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2023

# BRISTOL GRASSROOTS MUSIC FUND

Discussions, Findings and Recommendations:  
Bristol Music Industry Round Table

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# How can the music industry better support grassroots in the city?

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The music industry is a delicate ecosystem. It has weathered years of austerity from national government and the storm of the pandemic.

The sector is currently battling through the national cost-of-living crisis and the impacts of policy decisions beyond our city borders.

Despite immense pressures, Bristol has managed to go against the national trend of music venue closures.

The city has held on to our treasured music spaces, welcomed new and returning audiences, and continues to support a thriving and innovative music scene.

**This report is a summary from a round table discussion of Bristol music industry representatives.**



Bristol City Council hosted a round table discussion at City Hall on Thursday 7th September 2023.

The three-hour event, facilitated by Bristol's Night Time Economy Advisor, was supported by colleagues in the Mayor's Office and City Office.

Over seventy representatives from Bristol's music industry signed up to the session.

Sectors included organisations of every size, from independent, local and micro, to national commercially led organisations, charities, public sector and trade representatives, artists, studios and music management.

The represented sectors included :



# **GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE BRISTOL GRASSROOTS MUSIC FUND**

**Self-sustaining and  
community generated**

**To be inclusive**

**Fair and transparent**

**Focussed on the future**

**Embedded in Bristol's  
home-grown culture**

**Representative of our  
musicians, venues,  
events and genres**

**Business and talent  
development**

**Help the sector reach  
climate ambitions**

**Support infrastructure,  
music making and ecosystem**

# BACKGROUND

## The current state of the music industry in the UK is precarious. There is significant impact of venue closures and nightclubs are declining in numbers nationally.

Between March 2020 and June 2023 Britain lost a third of its nightclubs<sup>1</sup> with a specific emphasis on the independent sector.

Bristol is defying the national trend of venue closures. The city has a vibrant music scene, with a rich diversity of music venues and events happening in the city. On the surface Bristol's music industry appears to be thriving.

The night time economy plays a significant role in developing Bristol's cultural scene and is a major employer in the city. 41% of Bristol's jobs are between 6pm-6am<sup>2</sup>. A total of 116,300 Bristolians work at night.

This sector includes not only nightclubs, pubs, bars, and restaurants, but also various other industries such as health and social care, late-night retail, transportation, and services.

Bristol is one of the few cities in the UK to employ a Night Time Economy Advisor to support the sector, although night time advocacy is a growing global movement.

The night time cultural and leisure sector alone supports 22,700 jobs in Bristol and contributes to the overall vitality of the city.

According to licensing data<sup>3</sup>, Bristol boasts 12 live music venues and 27 nightclubs, making it a hub for music lovers.

However, this only tells part of the story. There are 1,068 premises in Bristol licensed for live music, recorded music, and dancing, showcasing the city's dedication to fostering a vibrant music culture. This demonstrates that licensing classifications can often omit premises where grassroots music is created.

The music tourism industry in UK is thriving according to a UK Music report, reaching a total of 14.4 million visitors in 2022. The South West region, including Bristol, attracted a substantial number of music tourists, with the highest per person spend outside of London.

These figures demonstrate the economic importance of music tourism in Bristol.

### SOUTH WEST MUSIC TOURISM IN 2022 <sup>4</sup>

**1.1 million** music tourists

**£683 million** revenue

**7,040 jobs**

**£621 average spend** per music tourist

1-CGA Strategy : Britain loses 30 % of nightclubs since COVID  
2-Office for National Statistics : The night-time economy, UK: 2022  
3-Bristol City Council Licensing Data  
4-UK Music : Here, There and Everywhere 2023



## BRISTOL MUSIC IS BIG BUSINESSES

1,068 premises licensed for music  
200 outdoor events (festivals)  
1.2 million festival attendees a year  
22,700 jobs in the night time cultural and leisure sector [ONS]

# Britain has lost a third of its nightclubs since the pandemic.

Bristol City Council (BCC) facilitates a significant number of outdoor events and festivals<sup>5</sup>, with over 200 events taking place across 70 locations in the past year alone, attracting 1.2 million people. These events not only contribute to the city's music tourism but also generate a positive impact for the local economy.

