



# EUROPE'S SECOND LARGEST MEDIA HUB



**KEY STRENGTHS  
OF ENGLAND'S  
NORTHWEST**

**31,000  
companies**

**320,000 people  
in creative  
and digital  
sectors**

**£16bn creative  
economy**

**Home to  
MediaCityUK –  
the largest digital  
city in Europe**

**European  
centre for  
gaming**

**Nowhere Boy: Sam Taylor-Wood's feature on John Lennon**

**Cover image: Anna Friel starring in Jimmy McGovern's The Street.  
Supplied by the BBC with the permission of ITV Granada**

## High ratings

England's Northwest is described by BBC North as 'pioneering and dynamic'. Few European regions can compete, and that's before £3 billion of investment

The sheer scale of the region's creative and digital industry often surprises people. The sector employs 320,000 people, with more than 31,000 companies generating almost £16 billion a year. The incredible growth of the sector has also been hugely impressive – increasing at twice the rate of the wider UK economy since the mid-1990s – while its significance to the region is fundamental, generating 16% of the region's total output.

This is before the completion of MediaCityUK – a 200 acre digital media 'mini city' located in Greater Manchester. The purpose-built development will put Manchester on the global media map, rivalling a handful of global media projects. It will also be the new home to several major BBC departments, including BBC Children's TV, BBC Sport and Radio 5 Live. According to the BBC, its new Manchester home will be the world's most advanced broadcasting centre.

Manchester is of course home to the longest-running drama series in the world; Coronation Street. This is only one of a rich variety of drama productions the Northwest can boast. There is an incredible talent pool and track record of producing pioneering television drama, from *Queer As Folk* to *Cracker*, *The Second Coming* to *The Street* and popular dramas like *Hollyoaks* and *Grange Hill*.

Both the BBC and ITV Granada have traditionally had major operations in Manchester, which has ensured that the regional media community has flourished, with high quality independents, from production to animation. The arrival of several BBC departments will only enhance the opportunities, not only in television, but in gaming, digital, online and animation.

Liverpool is established as one of Europe's centres for computer gaming. It is home to Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's headquarters for games testing, employing more than 600 staff in quality control and games development. Along with other major games companies – including Activision in Liverpool, and Warner Brothers and THQ in Cheshire – all studios are at the heart of the international games development industry.

When the UK's second largest advertising centre is added, alongside some of the largest publishing groups, including Trinity Mirror and Guardian Media Group, it emphasizes the size of the industry. The Northwest is home to some of the world's leading international media operators, attracted by the innovative, pioneering companies which have traditionally emerged. It continues to generate some of the finest dynamic entrepreneurial businesses, keen to capitalise on an exciting new era.

THE INCREDIBLE  
GROWTH OF THE  
SECTOR HAS ALSO  
BEEN STAGGERING —  
INCREASING AT  
TWICE THE RATE  
OF THE WIDER UK  
ECONOMY.



Bob Hoskins starring in *The Street*

# Global presence

## MediaCityUK will propel the Northwest from the second largest media centre in Europe to global status

MediaCityUK is an ambitious project to create Europe's largest purpose-built convergent 'media city'. It will put Manchester alongside hi-tech, global cities like Seoul, Singapore and Dubai, where similar developments are underway. In fact, MediaCityUK is fundamental to the UK's ambition to become the world's creative hub.

"It's the most exciting project in media this century. This has never been done before. No one else is creating a city in the way that we are – it's a place where people will live, work and play. What's more, we've gone from concept to execution within a short period of time," says Bryan Gray, Chairman of Peel Media.

The scale of the MediaCityUK is impressive; £500 million will be invested in phase 1; a 36 acre site including 700,000 sq ft office space and a 250,000 sq ft studio block. Once fully complete, the 200 acre project will eventually become home to 15,000 professionals. Hotels, apartments, shops and other facilities are essential to the proposal, along with a new tram link to central Manchester, only two miles away.

Perhaps most significantly, unlike other large-scale media projects, MediaCityUK is not simply a blue-print, but a live project; a large part of the development has been built and delivered ahead of schedule.

The facilities are second to none. The studio block will include seven high definition television studios, two audio studios, one of which will be dedicated to the BBC Philharmonic. A technical block will feature fully equipped sound and vision control rooms, core post-facilities, a CTA (central technical area), dressing rooms, make-up rooms, workshops, set storage and green rooms.

The project puts the latest technology at the heart of the development; it is effectively a blank canvas which will allow Peel Media to install 18 million metres of fibre, creating the UK's largest HD broadcast capability. Its 'future-proofed' system ensures that it is prepared for growth in traditional and new media content. It also ensures that MediaCityUK is geared up to attract a wide range of digital and creative businesses, across the media spectrum. This in itself will stimulate collaboration between companies working in traditional television formats to those in gaming, online and mobile, among others.

MediaCityUK will become the BBC's second largest operation and the headquarters of BBC Children's, BBC Sport, Radio 5 Live, BBC Learning and Future Media and Technology – with all five departments moving from London. This is in addition to the departments already based at BBC Manchester, including Comedy and Religion, as well as regional television and radio. In total, almost 2,500 BBC staff will work from the new base from 2011.

