

# SCREEN DAILY

## Creative England's jobs impact on regional agencies not yet known

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Speculation is growing that the three major centres of the newly announced Creative England will be Bristol in the South, Manchester in the North and Birmingham in the Midlands.

Culture minister Ed Vaizey today confirmed that eight regional screen agencies are to be combined into the new umbrella Creative England, which will have concentrations in the North, Midlands and South. Film London is to sit outside of Creative England, but will act as a partner, as well as promoting inward investment (i.e. foreign film shoots) into the whole of the UK.

A period of industry consultation is expected to follow today's announcement, with feedback being taken forward to shape the final Creative England business plan and the full details being revealed in early 2011. However the talk amongst the industry is that the three film hubs will be Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham, all of which are based in the Western half of the UK.

The newly formed Creative England will be chaired by John Newbigan, who formerly chaired regional agency network Screen England, which is expected to be replaced by the new body. Newbigan said: "We are pleased to say that in the Creative England structure, we believe we have arrived at a framework that will deliver effective and streamlined support to the regions."

He added: "Creative England will increase delivery and reduce costs, whilst retaining local resonance across the country. The regional screen agencies will now work together to recalibrate into Creative England's three hubs; Creative North, Creative Central and Creative South. The business plan for Creative England will be open to full industry consultation in the New Year."

Overall, the regional screen agencies have welcomed Creative England, an idea that has been in the pipeline for nearly two years.

It is not yet known how many jobs will be effected, but at this point none of the agencies appeared to be anticipating redundancies directly as a result of the restructure, with the expectation being that they would continue operating as part of Creative England. Vaizey didn't specify if any of the agencies would be shuttered as Creative England ramps up, although Alice Morrison, CEO of Manchester based North West Vision and Media, admitted that her team would inevitably be shrinking, adding that "those agencies that have not already shrunk will have to."

However Sally Joynson, Chief Executive of Screen Yorkshire said it was important that it be an “open, transparent process with industry consultation at the heart of it,” adding that “this is the only way we can ensure that talent, wherever it is based, receives appropriate support.”

EM Media chief executive Debbie Williams added that Nottingham based agency EM Media “fully supports direct consultation with industry at the earliest opportunity.”

She added: “Creative England must build upon the proven successes, strengths and expertise drawn from across the network to ensure the most effective and efficient support mechanisms moving forward.”

Caroline Norbury of Bristol-based agency South West Screen said: “In my view, there are three very obvious centres: Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester.”

She was keen to point out that Creative England was “not going to be a quango”. “It’s about creating a structure where the agencies are coming together and, crucially, still having that local delivery.”

Tom Harvey, chief executive of Northern Film and Media, which is based in Newcastle, said of Creative England. “Northern Film And Media Creative England is a private limited company and it will stay as a private limited company. But Creative England can contract with whoever it wants to deliver in the most cost effective way against the DCMS agenda for the creative industries.”

Harvey added that he welcomed the news that Film London was to control inward investment functions. “Having nine competitive agencies trying to lure films to different parts of the country is not a good idea. The relationship with Film London will make sure it doesn’t happen.”

Alice Morrison, CEO of North West Vision and Media, in Manchester said: “If you look at the north, the biggest concentration in the north is in Manchester. But this is a hub and spoke model and it’s incredibly important that the industry is provided for wherever it is.

“The whole point it to be able to deliver a national strategy, locally and we know we can do that through Creative North. The real philosophy is using the best in the country and disseminating throughout,” she added.

Meanwhile Screen WM put out a statement saying it was “pleased that the new Creative England structure has been decided, and we look forward to working with the other screen agencies to form the three hubs of Creative North, Central and South. We are confident that this new framework will support our local film and screen-related sectors, whilst also delivering for the wider creative industries which we have been engaged with for some time.”

And Screen South CEO Jo Nolan added that she was “looking forward to building on our success over the last ten years and to offer meaningful outcomes for our industry and community in the new Creative England framework.”