However, despite the thriving music scene and the significant contribution of the industry to Bristol's economy, there is a distinct gap in support and funding for grassroots music culture.

# 75%

**of Bristol venues have never received any Arts Council Funding<sup>6</sup>**

This lack of financial support is a concerning issue for the sector considering the industry generates wealth, creates jobs, and forms an integral part of the city's cultural identity.

The music industry in Bristol is culturally and economically significant. In the current economic climate, the continued resilience of Bristol's music venues is in spite of the sectors' urgent need for improved support.

It is vital that the value of this sector is recognised for the critical role it plays in grassroots music, supporting the night time economy, the creative industries, and cultural life in the city.

Bristol stands out by defying the national trend of venue closures, and has successfully maintained its venue portfolio, even gaining a few since reopening after the pandemic.

This resilience demonstrates the city's strong commitment to supporting its music venues.

The current state of arts funding in the UK is flawed, and we call for a change in priorities which better supports grassroots music culture. A lack of support and funding for grassroots music culture threatens the sustainability of the sector.

## **We propose the creation of a local fund to address funding gaps and ensure the sustainability and growth of music in Bristol.**

5-Bristol City Council Data 2023

6-Round Table Participant survey. *Excluding Cultural Recovery Fund*

**Feedback from the round table  
discussions**

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# **WHAT IS GRASSROOTS MUSIC?**

**It's an ecosystem, the talent pipeline, the heart of our communities, and happens everywhere.**

**Community driven and independent. It celebrates creativity, experimentation, authenticity, and inclusivity.**

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# WHAT IS GRASSROOTS MUSIC?

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The round table industry discussion started with attempting to define 'grassroots music'. Even amongst Bristol music professionals the characteristics are varied, individual and personal.

**Grassroots music cannot be defined simply as type of venue, genre, artist, commercial success, or audience size.**

Bristol music includes live music venues, nightclubs, promoters, festivals, performers, sound systems, labels and audiences. It can happen anywhere and relies on the support of the wider creative community.

All performance spaces are valued: nightclubs, pubs, bars, live music venues, festivals, radio stations, recording studios, busking on the highstreet, or livestreaming on the internet.

It has many names: grassroots, the underground, counter culture, "the scene", nightlife, club culture, emerging talent, local music, live music and night time culture.

For the purpose of this discussion we incorporate all of these definitions.

Grassroots music is not definable by genre or commercial success. The talent of performers can authentically exist within an open mic night, or resident DJ in local pubs and bars.

**A defining characteristic is community.**

Grassroots music is something which belongs to the people.

Bristol artists, audiences and venues innovate, create, and (re)define its meaning as the sound evolves. It is authentic, sometimes rough round the edges, and serves as the foundation of the music industry.

Independent and rooted in local culture, it provides artists with the opportunity experiment, and to be seen and appreciated by audiences who in turn are participants in creating new cultural movements. It's a place where people feel they belong. Many participants discussed the Bristol scene as if it is a music family.

All music genres throughout history have started life amongst a hyper-local group of artists and audiences. It's a participatory process. The culture is both created and defined by the communities that explore.. And then smash those boundaries.

There is no definitive "Bristol Sound", but the energy to collaborate, innovate and represent our diverse communities is a thread which runs through the city.

# BRISTOL'S GRASSROOTS MUSIC...

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... Is a celebration of creativity and a testament to the enduring power of music.

**Offers opportunities** for future talent. There is a low barrier to entry for creatives to experiment and try something new.

It is a platform for future talent, **cultural expression, and innovation**, allowing artists the freedom to explore their creativity and share their new music with a receptive audience.

It continues to **push boundaries**, discover new talent, and provide unique experiences for both artists and audiences.

It **represents the future** of the music industry, providing opportunities for all and serving as a platform for future talent and discovery.

Despite challenges, it **thrives in diverse venues** and involves a wide range of individuals and entities.