"MediaCityUK is visionary. The scary thing is that the BBC will only be about a quarter of it. There's a hunger and an appetite that is inspiring. We're thrilled to be part of it," says Peter Salmon, Director of BBC North.

It will also become the home for the University of Salford's new media centre, following an £8 million grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England. A partnership agreement between the university and the BBC, allows the university to provide a new generation of media and technology graduates, developing the pool of talent of the future.

### UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD: TOMORROW'S TALENT



The University of Salford's 103,000 sq ft facility in MediaCityUK opens in September 2011. The centre will include two TV studios, two radio studios, a digital media zone and a digital performance space. Immersive courses in media, design and technology will benefit students entering the highly-competitive jobs market, meeting the demanding needs of tomorrow's employers.

The building will operate as an extension of the university's main campus just a mile down the road, and it will provide a showcase for cutting-edge projects and exhibitions. It is designed to be a focus for research and innovation, as well as teaching activities.

"We will be in pole position to share significantly in the digital economy here in the Northwest and become a point of reference both in the wider UK and globally," said the university's Director for MediaCityUK, John Holland. "It will also help us deliver the vision of placing media and the digital economy at the heart of our teaching and research."

Cross platform teaching will be a hallmark of the new facility. There will be major opportunities for international co-operation.

The university is one of only 19 higher educational establishments to be recognised as a Skillset Media Academy, offering practice-based digital media courses.

5 BBC  
departments

200 acre site



The university's facility will be adjacent to one of the three BBC buildings, and include two television studios, two radio studios and a digital performance space.

"Salford students in MediaCityUK will rub shoulders with media industry professionals. They'll study using state-of-the-art facilities and gain real world work experience in a purpose-built environment, making them even more attractive to prospective employers. University researchers will also work with business to innovate and problem solve," says John Holland, the University of Salford's Director for MediaCityUK.

The development is owned and managed by Peel Media's parent company, the Peel Group. It sits on a fantastic location by the waterside at Salford Quays, in Greater Manchester. It is positioned alongside the region's newest cultural corner, beside the iconic Imperial War Museum North building, the Lowry arts centre and Old Trafford, home to Manchester United Football Club. It has easy access to the motorway network, situated minutes from the M602, leading to the M6.

The location is at the centre of the UK, with MediaCityUK at the heart of an exciting digital future.

[mediacityuk.co.uk](http://mediacityuk.co.uk)

## The technological advantage

Technology leads the project. When complete, it will stand above any existing media operation in Europe, due to the sophistication of the technology and the scale of it.

Peel Media is installing 18 million metres of fibre for Phase 1. The site's technical infrastructure will include:

- A public network with fibre to all buildings, delivering high-speed bandwidth.
- Privately-managed on-site fibre network to all buildings, designed to handle the large bandwidth demands of the media sector; future-proofed to manage the growth in traditional and new media content.
- Next generation voice, broadband and data connectivity.
- Connectivity to global media and broadcast networks.
- Site-wide Wi-Fi for both public and private networks.
- Services to all residential apartments, covering telephony, high speed internet access, and hi-definition video services on demand.
- Technology packages tailored according to individual need, providing customer choice and flexibility.

700,000 sq ft  
office space

£3bn investment

## Access all areas

NorthernNet is an innovative programme aimed at capitalising on MediaCityUK and the opportunities it will generate. It encourages creative companies to connect and collaborate using the latest technology. The concept brings together the three northern regions of the Northwest, Yorkshire and the North East. There are 13 pay-as-you-go Media Access Bureaus across the three regions, with a total of six in the Northwest. They offer cost effective technology, from mac suites to storage to video conferencing. The aim is to create an information website, Northern Knowledge, with a database of 5,000 northern-based firms from all creative and digital industries, including design and advertising, television, games, web and multi-media. The over-riding objective is to create a network, and supply chain to ensure the North of England becomes a European powerhouse through innovation.

An elevated view of MediaCityUK, as it will look in 2011

**"MEDIACITYUK IS VISIONARY. THERE'S A HUNGER AND AN APPETITE THAT IS INSPIRING. WE'RE THRILLED TO BE PART OF IT."**

Peter Salmon, Director, BBC North

## Peak viewing

The region is famous for its television dramas, great writers and high production values. By combining those talents it will produce content for a new generation

The Northwest has one of the UK's strongest television and film industries. It boasts more than 500 productions a year, making up almost 1,500 hours. It has always been a significant base for both the BBC and ITV Granada, encouraging a thriving independent sector to develop, led by the likes of Lime Pictures in Liverpool and Red Productions in Manchester.

Lime has consistently managed to retain and secure new commissions from the main broadcasters, becoming a major employer in the process. It has built on its original position as the company behind the Channel 4 soap opera Brookside to become one of the biggest independents in the country. Red Productions, headed by Nicola Shindler, rose to fame with Queer As Folk. The acclaimed series combined the best writing from Russell T Davies, acting and production, creating an iconic series for Channel 4, while putting Red Productions on the map, highlighting a new generation of Northwest-based television makers.

