories. Below we map a series of recurrent interventions designed by workshop participants across the scenario timelines which highlight actions that could be implemented in order enable desired futures:





High impact themes and tensions

The timelines, future scenarios and visions developed provided a significant range of material that has been analysed and translated into a roadmap of strategic insights. Recurring themes across the scenarios and timelines designed by participants were assessed and clustered into high-impact themes and recurring tensions.

Across the workshops, four central thematic areas emerged as highly impactful for the future. These themes are intentionally broad – in order to focus on the tensions revealed across the utopian and dystopian future trajectories:

- Creative education
- Artificial Intelligence
- Growth
- International collaboration

The four high-impact thematic areas are visually represented – with aligned hopes and fears visualised as potential future pathways. The analysis explores what the tensions between these pathways reveal, including key takeaways and implications to inform long-term strategy and planning.

THEME 01

Creative Education

Undesired future trajectories

- Undermined:** the importance of creative education is continually undermined, leading to its depletion
- Maze:** pathways and skillsets into creative careers remain unclear and education providers struggle to be responsive to the pace of change
- Patchy delivery:** devolution of skills and education budgets means delivery is inconsistent across the UK and there is fragmentation of policy and intervention delivery
- Obsolescence:** creative subjects are completely removed from the national curriculum.

Desired future trajectories

- UK leadership:** the UK sets the global standard by prioritising the creative potential of all citizens and communities
- STEAM powered:** the UK focuses education on STEAM, teaching principles and competencies of tech rather than tech skills alone – this comes with an increase in gamified learning
- Access:** access to technology is democratised through creative education pathways which remain agile to the pace of change
- “One stop shop”:** creative and digital skills pathways are neatly refined for people across all age groups – a holistic creative education strategy with a cradle-to-grave approach.

Key takeaways and implications

There is a recognition of the role creative education and subjects across the education pipeline will play in how young people critically understand technologies, how they work, and recognise the kinds of principles that applications should be built around. Ensuring creative technology is featured across education, alongside clarity in pathways into careers, will be crucial for long-term growth and a thriving workforce.

Creative skills partnerships
R&D programmes and industry should consider partnerships and knowledge sharing with education providers. Government policy should incentivise these kinds of partnerships.

Place-based skills planning
Combined and Strategic Mayoral Authorities should ensure that skills plans encompass creative and digital skillsets, via lifelong learning models – aligned to local cluster and identified future growth strengths.

Accessible talent routes
Scaling creative businesses should consider accessible routes for hiring young people, including via apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

Signal

Reforming creative education and the talent pipeline

Access to creative careers is shaped by inequality, with artists more likely to come from privileged backgrounds due to unequal access to arts education. Declining provision in state schools, combined with structural barriers in further and higher education, is narrowing the talent pipeline and excluding underrepresented groups. Addressing this requires systemic reform, including embedding creative subjects across education, improving access to skills pathways, and supporting lifelong learning. Without this, the sector risks reinforcing inequality and limiting future growth and innovation.

THEME 02

Artificial Intelligence

Undesired future trajectories

- Job displacement:** AI has far reaching consequences on the job market, in particular, entry level careers providing routes into the Creative Industries
- Climate catastrophe:** more data centres are built in rural parts of the UK without any attention paid to sustainability policy and implementation
- SMEs left behind:** multinationals are prioritised as partners of choice and continue to be the recipients of Government incentives, leading to small business crash/incubation without growth.

Desired future trajectories

- Increased AI/CI funding:** more funding for AI opportunities and developments are distributed to the Creative Industries – ensuring alignment and mutual benefits – with a focus on opportunities, rather than polarity between the sectors
- Strong sustainability policy:** strong commitments to AI sustainability policy emerge as priority, driving best practice across innovation and R&D, with established standards and incentives for UK businesses
- ‘Be nice to AI’:** AI becomes a friendly collaborator in creation and creative processes – it is free to access, and ethically sourced. People see AI bots as collaborators, rather than giving commands.

Key takeaways and implications

AI is seen as a key feature of workflows across the Creative Industries in the years to come. However, there is an expectation that investments in AI will be coupled with careful sustainability policies and with recognition of their implications for jobs. Small and scaling businesses should be supported with appropriate frameworks to develop responsible solutions, with a view to this contributing to their global competitiveness.

Responsible AI coordination

Cross-governmental partnership on responsible AI development should be prioritised, incentivising responsible development, and the development of principles guided by robust regulation. Regional hubs and centres of excellence could be leveraged as testbeds for implementation.

Trusted AI standards

Transparency in model development will be crucial for adoption of AI across the Creative Industries. Industry in the UK should prioritise responsible AI approaches, adhering to IP and copyright law – whilst also being aware of inconsistent regulatory requirements internationally.

Creative workforce transitions

Further exploration of the impact of AI on future jobs across the Creative Industries should be undertaken, both jobs likely to impacted, and those set to emerge.

Signal

AI in the Creative Industries:

Opportunities and tensions

AI is rapidly transforming the creative industries, with widespread adoption across sectors like marketing (71% usage), game development, and film—boosting efficiency but raising concerns about accuracy, jobs, and earnings. While the sector is well positioned to drive growth through AI, outcomes will depend on how effectively it is adopted and integrated with skills. Key policy priorities include balanced regulation, investment in skills, support for innovation and financing, and coordinated strategies to remain globally competitive.