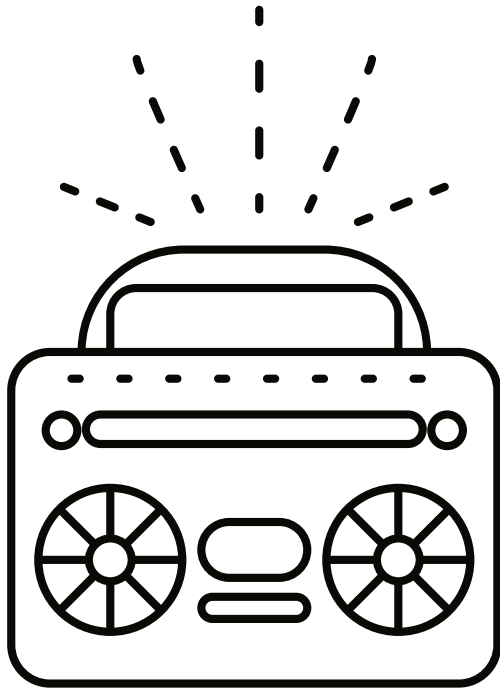
**Not limited to youth culture, it encompasses everyone** and relies on the support of the wider creative community.

It is generated and owned by a community of artists who are **deeply rooted in their local culture** and are committed to creating music that is authentic and genuine. It serves as the foundation of the music industry and provides artists with the opportunity to be seen and appreciated.

It is **accessible to all**, breaking down barriers and bringing people together through the power of music.

**All about the vibes.** This goes beyond the characteristics of music genres. Venues are diverse, counter-cultural, and places where audiences are encouraged to be 'authentically them'. Norms and behaviours of those spaces create a sense of unity that may not be reflected in day to day life. These are safe spaces where marginalised communities, including LGBTQIA+ and ethnically diverse groups, can come together to create culture.

**A DIY spirit** that encourages artists to take control of their own destiny and pursue their passion for music.



## WHERE AND HOW DOES BRISTOL MUSIC HAPPEN? WHO IS INVOLVED?

Bristol's grassroots music is a vibrant and diverse ecosystem that thrives on authenticity, inclusivity, and the support of various stakeholders. Despite challenges, it continues to push boundaries, discover new talent, and provide unique experiences for both artists and audiences.

Taking place in various venues, Bristol's music scene involves a diverse range of individuals and entities, including bands, artists, promoters, labels, and production teams.

Not limited to youth culture, people of all ages participate in enjoying, performing, and creating music.

Bristol's audiences play a crucial role in the city's healthy music scene. Audiences actively seek out new music, appreciate different genres, and value the live experience. Word of mouth and local community support are important factors in reaching the audience, and the strength of community in the city is a contributing factor in Bristol's resilience as a music city.

Open mic nights, jam sessions, resident DJs and online streaming serve as platforms for networking and showcasing undiscovered talent.

In the world of nightclubs, performance focuses more on DJs and MCs more than live bands - often characterised by electronic dance music and powerful sound systems.

Music in Bristol can happen anywhere and often starts with activities like street performances, radio shows or studio sessions. It thrives on a do-it-yourself mindset, pushing boundaries, and representing counter-culture values.

# **Bristol music support needs to consider the cultural ecology of venues, events, and music making.**

## **With a focus on talent development and sustainability for businesses and freelance creatives.**

Music creators in Bristol often create businesses surrounding their art, with record labels, fashion apparel and music events as an extension of their creative output. The participants at the round table cited Bristol's music offer as a reason to move to or build a life in the city. Additionally, the welcoming nature of the local creative community means new creative residents integrate into the Bristol scene.

The wider creative community, including photographers, videographers, dancers, designers, lighting and sound engineers, contribute to the ecosystem by enhancing the overall experience for both performers and audiences.

There is a need to better understand the cultural and economic value of this sector. A research project should include a mapping of the interconnectedness of the Bristol music ecology, alongside a more in-depth understanding of music's impact on Bristol's creative economy, cultural sector, and visitor economy.

Bristol music thrives on diversity, and is powered by support of a wider creative community.

Our night time cultural sector is an interconnected ecosystem; a network of businesses, places, creatives and fans.

Encompassing various genres and known by different names, Bristol music is a combination of the underground, local and live music scenes in the night time creative economy.

It includes live music venues, nightclubs, promoters, festivals, concert halls, studios, pubs, performers, and audiences.

Venues are celebrated as safe spaces where marginalised communities, including LGBTQIA+ and ethnically diverse groups, come together to create culture.

