

**DELIVERING A SECTOR
VISION**



RECOMMENDATIONS

2024

FASHION ROUNDTABLE





ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion

Delivering a sector vision for the fashion industry

Fashion Roundtable has met with industry leaders from the fashion sector who outlined the dire need for urgent action for the British fashion sector, which was at one time the fastest growing creative industry in the United Kingdom.

We have also engaged stakeholders in a Snap Survey aimed at including voices throughout the sector from design through to distribution, academia, retail, creative, manufacturing, business and NGOs.

This data has provided a strong overview of the current landscape for UK-based manufacturers and the key challenges and proposed solutions to support the sector to lead on sustainability, social justice, increased social mobility for working-class children, and increased revenue for UK GDP.

Recommendations:

Fashion Roundtable has identified the following recommendations, which are proposed to be looked at in greater detail:

- Restriction-free movement for UK talent who wish to work in Europe and a reduction in red tape for the transportation of goods between the UK and EU.
 - The UK committing to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to support the transition of the industry's annual carbon footprint of 3.3 billion tonnes CO₂e to Net Zero by 2050.
 - The reinstating of the VAT Retail Export Scheme with an estimated economy boost of £10bn a year according to current data.
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- Regenerating high streets to support UK businesses and protect local communities.
 - Greater support for on-shoring, a commitment to British made and a strengthening of public procurement.
 - Investment in UK manufacturing through consistent and secure orders.
 - Support for the UK as a place of decent work for garment workers.
 - Ratify the UNESCO Convention of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
 - Return to STEAM education.
 - Initiatives for UK workers from working-class backgrounds to access training and employment in the creative industries.
 - Support for more inclusivity in the fashion sector.
 - Rejoining of the Erasmus + Programme.
 - A long-term focused and robust policy framework for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and support of creative intellectual property (IP).
 - Food and fibre sovereignty.
 - Creative Wellbeing – Support for access to meaningful and rewarding work through a revaluing of craft, creativity, community, intersectionality and inclusivity.

Recommendations for restriction-free movement

- Frictionless travel for fashion creatives and businesses between the UK and EU -27 member states.
- The waiver visa cited by Deborah Annetts, Chief Executive of ISM at the DCMS Select Committee hearing on EU visas for creative workers.
- The UK agreeing to work toward bilateral agreements with the EU 27 member states.
- Secure a cabotage exemption for the creative and cultural sector – similar to the one that enables the Formula 1 industry to move large amounts of equipment across borders easily.
- Secure an equal level of support as the fishing industry received. E.g. in 2021 when exporting products to the EU the fishing industry received a £23m package for 12,000 workforce, versus £2,000 grants available for all of the UK's 617,600 SMEs.¹

¹https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60929adeee0e2a58d4dfaaf9/1620220640758/Fashion+Roundtable+Brexit+FollowUp+Report_060521.pdf

Recommendations for Extended Producer Responsibility:

- For fashion and textiles to be included in the Government's commitment to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). This should be incentivised.²
- Additional support for UK sustainable fashion and textiles businesses who export to the EU, in meeting the EU's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) commitments.

Recommendations for VAT Retail Export Scheme:

Data supplied by Sylvie Freund-Pickavance who is the Global Strategy and Business Development Director at Value Retail / The Bicester Collection highlighted that the lost opportunity and consequences of the Government's refusal to reinstate the VAT Retail Export Scheme is a £11.1bn opportunity.³

- The Government should back down on its refusal to reinstate VAT-free shopping for international tourists.

Recommendations for Regenerating High Streets:

- Amend Section 172 of the Companies Act to ensure businesses have a responsibility to protect workers, customers, communities and the environment inline with the Better Business Act recommendations.⁴
- Tackling vacancies on the high-street should sit within wider council priorities and strategies moving forward. Having this alignment built in, would bolster buy-in from council departments (this is crucial if red-tape could prove an issue, i.e. change of ownership).
- A long-term view of social prescribing which looks to building community wellbeing through skills such as mending and making. Similar to that of the Wales' Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015).⁵

²<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/6360f3ab1d399d27641f2ed3/1667298220378/Fashion+Roundtable+Simple+Waste+Strategy+November+2022.pdf>