THEME 03

Growth

Undesired future trajectories

- Growth for the few:** Growth becomes a reference for strengthening a few monopolies based outside of the UK, and remains unseen and unfelt across the nation, with no benefit to UK citizens and communities
- Stagnated:** growth remains a word and mission heard but never seen, coupled with continued rising unemployment and income disparity
- 'Bad Growth Zones':** All Growth Zones see big-tech firms becoming the main beneficiaries – communities feel no benefits and regions are hindered rather than helped to grow.

Desired future trajectories

- Growth for good:** growth focussed on people and quality of life is prioritised, and enacted through universal access to creativity and culture – which are seen as drivers of growth for good
- Distributed:** growth is present and visible, where terminology is clear and the benefits are tangible across regions and nations
- Creative:** the Creative Industries is the leading sector and driver of growth, innovation and R&D, driving responsible technology adoption and diffusion
- Qualitative:** Growth is focussed on making regions, place and local ecosystems resilient, connected, integrated and visible.

Signal

[Future Generations 2025 report,](#)
[Office for the Future Generations](#)
[Commissioner for Wales](#)
Wales is the first country in the world to appoint a Future Generations Commissioner focussed on well-being of future generations. The 2025 Future Generations report resists short-term fixes and outlines a commitment to the long-term future Wales. As part of this commitment, the report rejects the UK Government's economic imperative of growth, instead stating: "Cymru has chosen a different path, which prioritises economic growth for a purpose, which is the well-being of people and planet."

Key takeaways and implications

As seen across many of the Local Growth Plans, approaches to 'inclusive growth', or models of growth that explore impacts beyond the purely economic, are important to consider across regional innovation ecosystems. There is an important role for creative technology clusters and practitioners to play in solving local challenges and connecting with communities.

Inclusive growth measures

National Government should pay attention to the articulation of growth across Regional Growth Plans, and explore metrics beyond economic impact.

Ecosystem resilience

Ecosystem resilience remains an important priority in the context of place. Continued investment in creative technology R&D will provide opportunities for creative businesses to remain adaptive to technological change.

THEME 04

International Collaboration

Undesired future trajectories

Inward investment depletion: flux & uncertain international trade have significant detrimental impact on the sector across the UK, with inward investment from the USA, the sector's biggest inward investor, reducing

Big tech outsourcing: outsourcing undermines responsible technology innovation and R&D in the UK – with SMEs left behind as focus and investment channels increasingly to global tech giants – having significant impacts on regions and place.

Desired future trajectories

Global R&D powerhouse: the UK is world renowned for innovation and R&D mechanisms delivered across regions and place, designing accessible technology programmes built around creativity

New partnerships: new Trade Deals enable regions to forge specific place-led deals with international partners, as well as enabling more direct access to international markets and inward investment.

Key takeaways and implications

Alongside complementary national policy, there is a desire for appropriate agency across regions and nations when it comes to building international relationships, establishing place-based soft power assets, identifying unique areas of strength and securing inward investment opportunities.

International partnership pathways

National policy should encourage and empower regions and local clusters to forge long-term international opportunities, providing interfaces where appropriate – including R&D collaborations and partnerships.

Strategic regional alignment

Local, regional and strategic authorities should differentiate, whilst also ensuring collaboration rather than competition when it comes to inward investment; further mapping and data on specific creative technology strengths could support these efforts. This will ensure market access opportunities for promising creative businesses across the UK.

Regional positioning for global reach

Regional identity is likely to enhance the UK's soft power and ability to forge international partnerships on a national scale. Strong local investment and support mechanisms will enable businesses to make the most of this.

Conclusions and next steps

The scenarios and trajectories presented in this report have illustrated pathways, pressing opportunities and challenges for the future of creative technology in the UK.

Across the analysis, it is evident that creative technology is a high-growth national opportunity, and a lever for shaping innovation across regional economies. To fully realise this potential, there is a need to move beyond reactive policymaking towards more deliberate and long-term approaches that enable the navigation of uncertainty, respond to tensions and align actions across different policy areas and departments. Targeted and coordinated action that enables local ecosystems and is supported by national strategy, can unlock desired futures for the sector.

This report is a starting point for articulating high areas of impact in driving long-term growth in creative technologies – acting as a framework and a tool for understanding pathways that can guide action over the next decade. It also provides the foundation for ongoing policy foresight work.

The next phase of this programme of work will build on this foundation through continued tracking and monitoring of signals and drivers of change, mapping these developments back onto the pathways presented in this report, via a new series of quarterly briefing updates.

The report also provides the basis for further engagement, collaboration and co-design with national, regional and devolved authorities and policymakers to implement the methodological framework to support long-term intervention design and planning.

For further information, and to connect with the team, contact v.r.williams@lboro.ac.uk.

CoSTAR Foresight Lab
Goldsmiths, University of London
New Cross
London SE14 6NW

costarforesightlab@gold.ac.uk
costarnetwork.co.uk/labs/foresightlab