

## 2025 Autumn Budget submission

### SUPPORTING GROWTH IN THE UK COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY

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- *The UK Comic Book industry has a tremendous heritage, and huge opportunity for growth*
- *Sales of comics and graphic novels in the UK have reached record highs in recent years, breaking through the £50m barrier in 2022*
- *Globally, comics and graphic novels not only account for a huge part of the publishing industry, but also create valuable IP which fuels other parts of the creative sector including film, high end TV and video games*
- *The potential of the UK comic sector is currently under-realised, and measures to promote investment and support growth would support new entrants, new publications and sustainable salaried and freelance creative careers*

#### Context

The UK comic industry comprises a small number of larger publishers, and a far larger number of small publishers. Their output is a combination of original content, licensed work, and reimagined archive material which draws on the value of UK comic heritage.

Alongside weekly comics like The Beano, 2000AD and The Phoenix, there are less frequent but still regular anthology titles and one-off graphic novels, often with a premium feel.

Employment in the sector - in common with many creative industries - is dominated by freelancers, with relatively few salaried roles. Comic Book UK's ten founding members contract with around 800 freelancers annually, over half of whom incorporate comic creation into a portfolio career spanning other creative industries including commercial art, film and TV, video games and animation.

There is limited access to external funding in the industry, and so while more established publishers can rely on subscription revenues to finance IP creation, others often turn to crowdfunding to de-risk projects.

Profit margins are extremely tight, with many operating essentially on a non-profit basis, with senior figures motivated by love of the artform rather than their ability to make a living. This limits the growth potential of the sector, despite growing sales revenues, a growing and evolving audience, and the huge value of comic book IP across the wider creative industries.

#### New tax credits and tax relief

In many creative sub-sectors the government has put in place significant incentives to aid growth.

These have a track record of success, with [the BFI](#) calculating the benefits of various creative industry tax reliefs range from £1.72 in additional gross value added for each £1 spent in the video game sector, up to £8.30 per £1 spent in the film sector.

A similar measure for the publishing industry - including comics and graphic novels - could have a significant impact on the viability of new entrants into the market and encourage greater investment. It could cover author advances, artwork creation, design and typesetting, printing, distribution, as well as archiving and translation into other formats.

The benefits would include larger creator advances, more stable and more frequent opportunities for freelancers in the industry, and greater direct employment in areas like marketing and sales.

### **Business support, and guidance around existing schemes**

The UK comic industry can be encouraged to commercialise and innovate through being supported to make better use of existing schemes.

There is a role for improved guidance for comic book publishers and tax advisors on the way in which existing schemes such as the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and the smaller scale Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) can be targeted to comics and the wider creative industries.

Comic publishers would also benefit from access to tailored business support, and greater awareness amongst traditional support providers for the opportunities in their sector - this includes access to appropriate legal and IP advice, tax advice, and mentoring to identify growth pathways.

### **Greater support for export**

With low profit margins and limited growth investment, it can be prohibitively expensive to attend trade shows and rights fairs and make the connections which would open up new markets.

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) has a well-established model for supporting early-stage exporters to access new markets, but funding which supports an enhanced UK presence at comic and publishing trade shows, and as part of creative industry trade missions would be hugely beneficial.

### **About Comic Book UK**

Comic Book UK is the collective voice of the UK comic industry. Our members include the publishers of some of the world's most celebrated characters, award-winning graphic novel specialists taking new creative voices to global audiences, multimedia drama producers investing in comics to nurture new properties, and innovative startups developing online platforms to engage new readers.

We have come together around a shared mission to drive growth in our industry by making the UK the best place in the world to create, publish and sell comics and graphic novels.