Having great Northwest-based writers makes life easier for production companies, with Paul Abbott joining Davies. Abbott was the writer behind Clocking Off, Linda Green and Shameless. He also worked on Cracker and Coronation Street. Throw a few other names into the mix of great writers, including Jimmy McGovern, the writer behind Cracker, The Lakes and The Street, Craig Cash – actor and co-writer on The Royle Family – and Frank Cottrell-Boyce, the screenwriter on Welcome to Sarajevo, 24 Hour Party People and Millions (directed by Danny Boyle), and it gives a sense of the broad base of writing talent working out of the region.

"This is a brilliant place to work – it's full of interesting people. It's not attached to the metropolitan culture of London, so it's not just people in Soho, talking about Soho. It's real experiences," says Shindler.

The depth of the region's creative talent is a point highlighted repeatedly. Peter Salmon, the Director of BBC North, is keen to emphasize the region's "spirit and originality".

"The writer gene pool is second to none – from The Street and Shameless to Cold Feet and the Royle Family. We've also got original and innovative production companies and some fantastic pioneers."

The breadth of high profile television production offices is extensive, ranging from Steve Coogan's Baby Cow office in Manchester, to actor David Morrissey's Tubedale Films in Liverpool.

There are fantastic facilities for digital and production companies. The Pie Factory, located at MediaCityUK, handles several major television and film productions including The Royle Family. It has three sound stages, green rooms, prop stores, a construction store and office space, all contained within 15,000 sq ft of practical workspace. In East Manchester, the Sharp Project is being developed. When complete it will include 200,000 sq ft of creative work space, studios and sets, which operate 24/7 in a development which will act as a Virtual Super Studio, enabling 24-hour continuous production for international projects. It will also focus on developing the talent of the future, through Sharp Futures, which will nurture young creatives.

### Multi-platform

One of the BBC's priorities is to drive a culture of collaboration, combining skills in animation and gaming, as well as television. "We want to be part of a better ecology, with neighbours and allies and collaborators across the North of England in animation and gaming as well as television," says the BBC's Salmon. Multi-platform productions are key to channels like BBC Children's. Northwest companies are already delivering an increasing volume of material which works across different media outlets.

Conker Media, part of Lime Pictures, is an example of a company entirely focused on multi-platform. The 12-year old company employs 20 people from its Liverpool base. According to Lee Hardman, Head of Conker Media, they have never written purely for television or online, creating productions which consider every media opportunity including social networking and mobile.

"We work with broadcasters like the BBC and Channel 4, who are very keen to engage with their audiences. BBC Children's has its own channel, a big online community – it's a natural extension for companies like us," says Hardman.

There is a strong commitment from the major channels to commission cross-platform productions. There is also a strong commitment to working with northern companies as the BBC looks to produce 50% of its output outside of London by 2016.

Shameless: one of Channel 4's big hits, written by Paul Abbott



# £32m

Inward investment generated from TV and film productions each year

# 500

Number of TV and film productions in the region each year

# 1,500

Number of hours of TV and film produced each year

# 50%

Percentage of output the BBC aims to produce outside of London by 2016

**“WE WORK WITH BROADCASTERS WHO ARE VERY KEEN TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR AUDIENCES. BBC CHILDREN’S IS A NATURAL EXTENSION FOR COMPANIES LIKE US.”**

**Lee Hardman, Head of Conker Media**

## RED PRODUCTIONS: CUTTING-EDGE DRAMA



The company, headed by Nicola Shindler, is renowned for making some of the best drama in the UK. Based in Manchester, Red Productions went from making *Queer As Folk* in 1998, to *Love in the 21st Century*, also for Channel 4. Its list of productions includes *Clocking Off* and *Linda Green*; both for the BBC. They

also created the high profile, two-part drama, *The Second Coming*, where the Son of God returns to earth; in 21st century Manchester. The controversial, thought-provoking drama, starring Christopher Ecclestone (left), was a television success, with viewing figures above six million.

Other programmes include period drama *Casanova*, binge drinking drama *Legless* and *The Mark of Cain*, by Tony Marchant, which won a BAFTA for best single drama.

A three-part ITV drama, *Unforgiven* – which takes its influence from feature films, *Crash and Short Cuts*, with four apparently unrelated stories – has opened up a new avenue for the company. Oscar-winning producer Graham King has bought the rights to the story with the intention of making a feature film based in the US. Red Productions is also looking at other opportunities in film.

## LIME PICTURES: ONE OF THE UK’S LARGEST INDEPENDENTS



Lime Pictures is one of the UK’s largest independent producers, creating some of the most popular dramas. The company employs more than 500 staff at its 10 acre site in Liverpool. It has a long heritage which stretches back to the days when original founder Phil Redmond created *Grange Hill* and *Brookside*. Now part of the All3Media group, Lime produces the long-running

Channel 4 series *Hollyoaks* (left) as well as *Grange Hill*. Lime’s presence has become a real asset, adding to the breadth of talent in the Northwest. “We’re proud of the fact that Lime Pictures plays such an important national role from our base in Liverpool. There’s a long tradition of talented creative individuals that come from this city and we’d like to think we’ve played a big part in that,” says Sean Marley, managing director of Lime.