## **Bristol music is a creative cluster.**

# THE CHALLENGES

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**Bristol's music ecosystem faces numerous barriers, including declining sales, evolving audience habits, loss of venues nationally, increased overheads, lack of affordable spaces, festival saturation, industry monopoly, lack of support and recognition, financial risks, poor transport infrastructure, internet and AI-technology, Brexit-related issues, and a critical lack of funding from national government.**

The challenge for Bristol to support grassroots music and a vibrant night time cultural scene is multi-faceted and encompasses various aspects of the industry. Some of these are local issues, others national or international, and some are systemic. Cost-of-living and inflationary pressures on audiences and the economy has a significant impact on night time culture and grassroots music in Bristol, but it's more complex than that.

The round table participants discussed how challenges for local music scenes can be beyond the control of the local industry. Resolving these barriers requires a united effort among industry stakeholders, a shift in public perception on the value of music, and the implementation of supportive policies and funding mechanisms.

**A decline in bar sales** in nightclubs can be attributed to factors such as cost-of-living pressures, changing consumer preferences and the emergence of alternative forms of entertainment. Additionally, increased overhead costs pose a significant challenge for venues, making it difficult for them to sustain their operations alongside taking creative risks.

**Changing technology** and methods for consuming or discovering music has impacted the 'live' experience. The fight against algorithms for viral content and the emerging threat of AI pose a significant risk for local music scenes. While AI-generated artists may receive airplay on Spotify, they are unlikely to perform at festivals. This



# The challenges for Bristol music are multi-faceted.

reduces the discoverability of emerging creatives on streaming platforms, for festival programmers this is coupled with a reduction of local events, or the cost prohibitive nature of discovering new artists through attending events.

Traditionally, festival acts are discovered throughout the year at grassroots music events, or via community generated online platforms (like SoundCloud, Bandcamp, Twitch). **Post-pandemic, audience behaviours have changed.** Opportunities to earn a living from perform live, practicing your craft as an artist and “being discovered” have shifted. The “Tik-Tok-ification” of music places a heavy reliance on viral content determined by online algorithms, or Instagram followers. This gives a warped perception of popularity which may not translate to ticket sales or ability to perform to a live audience. Additionally, some promoters and performers are finding it challenging to convey to the younger generation the unique experience of live music that cannot be replicated through online platforms.

Market saturation in festivals is an obstacle. With numerous festivals competing for attendees and limited resources, it is challenging for emerging acts to secure slots and gain exposure. Furthermore, the **lack of affordable spaces** for events and the declining presence of smaller park-based festivals limits opportunities for grassroots artists to showcase their talent.

Accessing venues and selling tickets present additional challenges. It is not merely a matter of pricing, but rather generating

interest and attracting audiences. The size of the venue also impacts costs and overheads, making it essential to strike a balance between grassroots and mainstream acts that can attract ticket sales.

Moreover, grassroots music faces a monopoly of big industry, which can stifle the growth and recognition of emerging artists. **Lack of support for emerging and grassroots performers** further compound these challenges, coupled with financial risks and venue costs.

**Brexit-related issues**, such as visa requirements for international artists, have also had an adverse impact on the music industry. Uncertainty around attendance and financial risks, as well as the reliance on bar sales to fund events, contribute to the overall barrier to supporting grassroots music in Bristol.

Lastly, the growth and sustainability of grassroots music is hindered through **insufficient public funding**, a lack of support from government, loss in sponsorship from the business community, and declining profitability of record labels. Public funding and subsidies are necessary to ensure that grassroots movements receive the necessary resources and recognition they deserve.

## Overcoming these barriers requires collaboration, policy change, increased support, and an evidence-based approach to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for music in Bristol to thrive.

# THE OPPORTUNITIES

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Participants emphasised the importance of grassroots music and its contribution to Bristol's culture, night time creative economy and tourism.

There is a need for senior level leadership at Bristol City Council to develop an evidence-based strategy which recognises the local music ecosystem.

They suggested creating a unique "Bristol brand" as a music city and redressing the lack of contribution from external organisations.

Key opportunities include developing a vision for Bristol that values grassroots music, improving transportation, repurposing infrastructure, and establishing talent development programs and spaces for emerging artists.

# The participants felt that while Bristol is a culturally rich city, grassroots music often gets overlooked by public funding.

