



Partnership working & influencing

Salla Virman, Senior Policy Officer for Culture
West Midlands Combined Authority
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Photo: ACE Dance & Music



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is a partnership between 18 Local Authorities and other bodies. We have seven constituent Local Authority members who make up the WMCA Board.

WMCA was created in 2016 through a devolution deal where UK Government gave us money and powers to improve the lives of people in the West Midlands.

In 2017 Andy Street was elected as the first Mayor of West Midlands, and he was re-elected in 2021.



**We are young.
We are diverse.**



Our strategic objectives for culture

- 1. Business Development** – Support the cultural sector to grow and recover after Covid-19, strengthening regional networks and building resilience
- 2. Participation** – Making sure that all our communities realise the benefits of culture (wellbeing, quality of life, cohesion)
- 3. Placemaking** – Harness culture’s potential to transform our cities, towns and local centres through unique experiences, a thriving night-time economy and defining the identity of a place
- 4. Promotion** – Use our major cultural events and diverse cultural institutions to position the West Midlands as the best place to work, live, visit, and invest

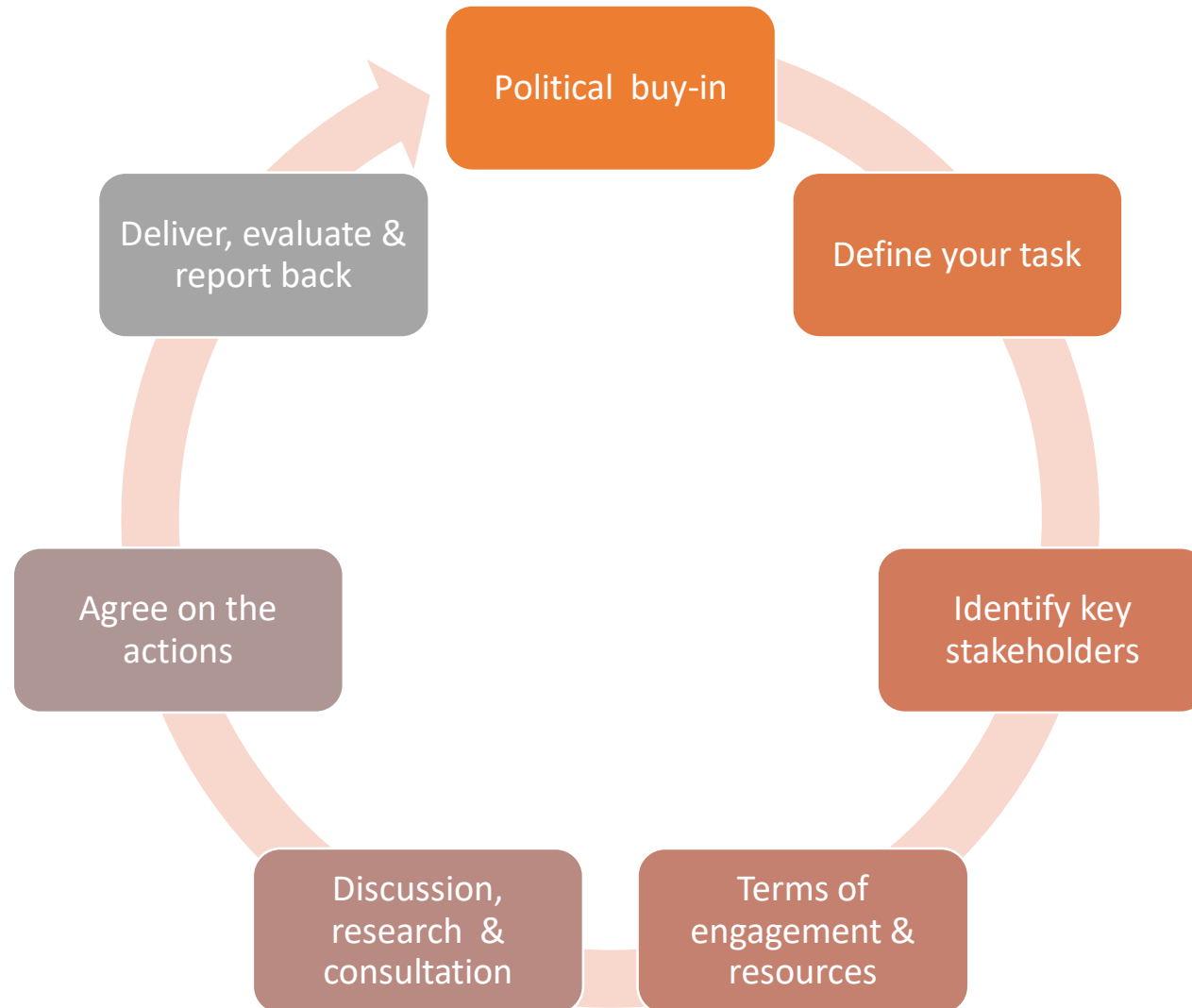
Black Country Cultural Investment Proposal