Lime was one of the early adopters of multi-platform, something which Marley says has put them ahead in terms of cross media productions: “Our pro-active approach to the digital cross-platform world has put us in prime position for the challenging media landscape and we believe Liverpool and the wider Northwest will have a crucial role in the development of a new generation creative talent.”



**Unforgiven: the rights to the ITV drama have been bought in the US**

## Getting animated

The region's animation hub continues to grow, with some of the best talent joining forces to create some of the UK's most popular programmes, for children and adults

The core talent of stop frame and digital animation companies makes the Northwest an attractive location. The region has a strong heritage in animation, going back 30 years when Cosgrove Hall was one of the largest animation companies in Europe.

Many of today's companies have been borne out of the experience gained over that period.

Chapman Entertainment is the creator of Fifi and the Flowertots and Roary the Racing Car – two of the most successful childrens' television shows currently being broadcast. Fifi is televised in 147 countries and Roary in 138. Chapman – headed by Keith Chapman, who founded Bob the Builder – has a 20-strong team of directors, producers and stop frame animators based at their Altrincham studio. Chapman says his team in the Northwest "live and breathe animation".

They work with the Manchester CGI animators Studio Liddell, which enhances the stop frame work of Chapman's studio team. The company also collaborates with Mackinnon & Saunders – the makers of animation puppets for everything from Bob the Builder to Fifi and the Flowertots and Pingu. It is working with MacKinnon & Saunders on the BBC pre-school show, Rah Rah the Noisy Lion.

"Having such a breadth of experience in and around the area will help us enormously in exploring these new multi-platform outlets. It's a very exciting time for us being in Manchester, with the coming of MediaCityUK it promises to be a new dawn for British animation," says Chapman.

Partnerships are critical to the growth of the sector. Red Vision Vfx makes film quality computer graphics for television, for programmes ranging from How the Twin Towers Collapsed to Headcases. Its high speed, high quality animation techniques, developed on programmes like Headcases, makes children's television an obvious next step for Red Vision – something they're working on. They've already joined forces with Mackinnon & Saunders on one such project.

### RED VISION Vfx: CREATING HEADCASES



When Dave Mousley set up Red Vision Vfx there were no specialist visual effects companies in Manchester. Today the company employs 50 people across its offices in Manchester, London and Toronto. Their focus has been to deliver innovative software allowing them to produce 'film quality' graphics and animations for television. Through consistent investment in new techniques – 10% of the team work on R&D – the company has won commissions for high profile projects, including BAFTA nominee How the Twin Towers Collapsed, BAFTA winner Battlefield Britain and Headcases. To make Headcases topical, Red Vision had to turn around the final four minutes of each programme in only three days – a process that normally takes several weeks.

"HAVING SUCH A BREADTH OF EXPERIENCE IN AND AROUND THE AREA WILL HELP US ENORMOUSLY. IT'S A VERY EXCITING TIME FOR US BEING IN MANCHESTER. IT PROMISES TO BE A NEW DAWN FOR BRITISH ANIMATION."

Keith Chapman, Creative Director,  
Chapman Entertainment

30 year  
heritage in  
animation

The region  
will be a centre  
of excellence for  
multi-platform

Roary the Racing Car: sold to 138 countries





## Film favourites

# Liverpool and Manchester have established themselves as essential locations, with the depth and expertise to ensure major features run smoothly

It is estimated that £32 million is generated in inward investment from productions each year across the region, with Liverpool and Manchester consistently performing well.

Both cities are increasingly popular due to their architecture, often doubling up as cost effective alternatives to London or New York. The re-make of the 1960s classic *Alfie* – this time starring Jude Law – was more recently followed up with Guy Ritchie’s feature for Warner Brothers’ *Sherlock Holmes* – filmed on location in Manchester and Liverpool. The film, starring Law again and Robert Downey Jr, involved some stunning sets and months of pre-filming recce work. It also emphasized the practicalities – and cost savings – in terms of moving crews between two cities only 36 miles apart, in contrast to working around London, particularly when supported by the local film offices, Northwest Vision and Media and the city councils.

Other recent productions include Ken Loach’s *Looking for Eric* and the highly-acclaimed, *Nowhere Boy*, by Sam Taylor-Wood, which chronicles John Lennon’s childhood. Both features were filmed on location in the region. Loach returned to Liverpool to film *Route Irish* months later. The

city also hosted a 200-strong unit for shooting scenes for the *Harry Potter* movie, *The Deathly Hallows* – another blockbuster Warner Brothers production.

Cumbria’s reputation as a film location was given a considerable boost from *Miss Potter*, the Beatrix Potter movie starring Renee Zellweger and Ewan McGregor, filmed on location across the Lake District. The region has also had success making its own films, with Granada creating Oscar-winner *The Queen*, starring Helen Mirren.