There is a general sense within the sector that they are misunderstood and underrepresented by local and national institutions. A common request emerged for senior strategic leadership for music, the night time cultural sector, and festivals at Bristol City Council. The sector would benefit from a strategic view for music in the city.

Additionally, there is a need for an economic study of the sector and its impact on Bristol, both in terms of cultural and economic value. Some participants felt that Liverpool and Manchester had a better coordinated approach to their local music scenes and suggested that Bristol should work harder to develop its own unique "Bristol brand" in relation to its music scene.

Participants expressed their feeling that while Bristol is renowned for being a culturally rich city, grassroots music often gets overlooked by national public funding, Bristol City Council, and West of England Combined Authority.

There is a perception that funding bodies tend to prioritise more traditionally recognised arts and culture sectors (such as theatre, museums, galleries, art centres, and

film) as well as the creative technology sector (digital, visual arts, video games).

**There is a clear need for a specific focus on funding and support for the local music ecosystem and the wider counter-culture creative community.**

Participants discussed various opportunities and needs but emphasised the importance of increasing funding opportunities for the sector. They stressed the need for meaningful recognition of grassroots music as a pipeline to creativity, which other sectors in the city benefit from, such as the creative technology sector.

They also raised concerns about the lack of contribution from organisations operating outside of Bristol, particularly national touring companies and wider business community who contribute little but benefit from Bristol's audiences:

## Key opportunities include:

- **Creating an evidence-based vision for Bristol music**
- **Affordable late-night transportation**
- **Repurposing infrastructure and empty buildings**
- **A coordinated approach for talent development**
- **Establishing a central space for emerging talent**
- **A Bristol-based entertainment pass for those aged 18 and above.**

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# **A BRISTOL GRASSROOTS MUSIC FUND?**

**A proposal to establish a self-sustaining and community-generated fund which supports the Bristol music industry.**

**Operated via a ticket levy system.**

**1-3% levy added to all music event tickets sold in the city.**

**This levy, paid for by customers at the point of sale, would be collected into a central funding pot and distributed via a grant.**

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# BY BRISTOL FOR BRISTOL

This core proposal is a self sustaining support system, built by Bristol, for Bristol.

By implementing a ticket levy system, this Music Fund has the potential to raise significant investment to support various aspects of the music ecosystem.

The more successful Bristol music events are, the more money can be redistributed to help support the sector to thrive.

Over the course of a year there is a potential for this fund to surpass the annual funding received by the city's only National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) music venue.

A feasibility study is needed on some robust economic modelling of the value and impact a ticket levy would have on Bristol's music.

## Fund Distribution

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The proposed fund aims to distribute its resources **across three pillars**: venues, events, and music making.

**Venues** The 'space' in which music happens

**Events** The music activity / performance

**Music Making** How the music is created

This approach recognises the need to support not only the *physical spaces* music takes place but also the activities and performances that happen *within* them.

Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of nurturing and protecting the creatives involved in the music industry, including promoters, performers, and festivals, who were largely excluded from government funding during the Cultural Recovery Fund.

## Fund Management

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To ensure the effective management of the fund, the proposal suggests two options:

**A fund manager through a community foundation, or**

**A community benefit society.**

Both options have pros and cons. Careful consideration is required by the working group, with input from accountants, lawyers, and business consultants as part of a feasibility study.

## Example\*

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Imagine Bristol sells 10,000 tickets every night of year.

A £7 ticket + 1% ticket levy = 7p each sale or £700 every night.

This would generate £255.5k yearly to the fund.

\* The feasibility study will calculate optimum percentage, and realistic projections from this proposed ticket levy.

# THREE PILLARS

venues

events

music  
making

Feedback from the round table  
discussions

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# DOOMSDAY THINKING



**During the round table discussion participants were asked to think about why they thought a ticket levy was a bad idea.**

**What could go wrong? Difficulties, weaknesses, dangers... what are the risks?**

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# Doomsday thinking - What could go wrong? ... What are the risks?

## Participants emphasised a need for transparent decision making processes and clear communication on the benefits of the fund.

A range of concerns were discussed on creating a ticket levy on music events in the city, including:

- Potential increases in ticket prices
- A lack of clear communication about the benefits of the levy
- Potential exclusion of other arts-based sectors
- Challenges in defining success
- Fair allocation of funds
- Logistical issues with fund collection and enforcement.