Artist Sonia Sabri, photo Black Country Living Museum

- Across four local authorities, Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell & Wolverhampton – complex geography
- Tackling low levels of opportunities, choice & investment
- How would you invest investment
- How do arts, culture & creative industries link with other things

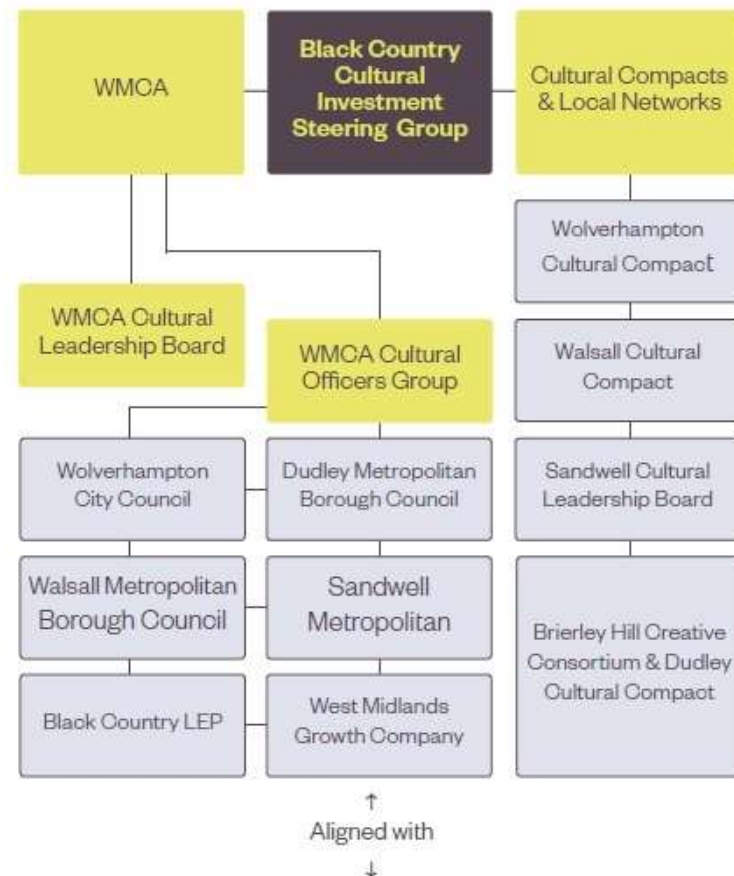
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How will we manage the investment?

To manage the funding and the delivery of the activity, the WMCA could take a lead role in channelling the funding. The oversight and decision-making functions will however be held by a specific Steering Group which will include representation from:

- Black Country Local Authorities
- Cultural Compacts or equivalent local partnerships within each of the Local Authority areas
- Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership
- WMCA Cultural Leadership Board & WMCA
- West Midlands Growth Company