Such activity continues to build the experience of the crew, from runners to assistant directors, and also demonstrates the quality of the facilities on offer. “Major film studios need to know that in the Northwest we have the infrastructure and capacity to make a feature film happen. This is an all-year-round industry and the region’s experience and broad base of skills means we are well positioned,” says Kaye Elliott, Director of Inward Investment at Northwest Vision and Media.

Miss Potter: filmed at a variety of locations in the Lake District



### Funding: Digital Departures

*Of Time And The City*, made by Liverpool company Hurricane Films and directed by renowned British director Terence Davies, “just wouldn’t have happened without funding” according to Roy Boulter of Hurricane. The film, set in Liverpool, received rave reviews, including two film festival awards. It was one of three films supported through Northwest Vision and Media’s Digital Departures scheme, which provided three films with £250,000 each. It was run by Northwest Vision and Media, set up to grow the creative and digital economy, and funded alongside the Liverpool Culture Company, the UK Film Council and the BBC as part of Liverpool’s year as European Capital of Culture. The success of the project has encouraged the organisation to explore a Digital Departures 2 scheme. Northwest Vision and Media is responsible for training and grants, including the Regional Attraction Fund, designed for companies with high growth strategies in order that they can significantly expand their businesses. In 2009 it awarded £364,000 in total. It also oversees the Accidental Leader and Managers Programme, a six-day development training programme to help creative and digital businesses grow and prosper.

See [visionandmedia.co.uk](http://visionandmedia.co.uk) for more information.

# Playing the game

## Twenty years of heritage and some of the leading global players has created a games industry recognised across the world

It's a £20 billion a year global industry and one where the Northwest is at the heart. Liverpool in particular is a hub of games activity, with the government's Department of Culture, Media & Sport describing it as "one of the world's most important cities for computer games".

Games development in the region generates £300 million a year, employing more than 1,000 highly skilled individuals across 50 companies. There are another 3,000 freelance technologists and artists in the sector.

Several of the biggest international publishers and developers have studios in the Northwest, including Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, Activision, THQ and Warner Brothers – all of whom have acquired entrepreneurial businesses based in the region. Another raft of young, independent up-and-coming games companies are producing games on a variety of increasingly popular formats, including mobile and web.

There is an incredible track record of producing some of the world's most successful racing games, from Destruction Derby to Wipeout, Formula One to MotorStorm and Project Gotham City.

"The UK remains a beacon for the global games development industry, and the Northwest has been a creative hub within the UK development scene for many years," says Michael Denny, Senior Vice President of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, who is based in Liverpool.

Sony is a powerhouse for the region's games community, employing 600 staff in Liverpool. Its development site creates some of the biggest-selling games, including MotorStorm – which sold three million copies.

Its external development division is paramount to the Liverpool operation too, deciding which games will and won't be published by Sony in Europe. Any developer based in the continent which wants to publish a game on one of Sony's platforms, from PlayStation, to PlayStation Portable (PSP) or the PlayStation Network (PSN), must go via the Liverpool HQ.

The team were responsible for commissioning, managing and producing Little Big Planet – one of the most innovative products to come out of Sony. The key aspect is the level of interactivity, with user-generated content, and the customisable and online features – giving it critical as well as commercial acclaim. According to Enda Carey, Head of Games and Digital Content at industry body, Northwest Vision and Media, this is in no small way down to the vision of the Liverpool team:

"There's a high level of project management and production. You can only get that with heritage. Most of the team have more than 15 years experience of meeting deadlines and budgets. No matter how good you understand it; until you've done the job for a long time it's difficult to have that precision and the wider view."

### SONY: A EUROPEAN HUB



The origins of Sony's Liverpool headquarters go back 25 years when games' veterans Ian Hetherington and Jonathan Ellis founded the company Psygnosis. Although it built a reputation for excellent graphic standards in its games, its main focus was as a publisher rather

than a developer. The launch of Lemmings in 1991 made a significant impact on the company's profile. It became an iconic game of its time and is estimated to have sold more than 15 million copies. As the European headquarters for Sony, Liverpool is the hub for all developers on the continent, with all games tested and commissioned from the office. Sony is also the home of many successful games in its own right too, including Formula One 2001, Wipeout and more recently MotorStorm – due to its acquisition of Evolution Studios, based in Cheshire. It employs 600 staff between its offices in Liverpool and Cheshire.

Little Big Planet: commissioned by Sony in Liverpool



1,000 highly skilled individuals and 50 companies

Experience is one area where the region isn't short. Many of the senior developers have moved between companies over the years, spearheading new businesses. Juice Games employs 65 people from its base in Warrington, Cheshire. Headed by Colin Bell – a veteran of the games scene – Juice developed racing game, Juiced and its sequel, Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights for a variety of Playstation, Xbox and Nintendo formats. The two games sold almost five million copies between them.

Such is the region's dominance in the racing game sector that it is difficult to find a gamer that doesn't have at least one product made by a company based in the Northwest.