Participants emphasised the **need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach** to address these concerns and ensure fair distribution of funds while maintaining accessibility and affordability for consumers.

One major concern raised was the potential negative impact on consumers, with **fears that the levy would further increase ticket prices.**

Various components contribute to the cost of a ticket, including face value, booking fees, venue levies, and grassroots levies. There is apprehension that the accumulation of these fees may result in higher prices for consumers, which could deter attendance and make events less accessible.

Another concern discussed was the lack of clear communication regarding the benefits of the levy to ticket buyers. Participants emphasised the importance of clearly **explaining how the funds raised through the levy would be used to support the music industry** and benefit the local community. Without a clear understanding of the positive impact the levy would have, consumers may view it as an additional financial burden without any tangible benefits.

Participants expressed concerns that the fund would be syphoned off to support local authority governance of the night time economy, this is rooted in national discourse around Night Time Levies.

In other cities, Night Time Levies are often used to support emergency services in managing negative impacts of the night time economy. Bristol does not have a Night Time Levy and currently has no plans of implementing one.

## We need an inclusive approach to ensure fair collection and distribution of funds, balanced with affordability for consumers.

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Assurances need to be made that funds generated from the ticket levy are not to be used for providing additional night safety provisions, such as police, transport, and ambulance services.

The city already has several Business Improvement Districts which use business levies to support the sector. The Cumulative Impact Area also puts a limit on the number of businesses that can operate late at night due to pressures on the emergency services. Without adequate measures in place, the levy could potentially be used for managing the urban environment at night instead of developing and supporting the creative sector, as intended.

Another point of concern was the potential exclusion of other arts-based sectors from the benefits of the levy. Participants stressed the need for a **transparent decision-making** process when it comes to grant giving and the allocation of funds.

The discussion touched on the challenges of defining success and determining the threshold for when an event or venue is no longer considered "grassroots."

It was noted that unless there was a consensus across the city for a funding model that ensures **equal contributions from all venues**, there may not be enough money available to meet the needs of the sector. In this example some participants highlighted the risk of larger venues contributing the same amount as smaller ones, which could lead to unfair distribution of funds. The contribution to the fund should be proportionate to the size of the venue, and embedded in a sense of fairness.

Questions were raised about how funds would be fairly allocated to reflect the different needs of small and large venues. Competition over grants has the potential to create resentment from those who do not receive funding.

**Logistical issues** surrounding the collection of funds and the enforcement of the levy on every ticket sold need to be resolved. Participants discussed the added barrier this would create for ticket sales and potential impact on the market in Bristol. There were worries about the potential negative effect on attendance at creatively risky gigs if ticket prices were higher due to the levy.

Overall, the round table discussion revealed a range of legitimate concerns associated with implementing a ticket levy in Bristol. Participants emphasised the need for an inclusive approach that is respectful of the music ecosystem, ensures a fair and effective distribution of funds whilst also maintaining accessibility and affordability for consumers.

Feedback from the round table  
discussions

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# ABUNDANT POSITIVITY

**During the discussion, participants were asked to think with ‘abundant positivity’ about the benefits of the fund.**

**What are the positives? Plus points? What is good about this idea? Why is it useful?**

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# Abundant positivity - what are the benefits of the fund?

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## The sector supports developing a funding model that aligns with Bristol's values and supports the local music industry.

The round table discussion offered useful insights into the possible advantages and factors to consider when implementing a ticket levy in Bristol. Participants highlighted benefits for the city, including:

- An opportunity to support the **discovery of local talent, and nurture creative careers**
- Delivering on a much needed **sustainable funding** source,
- The potential to position **Bristol as a music hub**,
- Broader socioeconomic impacts, including improving the experience of underrepresented and marginalised communities.

Alternative funding options were also discussed. Participants stressed the importance of carefully evaluating these proposals, and implementing a process which considers the feedback of stakeholders and audiences.

Participants emphasised the importance of fostering a **strong connection between the music industry and the city**, with the aim of increasing the sense of community and promoting a vibrant cultural ecosystem. A positive factor in a community-generated fund was a sense of 'ownership' in supporting the wider cultural ecology.

