

BRITISH FASHION COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE
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LAUNCH OF THE HIGH-END & DESIGNER MANUFACTURING REPORT

Today the British Fashion Council (BFC) alongside UK Fashion and Textiles Association (UKFT), Creative Skillset (CS) and Marks & Spencer (M&S) announced the launch of the *High-end & Designer Manufacturing Report* (www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/manufacturingreport). The report was commissioned as part of the BFC's strategic goal to protect and develop the UK's reputation as the best place to start, develop and grow a designer fashion business.

The research was undertaken by Oxford Economics (OE) and Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) and was born out of the challenges faced by designers in finding the right production partners in the UK and the concerns around the long-term viability of the existing units. In order to ensure that this research could act as a platform to start addressing challenges, the BFC approached UKFT and CS to become partners in developing the methodology, research briefs and target lists of designers, brands and manufacturers to engage in this research. M&S, a patron of the BFC and lead partner on the BFC's Positive Fashion initiative brought extensive knowledge and experience in garment and textile production, both in the UK and overseas to the committee. Daliah Simble, Susie Palmer and Wendy Malem of the Centre for Fashion Enterprise (CFE) were also invited to join the Steering Group and share their industry knowledge and manufacturing contacts.

The *High-end & Designer Manufacturing Report* aims to bring industry together, share knowledge and propose a viable action plan.

The report suggests a 65% increase in demand for UK made high-end product over the next five years. This would deliver an additional turnover of over £400 million and support an additional 1,700 jobs across the UK. The report highlights the need for manufacturing benchmarking, shows the highly fragmented state of the manufacturing sector and emphasises the need for a coordinated approach from relevant stakeholders. The paper is keen to stress it has looked at the high-end only, complimenting the work of The Alliance Project in mapping the opportunity more broadly and focusing on growth and development in the North of England.

Caroline Rush CBE, CEO, British Fashion Council commented: "A concerted effort to rebuild the UK's fractured manufacturing capacity for the fashion sector requires action from both industry and policy makers to

support recommendations made within the report. Underpinning opportunities around manufacturing will not just see job and wealth creation, but will help British fashion designers to work with British suppliers based on proximity, price competition and skilled labour whilst also enjoying the currency of the Made in England label.“

Krishan Hundal, Director of General Merchandise Technology, M&S commented: *“M&S is the UK’s leading high street clothing retailer and a long standing patron of the BFC. M&S is also the Lead Partner of the BFC’s Positive Fashion initiative under which the report was commissioned. Unless you know where to look, there are significant challenges in finding companies able to produce the clothing to the standards needed. This report brings into focus those challenges particularly around the lack of benchmarking at the high end and because without an umbrella group for the industry it is hard to for new designers or those looking for new suppliers to know where to start.”*

John Miln, CEO, UK Fashion and Textiles Association commented: *“UKFT works across the fashion and textile industry spectrum and actively has contributed to, and supported the work of, the steering group, particularly the BFC, in the presentation and recommendations of this report. There continues to be much currency in developing manufacturing capacity for multiple reasons, but particularly so as it affects the manufacturing and supply of high end fashion for British designers.”*

Dr Kion Ahadi, Head of Research and Evaluation, Creative Skillset commented: *“This timely research shows that there will be a significant increase in UK made high-end product over the next five years, which is excellent news for the fashion industry. In recent years UK manufacturing saw a decline as many designers turned to emerging markets. However, with an increase in prices, difficulties with communication and unreliable delivery schedules, businesses are starting to see once again the benefits of local production.”*

The *High-end & Designer Manufacturing Report* is a credible first step in creating a framework for change, with stakeholders readily addressing some of the core challenges raised through the research with an intention to look at others in more detail. The top three for each organization and the Steering Group is as follows:

British Fashion Council

- 1 Better educate new and emerging fashion designers about manufacturing and make this information more widely available
- 2 Provide better access to specialist production management support for new fashion designers
- 3 Continue to lead the steering group to move forward on these recommendations

UK Fashion and Textiles

- 1 Better promote the role of UKFT to the manufacturing sector creating specific points of engagement for micro high end designer business units
- 2 Provide a targeted business support programme for managers within the high end manufacturing sector

- 3 Explore the opportunity to create more shared services hubs of modern equipment and technology that can be accessed by micro businesses. The Fashion Lab, installed in Hackney funded by European funding for DISC in partnership with the Trampery is a good example of how this is working for designers

Creative Skillset

- 1 Find ways for apprenticeships to work for all, from micro to medium sized businesses with access to grants to support training across the board
- 2 Review the development of dedicated high end making apprenticeships
- 3 Support skills development on a regional basis around centres of excellence as well as the expansion of training capacity for high end

Steering Group

- 1 Review the need for a specific benchmarked national database of UK-based manufacturers of high end and luxury goods which should sit within the existing broader UKFT funded and managed 'Let's Make it Here' database which assists in capturing national scale and scope of overall UK production of textiles apparel and accessories including footwear
- 2 Engage with a group of manufacturers to develop ideas of building constructive working communities: "We don't have a network. There's no collaboration, or very little. We don't enter each other's territory. We don't have a committee of fashion manufacturers coming together and talking about it"
- 3 Look at ways in which design courses can better integrate with local manufacturers to foster understanding and partnerships

The Lord Alliance Project is highly praised by the steering committee for its work in the North of England. Caroline Rush, CEO of the BFC and Nigel Lugg, Chair of UKFT have already supported the project in its launch while Lorna Fitzsimons, Director of The Alliance Project will join the steering committee to ensure a joined-up strategy and sharing of knowledge moving forward.

-ENDS-

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