In this highly-skilled sector, the demand for high quality programmers and designers continues apace – fuelled by commercial success. It has also attracted many of the major games companies. Juice is owned by LA-based THQ, Bizarre Creations in Liverpool by Santa Monica-based Activision, while Traveller's Tales in Cheshire is now part of Warner Brothers, also headquartered in California. Traveller's Tales employs more than 150 people, selling more than 45 million games in the last 15 years. Unlike many of its peers, it has built part of its reputation on developing games for children's franchises which include Disney's Toy Story and Finding Nemo. Recent growth has been driven by the popularity of its Lego franchise, including Lego Star Wars – selling five million copies worldwide. Lego Batman,

Indiana Jones and Rock Band have followed, defying the market norms, proving popular with adults as well as its target market of children.

Innovation is at the heart of the sector, with most firms committing to continual R&D investment, reviewing digital distribution as well as new gaming ideas. The rise in mobile phone technology and usage has encouraged most companies in the region to assess these outlets. There are also companies whose main focus is in the arena of mobile phone games. Connect 2 Media employs 100 people – almost 50 of which are from their headquarters in Manchester city centre.

Their big name title is Guitar Hero, with the company producing a mobile phone version for Activision. However, the company's strategy is more focused on the creation of their own games – retaining their own IP.

Collaborations are increasingly important as new media outlets emerge, and the demand increases with it. Games businesses are looking to build on their network of independent specialists. Such is the demand for collaboration that Northwest Vision and Media is spearheading a scheme with Sony, encouraging smaller companies to engage and capitalise on their close proximity to major publishers – and to capitalise on the variety of formats.

“THE NORTHWEST HAS BEEN A CREATIVE HUB WITHIN THE UK DEVELOPMENT SCENE FOR MANY YEARS.”

Michael Denny, Senior Vice President, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe

Games development generates £300m a year



LEGO Indiana Jones created by Traveller's Tales

## BIZARRE: RACING SUCCESS



Bizarre Creations is an example of a success story which proved too attractive to the multi-national games companies; being acquired by Activision. The company employs more than 200 programmers, designers and technologists at its Liverpool studio. In line with many other Northwest games firms, it made a name for itself in the racing game arena, creating Formula 1 and Project Gotham. It has since moved into other genres, with shooting game, The Club. Keeping on top of new technology is key to their strategy, operating a Shared Technology Team which works with two large game development teams.

## Pressing ahead

# Home to some of the largest publishers in the UK, the region is diversifying to meet the demands of a new, younger and more media literate audience

The publishing industry has strong roots in the Northwest. A combination of major newspaper groups, like the Guardian Media Group and Trinity Mirror, and ambitious independents has created an industry which employs more than 8,000 people.

As the original home of Trinity Mirror, the group continues to dominate the Merseyside regional and newspaper scene. Its titles include the Liverpool Echo, which remains one of the best-read regional newspapers in the UK. Although the market is changing and fragmenting – with people increasingly sourcing their news online, or from mobile phones – newspaper groups are tackling the challenge head on, creating multi-platform operations.

Trinity has driven forward with its online entertainment guide, Liverpool.com, while also delivering news content on new media platforms. The Daily Post launched the UK's first business website for a regional newspaper. Other initiatives include the video streaming of exclusive news debates online.

The Guardian Media Group's MEN Media dominates Greater Manchester's landscape, with the Manchester Evening News (MEN) continuing to be one of the UK's most-read papers. The MEN has invested heavily in its online offer in the last decade, and is among the most popular newspaper websites in the UK in terms of unique users.

In line with the changing nature of news and content, MEN Media has invested in Channel M, which primarily targets a younger audience through a mix of news and entertainment, while its sister division GMG Radio has built a strong portfolio of radio stations. Trinity in turn has looked to build its digital offering, acquiring the Liverpool-based digital marketing company, Rippleffect. The digital company is a strong force in sport, with clients including Arsenal and Everton, as well as national retail and leisure clients. The deal emphasizes the role still played from Trinity's Northwest base, as well as the national quality of some of the digital companies.

The strong raft of publishers continues north, with Newsquest, owners of the Lancashire Telegraph, and the CN Group – which dominates Cumbria – listing a range of titles including the North West Evening Mail in Barrow, Cumberland News and News & Star in Carlisle. However, the region has also built a strong niche in specialist publishing. The fast-growing Ten Alps group is one of the UK's leading contract publishers, handling more than 600 titles from its Macclesfield, Manchester and London offices. Manchester is also one of the most competitive business publishing markets in Europe, with the daily regional press joined by the regionally-based national operators like Insider Media and Excel Publishing and smaller independents. It is also home to the only European paper for the US business publisher, Crains.

### GUARDIAN MEDIA GROUP: MANCHESTER DOMINANCE

MEN Media – the Guardian's regional operation for Greater Manchester – has comprehensive coverage of the city region, which goes beyond its daily mainstay title of the Manchester Evening News (MEN). It publishes more than 20 local titles, oversees the MEN website and the recruitment website, jobsmine.co.uk, as well as Channel M, which is broadcast on terrestrial as well as satellite, cable and online.