One of the key advantages highlighted by participants was the opportunity to discover and nurture local talent. In allocating funds to support grassroots music, **the proposal would empower music communities** to have control over their own funding and shape their own destinies. This would not only help in retaining local talent within Bristol but also **highlight the city's cultural leadership and vibrant music scene**.

**Sustainable funding** was discussed as a significant positive aspect. The current reliance on short-term grants and dwindling public funding poses challenges for the music industry. **Many of the participants had never received any funding from public resources**, in part due to lack of skills and resources required to submit a bid, others feel that arts funding doesn't apply to their businesses.

## It would reinforce Bristol's reputation as a music city, a place that supports the creative community, and night time culture.

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Implementing a ticket levy would provide a more stable and sustainable source of funding, reducing the time and effort spent on grant applications and administration. This, in turn, would allow artists and organisations to focus more on creating art and taking creative risks, **fostering an environment where creative risk and innovation can flourish.**

The proposal also aims to **position Bristol as a great place for new music**, attracting big acts and tourism to the city. By investing in audience development and supporting better music experiences, the city can enhance its reputation as a hub for diverse and high-quality music.

Additionally, the proposal offers **the potential for an increase in accessibly priced events**, making music experiences more affordable and inclusive to a wider audience.

Apart from the immediate benefits to the music industry, implementing a ticket levy would have broader socioeconomic impacts. It would add to the Bristol brand, reinforcing the city's reputation as a place that supports grassroots music.

The proposal also aims to build a stronger sense of community in Bristol, making the arts more accessible to people from all backgrounds.

**By keeping money within the community and reinvesting it into future grassroots initiatives, this proposal aligns with the key principles of the creative industry.**

During the round table discussion, participants also explored alternative funding options. These included redirecting current funding from sources like the Arts Council towards the music industry, establishing investment funds to reinvest returns into the sector, exploring mixed funding options based on profits or tickets, and seeking government involvement through rebates or levies from organisations like West of England Combined Authority.

The discussion showcased the diverse range of ideas and perspectives in finding sustainable funding solutions for the music industry.

It is essential to evaluate and consider these proposals carefully, and consider the concerns and feedback raised during the round table discussion.

In doing so, Bristol can develop a funding model that not only supports the music industry but also aligns with the city's values, fosters innovation, and strengthens the sense of community and cultural identity.

Feedback from the round table  
discussions

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**WHAT'S THE  
ALTERNATIVE?**



**The following suggestions are a collection of quick-thinking ideas for alternatives, should the ticket levy proposal not progress further.**

**These proposals should be explored in further detail via a feasibility study.**

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# What's the alternative?

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## **These ideas aim to support and sustain the local music industry, encourage creativity and innovation, and build a stronger music community in Bristol.**

Evolving the proposal of a grassroots music fund, the following suggestions came out of from a series of quick-fire rounds. Participants were asked to imagine alternative solutions which address the 'doomsday thinking' problems, and lean into the collective power of the Bristol music community.

These ideas were put forward during the discussion as an alternative to a ticket levy, to address the critical funding needs of the Bristol's music community.

Several alternative funding ideas were proposed such as, redirecting existing funding from the Arts Council or West of England Combined Authority, establishing an investment fund, exploring mixed funding options, philanthropic trusts, voluntary donations from residents, corporate social responsibility budgets, or partnering with businesses.

One suggestion is to redirect current funding, such as funds from the Arts Council, towards music-making and venues. This could include NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) grants, Project grants and Developing Your Creative Practice. The feeling amongst participants was that in reallocating existing resources, it is hoped that more funding will be available specifically for the grassroots music sector.

Another fiscal proposal is to establish an investment fund, which would require initial funding and then reinvest the returns into the sector. This could be linked to an endowment fund, like the one managed by Quartet Community Foundation, with a focus on ethical investing, green technology, and green futures.

Citywide music membership-based approaches were suggested, such as a subscription models. This could offer benefits to members, like discounts on merchandise or tickets, while providing a steady source of income for bands and artists.

## "Why can't we aspire to be a city of culture? We have enough of it!"

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Such investments would not only support the music industry but also contribute to sustainability and environmental initiatives.

This proposal would mean that the sector essentially creates a collective pot for investment, and collectively reaps the awards.