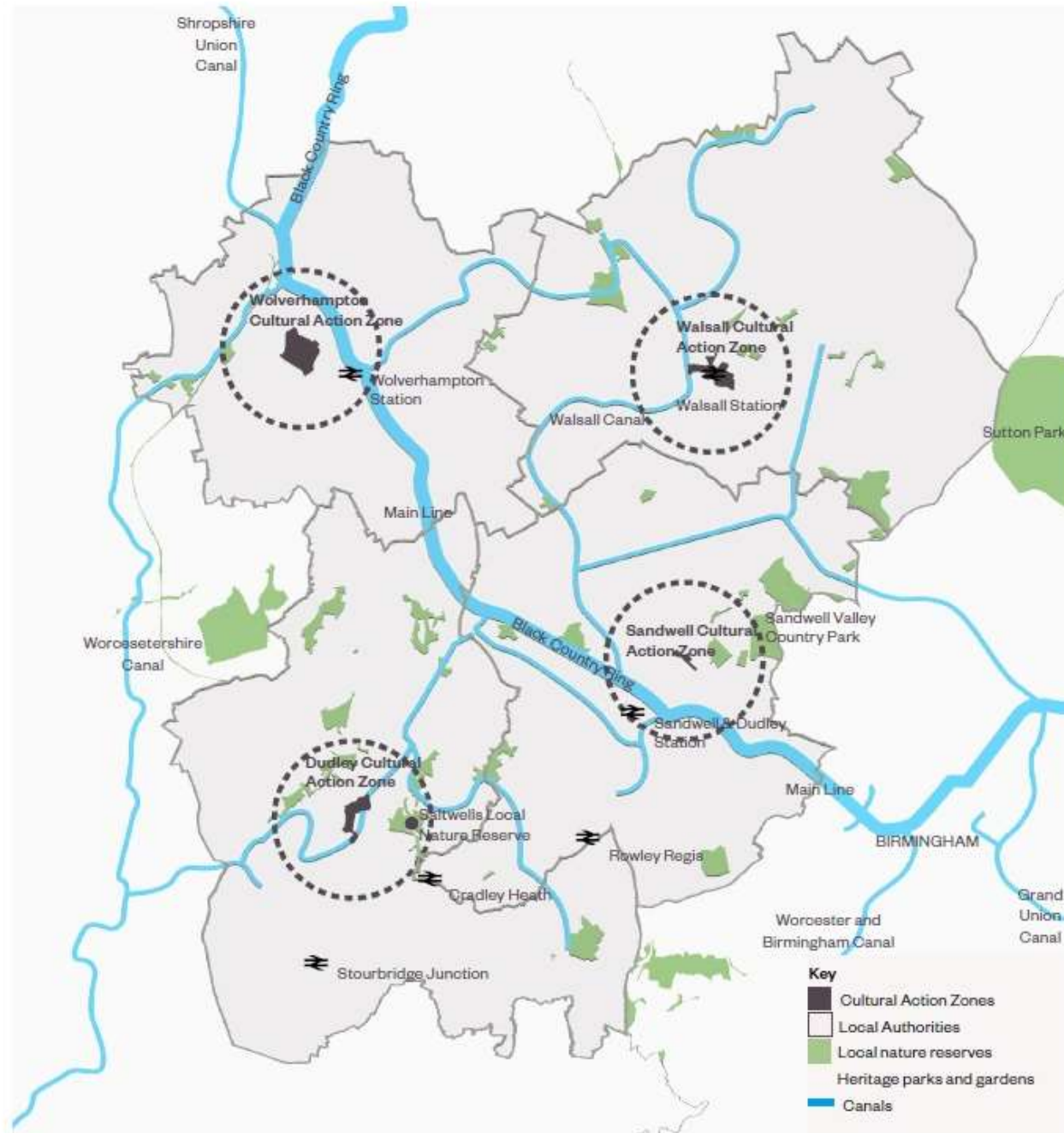
Strategic alignment		
- Black Country Plan	- Black Country Together Action Plan	- UNESCO Geopark
- West Midlands Digital Roadmap	- WMCA Reimagining	- Black Country Canals Strategy
- West Midlands Natural Environment Plan	- Transport in the West Midlands	- Towns Funds
- Black Country Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	- West Midlands National Park	- Arts Council England 'Let's Create' Strategy

03 Governance and Management



1. Investing in Culture and Places in the Black Country

Black Country Cultural Action Zones



Black Country Cultural Investment Proposal

- New sub-regional partnership
- Links between organisations, networks and public sector
- Cross-sectoral working & new partnerships
- New evidence
- Resulted in £725,000 investment being secured

Roles and Tactics



Deliver

Fund and deliver
your proposal (£)

Fund and deliver
your proposal (£££)



Convene

Bring together the
beneficiaries

Use publicity and
attention to bring
together decision
makers and funders



Influence

Amplify participants
voices to make the
case for greater
support

Make a clear and
compelling public
case for your cause



Tactics?

The goal is relevance – how do we ensure that your cause cannot be ignored by people in positions of power

Suggestions for some tactics:

- Target **anchor institutions** and make the case directly – put a human face to the cause
- Target **politicians and their teams** – meet with Local Authority leaders
- Position **op-eds and articles** in regional and national press – finding a press ‘hook’ wherever possible
- **Lift up voices** that would otherwise get ignored – by producing content like short videos for social media
- Use **social media** more broadly – either traditional posts on twitter or innovative content on TikTok
- Launch a **campaign** – pick a single message (e.g. the value of cultural participation culture) and use multiple channels and methods
- Forge **new relationships** – with music boards, with national trade bodies, etc.