### TRINITY: MERSEYSIDE MAINSTAY

The Liverpool Echo continues to boast a readership in excess of 330,000 – aided by the city's renaissance on the back of its reign as European Capital of Culture and regeneration. In recent years both the Echo and its sister business-focused morning, the Daily Post, have relaunched, each creating a look and style which works across print, online and mobile. In terms of local press, the group's array of titles ensures widespread readership across the surrounding area.

More than 8,000 employed in publishing



## Creative muscle

# With one of Europe's biggest creative sectors, the region's marketing scene continues to be strong, aided by its rising reputation in digital

A flourishing creative scene has existed in the Northwest for decades. This industry now generates £1.25 billion for the economy, making it the largest advertising, marketing and design centre in the UK after London – and one that can rival most of Europe's leading regions.

The industry is strengthened by significant multi-national operators, including McCann, WPP, TBWA, IAS and Weber Shandwick.

In most circumstances, agencies in the region can boast specialist expertise, without the same overheads of their London rivals. Agencies still have the funds to invest in high quality office space, and professional development for their staff and still remain more competitive than their southern-based competitors.

McCann, which operates from rural Cheshire, handles international brands including American Airlines, Aldi and the Intercontinental Hotel Group. The agency has consistently been a mainstay of the advertising group's network.

Manchester – the hub of the advertising and design industry in the region – boasts creative advertising agencies Cheetham Bell JWT (part of the WPP group) and BJL, while TBWA is located in the suburbs of the city centre. Creatively, the region is second to none with a vast number of design and advertising agencies, with high level technical skills including cutting edge CGI, film and digital knowledge, producing high level print, commercials and online material for leading brands.

The success of digital agencies, like Code Computer Love in Manchester, and Liverpool-based Rippleffect and Mando Group is testimony to the skills within the sector. All three agencies have managed to secure a succession of major national projects.

Code is one of the digital success stories, creating campaign strategies and websites for some of the UK's top brand names, including HMV, Crown Paints, PZ Cussons, Matalan and the Ministry of Sound. The agency now employs 55 staff at its offices in Manchester's city centre.

The region is also home to the ambitious, stockmarket-listed integrated marketing group Hasgrove, which includes leading design agency, The Chase, integrated marketing agency Amaze, public affairs firm Interel and software company Odyssey. By joining forces, the group has been able to establish itself as a European force from its Manchester location.

Other agencies have seen success by focusing on their core skillset. MediaVest is the UK's largest independent media buying agency, employing 160 staff at its offices in Manchester city centre. With a turnover exceeding £220 million, MediaVest is evidence of the entrepreneurial spirit within the creative sector, and demonstrates the growth that can be achieved while remaining independent. As significantly, MediaVest is one of the market leaders in the rising digital media market. The agency is currently the seventh largest digital buyer in the UK, billing in excess of £50 million in digital alone. Media buying power is further strengthened by Mediaedge: CIA, PHD North and Mediacom North.

In PR terms, the region attracts many of the global networks, including Trimedia, Burson-Marsteller, Beattie Communications, TBWA, via its Staniforth operation, and Weber Shandwick. However the sector is largely driven by a thriving independent scene with specialisms ranging from professional services to B2B and consumer. Such variety ensures the essential mix for a bustling industry, where agencies work together to grow their businesses further.

### McCANN: RURAL RETREAT



For most of McCann's 260 staff, working at the agency's Bonis Hall is quite literally a day in the country, and another world from the hustle of the Manchester city centre scene. Set in a 12 acre estate at Prestbury, the setting is stunning. The agency's origins are based on the strength of the pharmaceutical sector in the area – still an important element of the business. Nowadays, McCann's client list covers most commercial areas, while it offers the full advertising remit – with its media buying division a strong operation in its own right. It also offers creative, direct marketing, PR, digital and social media, creating an agency with a billing of more than £100 million.



Code Computer Love's office designed by Andrew Wallace Architects

## World class skills

# With some of finest facilities, research resources and academics, the region is well-placed to grow its knowledge base for the future

Skilled people are the lifeblood of digital media. The Northwest is developing the physical, skills and financial infrastructure to allow companies to take advantage of the expanding opportunities presented by the BBC's move North and the development of MediaCityUK.

Training in a range of high level technical skills is essential to ensure that staff and contractors can respond to the demands of a rapidly evolving digital industry. There are more than 300 media courses on offer across 12 universities in the Northwest, with some of best facilities the UK has to offer. In addition, Northwest Vision and Media's Digital Media Skills programme extends this offer to cover freelance workers and new entrants as well as existing employees, and has brought in world class leadership and management skills training from the likes of Hyper Island and Kirkbright.

The Northwest is home to two Skillset Media Academies, at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) and the University of Salford. LJMU's Academy includes the Liverpool Screen School, combining undergraduate courses with continuing professional development for business, based on Liverpool Innovation Park.

InfoLab21 is Lancaster University's world class centre of excellence of ICT. It has the latest training, incubation facilities and equipment, as well as research and development. Its research focuses on advanced communications and networking technology, with research staff working on advanced software systems. All research has a strong practical element to it.