To diversify funding sources, the idea of exploring mixed funding options was discussed. This could involve implementing a levy based on profits or tickets, where a percentage of revenue would be allocated to supporting the music sector. Additionally, a partnership or sponsorship model could be explored, where businesses and organisations collaborate with venues and artists to provide financial support.

Government involvement was also considered, with suggestions of rebates or levies from organisations like West of England Combined Authority. Exemptions for VAT and tax breaks were proposed to ease financial burdens and incentivise support for the sector.

Voluntary donations from residents, either as a levy or optional contribution, were seen as a potential source of funding. This could be complemented by the establishment of a city fund social investment bank, where funds are pooled and invested in the music industry.

Other ideas included collective insurance for venues, "taxing the rich" to support the arts, partnering with breweries or alcohol suppliers, and establishing a "pipeline fund" to redistribute funds from large-scale gigs to smaller music events.

The concept of city of culture status and corporate sponsorship was also raised, as these designations and partnerships can bring additional funding and visibility to the music scene.

Similarly, promoting the arts and music through billboards and campaigns funded by the local authority and Visit West, similar to the "save culture" initiative, could help generate public support and ticket sales.

National government funding pots, mandatory fees, concerted efforts from the local council to promote the arts, and schemes similar to "eat out to help out" or Bristol-based "entertainment pass" were also proposed as potential funding avenues. Additionally, the establishment of a membership organisation or a Bristol-based share offer, along with opt-in donations at a higher cost, were mentioned as alternative options.

Finally, philanthropic trusts like Paul Hamlyn and Power to Change were suggested as potential funding sources for the music sector in Bristol.

It is important to note that these ideas were generated during the round table discussion, and further exploration and evaluation will be needed to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of each funding approach.

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# WHAT'S NEXT?

**The Bristol music community has shared their commitment to building a self sustaining fund, what now?**

**What are the recommendations to the city, and next steps?**

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# There is a need to better understand the impact of Bristol's music ecosystem, in both economic terms and cultural value.

**It is clear that a current definition of the sector does not encapsulate the nuance of how music culture is created in the city, the economic impact of the sector, and the level of financial or business support already available.**

A study of the night time creative industry in Bristol and the South West would help define the businesses and networks involved, along with the level of business development or funding support required to help the sector prioritise innovation.

This could be better understood through an economic mapping of the cultural ecology around the creative industries within the night time economy.

We would like to thank the participants of the round table event for their generosity of time and expertise in the formation of this proposal.

Bristol's music culture is a reflection of our inclusivity, innovation, and community spirit.

This proposal is a unique solution to the challenges facing the sector.

We strive to embody the values of Bristol's grassroots music community as we reflect and explore the recommendations discussed. The heart of this response will require collaboration and imagination of an alternative future for music culture in the city.

**Establish commitments from public bodies to support the formation of this fund**

**Secure seed funding**

**A study into the economic impact of Bristol's grassroots music industry**

**Explore feasibility of a ticket levy system to raise funds for Bristol music**

**Set up a working group of sector representatives and create a delivery roadmap**

**Market-test the proposals via audience survey**

**Secure a commitment from commercial led and national organisations to support the fund**

**Create a grassroots music fund  
built by Bristol, for Bristol**

**Ensure fund is self-sustaining, inspires innovation,  
and supports talent development in the city**

**Distribute funds fairly across the ecosystem,  
including venues, events, and music making**

**Establish a robust governance system rooted in  
equality, transparency, and community**

**Choose a fund manager which supports fund values,  
via a community foundation  
or a community benefit society**

**Address concerns about  
potential increases in ticket prices and  
communicate benefits of the levy**

**Develop a comprehensive and  
inclusive approach to address concerns and  
ensure fair distribution of funds**

**Embed Bristol music into  
the heart of city cultural strategy**

**BRISTOL  
NIGHTS**

Bristol Nights



**Bristol Nights is a Bristol City Council partnership for the night time economy.**

**Keep up to date with our work:**

**[www.bristolnights.co.uk](http://www.bristolnights.co.uk)**

**For questions, comments, suggestions, offers of funding and assistance in the establishment of this fund, please get in contact:**

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**Discussions, Findings and Recommendations:  
Bristol Music Industry Round Table**

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