³ <https://cebr.com/reports/business-leader/>

⁴ <https://betterbusinessact.org/about/#thestory>

⁵ <https://www.gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales>

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- Establish an evidence base to support schemes which tackle vacancy. This is supported by the Local Government Association who suggest using a Vacant Possession Tracker, recording ownership and leases, and how the scheme provides community value, including public perception. This provides supporting data for potential continuation of the scheme, as well as offering a direction for how the project should evolve.
 - Further exploration of this concept under a Social Value Lease, which is currently being piloted in the London Borough of Haringey. This lease allows for an ascription of a monetary value to social value outcomes, such as the number of people employed as well as the total amount spent in the local supply chain. This would be of great benefit to socially-driven projects such as Charity Super.Mkt.
 - Also, further exploration of the 'Preston Model' could be looked at. The local council procured its services from local companies, then invited public employers to do the same. This strategy led to Preston becoming the first living wage employer in the North of England.⁶

Recommendations for greater support for on-shoring, a commitment to British made and a strengthening of public procurement:

To make it easier for British brands and manufacturers by creating the right conditions:

- Garment workers should be added to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL), at least until such time as UK domicile talent is trained in the key necessary skills where there are staff shortages.
- Local procurement for workwear should be looked at under the ECAP framework as a priority for growing jobs as well as a circular infrastructure for textiles. The emphasis here should be on Made in Britain and not just the purchasing of British brands.
- A commitment to align business needs with university/FE college training: plugging the skills gap.

⁶https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/64677626079db43a18839f47/1684502055169/FR+Prosumption+Policy+Briefing+2023_FINAL+.pdf

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- Tax incentives for B Corps and companies⁷ with proven positive social and environmental contributions who commit to manufacture in the UK (c.f. The tax incentives enjoyed by HETV and film who make scripted productions in the UK).⁸

Recommendations for investment in UK manufacturing through consistent and secure orders

Labour Behind the Label has offered the following data

- The Government should encourage UK fashion brands and retailers to commit to long term sourcing in the UK to provide consistent and secure orders in order to support UK manufacturing, exploring the possibility of tax incentives. Suppliers to ask for 1% of UK brand garment production to be placed in the UK as a minimum (Labour Behind the Label's new campaign which will launch later this year)⁹
- The Government should explore ways to continue to promote ethical production in the UK including through funding for suppliers alongside skills training, the development of a Garment Code Adjudicator (Fashion Watchdog), possibly Made in UK certification.
- Trade unions should continue to be supported to offer training and advice to workers in UK factories, building on brand dialogue and worker awareness.

Recommendations for support for the UK as a place of decent work for garment workers

Labour Behind the Label has offered the following data

- Continue the timely creation of the single enforcement body to simplify and respond to worker rights abuses.
- Encourage collaboration and transparency among different labour enforcement bodies as well as NGOs and unions to ensure collaboration and effective data sharing.

⁷<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/62ed33e7f20552086ad31075/1659712487990/Treasury+Meeting+July+2022+Report+Final.pdf>

⁸ <https://britishfilmcommission.org.uk/plan-your-production/high-end-television-tax-relief/>

⁹ <https://labourbehindthelabel.org/press-release-leicester-garment-workers-rallied-in-fight-for-decent-jobs/>

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- The Government to invest in the labour market enforcement agencies to ensure adequate monitoring of the industry.
 - The Government to ensure that there is a division between labour market enforcement activity and activity by the immigration department in order to support any victims of modern slavery and to promote transparency and accountability.
 - Support and encourage work by trade unions in supporting factory workers in collaboration with brands and retailers.
 - Continue to work towards a living wage for all.
 - A commitment to end zero hour contracts for workers.
 - The Government to ensure that legislation is introduced that holds companies to account through mandatory human rights due diligence.
 - Consider the establishment of a Garment Fair Purchasing regulator, (Fashion Watchdog) with dissuasive sanctions, and own-initiative investigation powers to curb unlawful practices by UK retailers. A regulator in the fashion sector would complement the role that the Groceries Code Adjudicator successfully fulfils as a watchdog overseeing UK food retailers' practices towards suppliers.
 - Consider the development of a set of brand purchasing practices principles, commitment and goals aligned to the UK market, to ensure progression and attainment to implementing the highest standard, similar to the pledges around the prompt payment scheme and Living Wage employers.
 - Consider introducing mandatory transparency for UK brands and incentivising the publication of accurate supplier lists.
 - Support in legislation around a responsible exit strategy, which supports the supplier and its workers and holds brands to account for remediation as opposed to cutting and running from suppliers.

Recommendation to ratify the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

- Although this is currently under consultation with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) we would ask that the UNESCO Convention for

Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage be ratified to ensure that British culture and heritage are valued.¹⁰

- Long-term monitoring and support of heritage craft viability, particularly those which fall under the Heritage Crafts red endangered list to avoid cultural loss that is borne from craft loss.
- Exposure of crafts for younger generations through a STEAM curriculum.

Recommendation to return to a STEAM education

- We recommend England follow Scotland and Wales in reinstating a STEAM curriculum.