Sandbox, based at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, is an innovative new creative facility, effectively a modern digital media R&D lab. The centre is used by academics and industry, collaborating to experiment with ideas and technologies.

Daresbury Science & Innovation Campus is one of only two national science research facilities in the country, and is home to the Daresbury Laboratory and Daresbury Science and Innovation Centre, where more than 100 high tech firms are already based.

All of these locations, plus another six across the Northwest and 10 more across the wider North, are linked by NorthernNet, a dedicated 100Mbps VPN network, accessed through specialist bureaux equipped with Mac and PC workstations to allow companies to bring content in any format to be managed, manipulated, stored and distributed to any other business on the network.

At Manchester Metropolitan University, there are a number of digital media and games degrees, all operating within the Department of Computing and Mathematics. These courses include; Digital Media and Computer Games at undergraduate and postgraduate level; Computer Games Technology at undergraduate level; and Digital Media Computing. The university has extensive facilities including a games lab, usability lab, video editing suite, motion capture and 3D digitisation. The games lab allows students to experience and experiment with modelling software, using current research on character and face animation among others.

## NORTHWEST VISION AND MEDIA: CREATIVE STRATEGY

Each of the NWV+M's sectors is headed by a specialist, with excellent knowledge to develop the sector. The role of the publicly-funded organisation is to help grow the creative and digital economy in the region. This strategic leadership takes many forms, with extensive training and professional development to create the individuals and businesses to capitalise on the opportunities of the evolving media landscape, and the rise in convergence.

To find out more, go to [visionandmedia.co.uk](http://visionandmedia.co.uk) or follow them on Twitter: @VisionandMedia

**NORTHWEST VISION MEDIA**  
create the bigger picture

# THE NORTHWEST IS HOME TO A NUMBER OF WORLD CLASS CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE.



12 universities

More than 300 media courses

# Culturally aware

## Two of the most cosmopolitan cities in the UK, excellent venues and galleries, and only ever 90 minutes from England's largest national park

Outside of work, there are fantastic cultural activities on offer. There's a vast selection of galleries and museums, amazing architecture, great bars and restaurants and some of the best shopping in the country.

The two cities of Manchester and Liverpool are young, vibrant cities, constantly changing, at the cutting edge of the music and creative scene. Spare time can be spent socialising at Liverpool's Albert Dock (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), at the converted mills around Manchester's Castlefield or in the more creative and bohemian Northern Quarter in Manchester.

In contrast, only a short distance from both Manchester and Liverpool is Chester, an historic city which can trace its roots back to Roman Times. The city has incredible architecture and is home to the oldest racecourse in the country. The region also offers miles of coastline, the popular seaside resorts of Blackpool – one of Britain's most popular day visits – as well as Southport.

There is a strong sporting heritage. Indeed when it comes to football, the region is one of the most successful in Europe, as home to two of the biggest football clubs in the world; Manchester United and Liverpool. It can also boast the Grand National at Aintree and has 20 of the most naturally beautiful golf courses in Britain, including three famous Royal links courses at Birkdale, Liverpool and Lytham St Annes.

Major cultural events are increasingly attracting attention from European audiences. The Manchester International Festival has already established itself firmly on the map, as the world's first international festival of original, new work.

Many of its events, including the Chinese opera *Monkey* by Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett, received worldwide critical acclaim.

Meanwhile, the Liverpool Biennial is one of the most successful arts events in the UK, best known for presenting the country's largest festival of contemporary visual art. Since its inception, the international exhibition has commissioned more than 100 new works.

Liverpool's renaissance was further enhanced by its title as European Capital of Culture 2008, which led to significant regeneration of the city centre, including Liverpool One, the £1 billion, 40 acre shopping centre – the largest of its kind in Europe. It has gained plaudits for its architecture and planning, linking the city with a mix of designer stores, high street names and boutique shops.

And yet, these dynamic urban cities are only ever 90 minutes from the Lake District – England's largest National Park. The Lakes are renowned for their beauty, catering for everyone from the casual stroller, to those who prefer more extreme pursuits.

The Northwest is also one of the best connected regions in the UK, easily accessed both nationally and internationally. There are three international airports, flying to over 270 destinations; Liverpool John Lennon, Blackpool International and Manchester International.

On a national level, the West Coast Line from Manchester and Liverpool to London, is Europe's busiest main railway line. Massive investment means it is now the most frequent long distance train service in Europe, with a journey time of only two hours to central London.



The beautiful landscape of Wastwater, the Lake District (top). Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (left)

- City
- Airport
- University
- Science Park

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## Creative and digital industry at a glance

**31,000 COMPANIES**

**320,000 EMPLOYEES**

**NEW HQ FOR FIVE BBC DEPARTMENTS**

**30 YEARS IN ANIMATION**

**EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR GAMING**

**£3 BILLION MEDIACITYUK**

**£16 BILLION CREATIVE ECONOMY**

Printed on 100% de-inked recycled waste with FSC recycled certification. Pulp is bleached using a Totally Chlorine Free process.