

£500 million boost for UK film industry from US firm

The UK's creative industry is expected to benefit from a £500 million boost following an announcement today (19 February) of a major investment planned by a leading US film studio.

Atlanta-based movie studios firm, Blackhall Studios, announced their intention to build a £150 million state-of-the-art film studio in Reading, their first outside of the US. Once built, the site would become one of the largest film studios in the UK, boosting the UK's film capacity substantially. Once operational, the studio is expected to be worth £500 million to the UK economy per year.

The new studio is expected to be built at the Thames Valley Science Park, which is owned by the University of Reading. Blackhall was assisted in securing a site by officials at the Department for International Trade (DIT), who have been working with the business over the past year. DIT officials worked with teams in Atlanta and Los Angeles, as well as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Following the completion of the transaction, the investment is expected to create up to 3,000 jobs in the local area, including 1,500 employed at the studio site, from set-building trades and advanced digital skills to physical film production.

Warner Bros, Sony and HBO have all filmed productions in Blackhall's US studio, with box-office hits, including "Venom", "Jumanji: The Next Level" and "Godzilla: King of the Monsters" produced at their US sites.

Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss MP said:

The UK and the US are each other's largest investors, and this announcement demonstrates the strength of our trading relationship, which benefits all sectors and regions in the UK.

Blackhall's commitment is a strong endorsement of our creative industry and the great creatives that work in UK film, and is set to deliver hundreds of new jobs in the area.

I look forward to negotiating and signing a new ambitious free trade agreement with the US, to ensure we can continue to deepen our trading relationship and grow our creative industries.

Ryan Millsap, Chairman and CEO of Blackhall said:

We are excited to be establishing a base in the UK. Blackhall is

the global standard for entertainment production space and our US-based clients like Disney, Universal and Sony are all asking us to expand into the UK to meet their desire to create productions here.

They wouldn't trust just anyone to meet their high standards, so we are delighted to serve them in this way.

We are very excited about the prospect of investing in the UK creative industries as one of the most vibrant markets in the world. We hope that the site at Thames Valley Science Park will be the start of a series of investments in the UK which will see investment in jobs, training and the creative arts across a range of disciplines.

The UK has a wealth of talent that our UK companies recognise and want to partner with for decades to come.

Adrian Wootton, Chief Executive of Film London and the British Film Commission said:

The booming film and TV industries continue to demonstrate unprecedented growth and in 2019 inward investment spend from major international productions topped £3.04 billion.

We know that what brings productions here is the combination of our competitive and reliable tax relief, world-class studios and facilities, exceptional post production and VFX, and an immense variety of locations.

The Blackhall Studios development will be a fantastic and hugely significant addition to this, allowing for even more content creation.

It is particularly exciting to be welcoming new international studio investors to operate here, bringing a fresh perspective to our infrastructure and further bolstering the UK offer.

The potential investment follows a number of positive announcements about UK film in 2019, including Netflix's statement that they intend to spend \$500m making over 50 TV shows and films in the UK over the course of this year.

The new studio is expected to strongly benefit the local area, including the University of Reading, which has a film and TV department and business school. The new studio will be located less than an hour away by train to London, within the UK's "creative corridor" that is being developed through Thames Valley.

In 2019, the UK's creative industries attracted more than £3bn of inward investment. This is expected to grow over 70% in the next five years.