Delegated Decision Report
5 August 2026

Title: Northern Music Export Office
Report of: Phil Witcherley, Director of Economic Growth and Innovation
Portfolio: Home to a Growing and Vibrant Economy

A. Summary

This report outlines the case in support of the request for £684,088 from the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority's (North East MSA) Integrated Settlement (Economic Development and Regeneration pillar) to support the delivery of the Northern Music Export Office (NMEO), in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) over a three-year period. The project seeks to address a lack of existing infrastructure to support Northern artists and music professionals to access opportunities in music export both nationally and internationally. As the first initiative of its kind, this cross-regional initiative is designed to strengthen the music industry ecosystem across the North of England through strategic support, talent showcasing, and international collaboration.

Led by Generator, and backed by Northern Combined and Mayoral Strategic Authorities, this programme will deliver a profound increase in national and international visibility for Northern music artists, businesses, and professionals.

The programme is working in partnership with regional organisations, venues, policymakers, and educational institutions to ensure Northern music is no longer the UK's best-kept secret and will support emerging and established music professionals to access export pathways, business development tools, and international showcase opportunities.

The North East Local Growth Plan (LGP) identifies Creative Industries and Content as one of the six priority sectors identified where the North East has unique economic assets and opportunities. The plan aims to 'Establish the North East as a centre for music, supporting new musicians, the music industry and the visitor economy' and states that 'creative industries could provide an annual UK GVA boost of around £10 billion by 2030'. This proposal for a NMEO aligns directly with those ambitions, and will support the achievement of them. This is important for creating both jobs and opportunity for the region, and making our growing industry sector a success as well as putting the region on the map for inward visitors.

TVCA will be the lead accountable body with Generator as lead delivery partner for the whole North. An Inter Authority Partnership Agreement (IAPA) between all participating partners has been prepared and will be signed on approval of all funding.

Liverpool City Region (LCR) has stated its intention to join the programme but this is not yet confirmed. When confirmed, funding contribution and outputs will be equal to participating Authorities.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to:

i) Approve the request for £684,088 from the North East MSA Integrated Settlement (Economic Development and Regeneration pillar) to support the delivery, alongside Tees Valley Combined Authority and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, of the Northern Music Export Office.

1. Background

The North of England is home to a wealth of musical talent and creative industries, but it lacks the necessary infrastructure to capitalise on (inter)national export opportunities.

Despite producing an array of globally recognised talent and nurturing a vibrant grassroots musical ecosystem, the region continues to experience underrepresentation in national funding schemes, reduced visibility in key industry events, and limited access to platforms beyond the area. Our thriving music ecosystem contributes significantly to local economies, but Northern artists and businesses face unequal barriers in accessing (inter)national opportunities, limiting their growth potential.

In 2022, UK music exports generated £4 billion, yet the North of England received a mere 10% of related support. This disparity highlights the region's untapped potential and a clear need for investment in export-readiness infrastructure.

The challenge is not a lack of talent, but a lack of access, joined-up support, and opportunity. NMEO seeks to reverse this trend by embedding a new cultural infrastructure that is export-focused, equitable, and regionally distributed.

In March 2017, the proposal was presented at high level, as part of the overall Creative Industries Investment Plan where it was endorsed by members. The NMEO has formed part of ongoing consultation of the DCMS Creative Places Growth Fund – devolved funding approach.

2. The Investment Proposal

NMEO aims to position the North of England as a national leader and global hub for music exports, delivering economic growth and raising the region's profile. NMEO will coordinate and deliver a rolling programme of activity across three years to build export capacity and raise the profile of Northern music talent. Three core themes shape the NMEO initiative:

1. **Exporting Northern Talent:** Showcasing and supporting a diverse array of music artists and businesses from across the North.

2. **Infrastructure & Industry Access:** Building platforms, partnerships, and support structures that enable long-term success in national and global markets.