Recommendations to support initiatives for UK workers from working-class backgrounds to access training and employment in the creative industries

- DCMS must progress its promise in the Culture White Paper to work with the Arts Council to understand the barriers that prevent people from minority groups from entering industry careers.¹¹
- For the 'Space to Create' initiative to be implemented.¹²

Recommendations for more inclusivity in the fashion sector

Access to work:

- a) Negative attitudes to workers with disabilities across society must be addressed and countered.
- b) Apprenticeships, paid internships and start up schemes, specifically targeted at encouraging people who have disabilities into the fashion industry, are urgently required.
- c) Consider commissioning specific research into the employment of disabled people within the fashion industry – to address the lack of data, acknowledge barriers and seek ways to facilitate progress.
- d) Greater accountability is required to increase the representation of disabled people. Rigorous monitoring and reporting is required.

¹⁰<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/2003-unesco-convention-for-the-safeguarding-of-the-intangible-cultural-heritage>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-white-paper>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSUgtyHkzFY>

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- e) Disability champions could be assigned to provide mentorship and be role models for people who have disabilities seeking careers within the fashion industry.

Taken from our Representation and Inclusion report.¹³

Access to content:

- We recommend that the UK adopts a similar and timely policy to the European Accessibility ACT (EAA).¹⁴

Access to venues:

- We recommend a strengthening of the Equalities Act of 2010 with a specific focus on access to venues to allow for equal opportunity for access.

Recommendations for Erasmus + Programme

- For permanent funding to allow students across the United Kingdom to access the Erasmus+ Programme.

Recommendations for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and support of creative intellectual property (IP)

- An individual body to act on this urgently to protect models and their IP. This would ideally be in both Government and at DCMS and someone who has a good understanding of the fashion sector.
- A roadmap which takes responsibility for the potential impacts of AI on the labour market; its impact on skills and the required steps to mitigate devastating job losses in the fashion sector.
- A long-term focused and robust policy framework with a rights-based and people-focused approach to artificial intelligence, and for a process that puts the voices and interests of workers at its heart.
- Transparency around the use of AI. That all AI designs and marketing be labelled as such, to ensure that those created by people are set apart. Similar to the

¹³https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ffa9388ab5d36da3288810/1627368022152/FR_TFA_PPG_Representation_Inclusion_Report_07.2021.pdf

¹⁴<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202&intPagelId=5581&langId=en#:~:text=All%20EU%20Member%20States%20must,by%20the%20Act%20are%20accessible.>

Competition and Markets Authority policy for content creators and influencers on transparency around ads.¹⁵

- Stringent IP regulation that protects creatives and their work from the use in training of AI programmes and systems.

Recommendations for Food and Fibre Sovereignty

- Strengthen Government procurement rules to ensure that taxpayer money is spent on healthy and sustainable food.
- A local Government option should be explored to buy from a certain distance to ensure local-purchase practices in relation to fibre.
- As per the Land Alliance Trust, the Government must ensure that ELMs payments are sufficiently generous to incentivise farmers to switch from conventional farming to more sustainable practices.
- The Government should consider supporting more investment towards a long-term strategy, focused on high-tech and traditional methods in the regenerative farming space by those who know the land best.
- The Government should look to place more emphasis on the value of fibre sovereignty. We recommend a long-term strategy that looks at the benefits of this in relation to regenerating small and diverse producers and hand-production practices and skills.

The Creative Wellbeing Economy: Support for access to meaningful and rewarding work through a revaluing of craft, creativity, community, intersectionality and inclusivity

The Creative Wellbeing Economy disrupts legacy thinking, amplifying alternative solutions which centre creativity and wellbeing as central to their framework. This work requires fresh analysis, new data, collaboration and thought-leadership as central tenets, to shape these concepts, definitions and strategies, in order to countermand the dominant economic and business models, with a bold alternative system and approach.

The Creative Wellbeing Economy is not simply a methodology for the fashion industry, it is much larger than this: it is a new systems approach, which revalues and reeducates, to redefine success and place, a central theme of opportunity and access for all, meaningful and rewarding work, as vital links in an economy which views thriving citizens as central to its success and longevity. It places craft, creativity, community, intersectionality and

¹⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-media-endorsements-guide-for-influencers/social-media-endorsements-being-transparent-with-your-followers>

inclusivity as central tenets to support all of us to realise our potential and create access to opportunity.

To read the full report, please visit our website:

<https://www.fashionroundtable.co.uk/reports>

This is a condensed version of our data and recommendations, for the full version, please contact Meg Pirie : meg.pirie@fashionroundtable.co.uk