3. **Creative Opportunity & Equity:** Ensuring Northern artists from all backgrounds have equal visibility and opportunity to enhance their career, addressing systemic opportunities.

Generator will lead programme delivery across the Northern regions, supported by other Northern agencies. Partners and global music stakeholders such as Warner (UK and US) and CUEW, Music City Council of Fukuoka and audio brand KEF (Japan), Youth Music, PRS Foundation, Arts Council England, will support activity.

Generator will commence recruitment activity for a dedicated NMEO team on approval of funding which will support capacity and full scale delivery.

The North of England is currently underserved in receiving national funding for creative industries. To address this and to enable longer term sustainability of the programme, NMEO will seek to strengthen access to national funding programmes.

Governance and Partnership Working

TVCA will serve as the body responsible for holding and managing all funds contributed by partner organisations. The grant agreement will be between TVCA and Generator, acting on behalf of the other Authorities.

To enable early mobilisation, TVCA, WYCA and North East MSA provided advanced funding, covering initial staffing, operational setup, and programme planning. This investment has ensured that the NMEO can move quickly into full scale delivery.

2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs are split equally across the three MSA/CA areas. Outputs below relate to the North East region:

Outputs	26/27	27/28	28/29	Total
Number of unique enterprises receiving support	6	9	8	24
Number of enterprises receiving support in the form of non-repayable grant	4	5	5	14
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	2	3	3	8

Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Artist Record Deals	March 2029	19
Artist Publishing Deals	March 2029	25
Artist Festival Slots	March 2029	15
Artist Tour Supports	March 2029	5
Artist Radio Playlists	March 2029	8
Brand Partnerships	March 2029	2
Artist Showcases	March 2029	16

2.2 Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Proposal Start Date	01/06/2026
Launch Date	02/06/2026
Financial Completion Date	31/05/2029
Inter Authority Agreement sign off	01/07/2026
Anticipated Proposal Completion Date (date by which all outputs/outcomes will have been achieved)	30/11/2029

2.3 Evaluation

Generator will provide activity impact reports to feed into the monitoring and evaluation process on an ongoing basis. The three MSA/CA's will commission a joint, project-wide evaluation.

2.4 Appraisal

A full-scale business case has been prepared and appraised internally at North East MSA with an overall RAG rating of Green. The Economic case returned a RAG rating of Amber due to unit costs being considered high relative to comparable programme costs; however, it was recognised that this reflects the novel and specific nature of the programme. We will work to ensure that there is careful monitoring and evaluation/lessons learned given that this is a pioneering approach.

2.5 RAG Assessment

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic case	**Green**
	Commercial case	**Green**
	Economic case	**Amber**
	Financial case	**Green**
	Management case	**Green**
	Overall rating	**Green**

Subsidy Control

Internal legal advice has been sought by TVCA, as lead accountable body. The advice determined that this programme will operate with a structured "flow-through" arrangement, whereby funding is channelled through Generator to end beneficiaries rather than retained. Generator should therefore be capable of receiving all the funding on a "no subsidy" basis by putting in place a structure that ensures the funding flows through the organisation, so no residual benefit remains with Generator at the end of the project. Generator will be funded to deliver several different workstreams, but all will be done for the benefit of third parties in the sector and for the general benefit of the sector within the North. Drawing on established delivery models used in comparable programmes (e.g. North East Screen and Sonic Futures)

The benefit from Generator's activities in the hands of third party SMEs will normally be a subsidy to the extent they are carrying on economic activities, i.e. they are in business. The benefit will be the value in kind of services they receive for free from Generator and/or any grant. Generator will be required to ensure each award is properly valued per different beneficiary and then subject to appropriate subsidy compliance steps. This will normally mean processing via MFA. Responsibility for ensuring compliance sits with TVCA as lead authority.

2.6 Recommended Conditions of Funding

Condition 1	No grant to be paid until TVCA and WYCA match funding is approved.
Condition 2	No grant to be paid until a signed copy of the 'Inter Authority Agreement' is submitted

2.7 Communications and Publicity

Generator will lead on comms activity with approval required from each MSA/CA before final release/publication.

All participating combined authorities along with Generator as delivery partner and comms teams across all CAs are actively involved in the development of the proposal and delivery. A formal launch took place on 2nd June 2026 and internal comms helped to inform the comms strategy. The regional Mayors attended the launch with the mayor's team and comms officers involved.

B. Potential Impact on North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Objectives

The North East is rapidly growing its portfolio of support for the music industry and cementing it's position nationally as a place to nurture and grow talent. This proposal dovetails well with existing commitments and activity that the North East MSA funds including, Music Industry Cluster development and the Create Talent skills programme. In addition, it aligns well with the emerging Small Venues Fund, due to launch 16th July 2026.

61,000 people are employed in the wider region's Creative Industries, 5% of the region's total jobs. The regional GVA is an estimated £1.67bn. The North East Local Growth Plan (LGP) identifies Creative Industries and Content as one of the six priority sectors identified where the North East has unique economic assets and opportunities. The plan aims to 'Establish the North East as a centre for music, supporting new musicians, the music industry and the visitor economy' and states that 'creative industries could provide an annual UK GVA boost of around £10 billion by 2030'. This proposal aligns with those ambitions and will support the achievement of them.

Growing our cultural and creative industries, is a key Mayoral Manifesto commitment and a strategic objective within the Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport portfolio. This proposal will proactively contribute to regional inclusive economic growth, capitalising on the values and opportunities that are unique and specific to this portfolio.

Additionally, this proposal links well with the North East MSA's link to international work, in particular in Japan and the USA, presenting further opportunity for international collaboration.

C. Key risks

Key risks relate to the potential for low artist engagement or poor pipeline from regional agencies, operational capacity constraints and limited local stakeholder engagement. All risks have satisfactory mitigations in place and will be monitored through the project steering group and project board.

D. Corporate Implications

D1. Financial and other resource implications

FUNDING SOURCE	**FINANCIAL VALUE**
North East MSA Funding Applied for:	
Integrated Settlement (Economic Development and Regeneration pillar)	£684,088
TOTAL NORTH EAST MSA FUNDING:	
Match Funding:	
Public Funding TVCA WYCA	 £617,008 £602,088
Private Funding	
Other	
TOTAL MATCH FUNDING:	£1,219,176
TOTAL PROPOSAL COST:	£1,903,264

Status of match funding:

Total funding for the full project, including predelivery, is £2,202,264. Funds approved to date and contracted separately to enable establishment of the NMEO are as follows:

North East MSA	£50,000 (fully drawn down)
TVCA	£117,000 (in delivery)
WYCA	£132,000 (in delivery)
Total	**£299,000**

D2. Legal implications

The comments of the monitoring officer have been included in this report.

D3. Equalities implications

An equalities impact assessment has been submitted to the North East MSA equalities team, awaiting feedback.

D4. Consultation and engagement

Industry engagement has been conducted on both sub regional, regional, national and international levels by partner authorities and Generator. High level consultation has been conducted on the lead up to the North East MSA's March Cabinet around the principles rather than the detail of the programme activity.

H. Appendices

None

I. Background papers

Delegated Decision Record NMEO 31102026

J. Contact officers

Name: Lisa Harwood
Title: Programme Manager
Email address: lisa.harwood@northeast-ca.gov.uk

K. Glossary

BPI – British Phonographic Industry
CA – Combined Authority
IAPA – Inter Authority Partnership Agreement
LCR – Liverpool City Region
MFA – Minimum Financial Assistance
MSA – Mayoral Strategic Authority
NMEO – Northern Music Export Office
North East MSA – North East Mayoral Strategic Authority
PRS Foundation – Performing Right Society Foundation
SXSW – South by South-West
TVCA – Tees Valley Combined Authority
WYCA – West Yorkshire Combined Authority

L. Consultees

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes