



Mark Bailey

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Lighting the fuse for creative talent in the North East

A £4m project which will unlock the potential of the North East's creative, digital and IT (CDIT) sector will be officially launched tomorrow.

Creative Fuse North East is a unique partnership between the region's five universities - Northumbria, Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland and Teesside. Specialist academics and staff will work with industry, cultural organisations, charities and the public sector to explore how CDIT firms complement and add value to each other, sharing best practice and encouraging the adoption

of new innovative working practices. This will ensure the sector becomes more resilient and grows faster – creating more and better jobs for the region.

The project, which is led by Newcastle University, will be launched on Thursday, 1 December, by former Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, the Right Hon Ed Vaizey MP, who has been appointed Chairman of the Creative Fuse North East Advisory Board.

“The growth of the Creative, Digital and IT sector is absolutely vital for the economy”, said Mr Vaizey. “However, as many of these businesses are small they often lack the knowledge, experience or the resources to grow, innovate and reach their full potential.

“For this reason I am thrilled to be able to play a part in Creative Fuse North East. This partnership of five universities has the potential to make a real and long lasting impact on these businesses, the wider region and provide a real boost to its economy.”

The scheme will also look at how skills in the CDIT sector can be transferred to other areas, for example placing creative practitioners within other sectors such as transport or health.

Jason Legget, Project Director of Creative Fuse North East said: “We have an unprecedented opportunity here to do things differently and see some real results. This isn’t about academics and experts telling companies what to do. It is about using all the different expertise from these five respected institutions in new and unexpected ways; taking the things we learn and experience and finding out how they can benefit other industries too. It is incredibly exciting.”

Professor Eric Cross, Dean of Cultural Affairs at Newcastle University said: “One of the strengths of our region is that many people are very creative and very innovative but often companies don’t know how to take the next step to diversify or grow.

“The expertise our universities have to offer will allow this to happen. The result will not just be a thriving economy but, just as importantly, a wider boost for the region’s cultural scene.”

The Academic Lead for Creative FUSE North East at Northumbria University, Newcastle, Mark Bailey, explains: “Our team will be using a design-led approach to promote fusion between and within organisations that will enable them to create new, unexpected opportunities through multidisciplinary collaboration.

“This will be action-packed research involving many different companies, academics, researchers and, importantly, students who often provide the creative spark required to ignite new innovations.”

The first phase of the project will take place between now and Christmas, with the most comprehensive research study of the region’s CDIT sector ever undertaken. It will engage with thousands of businesses, organisations, freelancers and institutions, developing a detailed understanding of what makes the North East community unique and helping to identify ways it can be developed.

The data from this survey will be compiled and analysed by a team of specialists from across the five universities – Newcastle, Northumbria, Durham, Sunderland and Teesside - and the findings will be used to inform and shape a series of specialist Innovation Pilots scheduled to be delivered 2017-18.

[Creative Fuse North East](#) builds on a similar project in Brighton launched in 2011. A report published in November 2015 highlighted that, as a result of the Brighton Fuse project’s evidence that was used to lever European funding, Brighton and Hove’s digital and creative economy is now worth more than £1 billion to the city each year. Research carried out by Brighton Fuse also showed that ‘fused’ businesses grow three times faster than ‘unfused’ businesses.

Northumbria offers a range of courses in the creative, digital and IT sector and recently announced ambitious £52m campus investment plans, to include a new Computer and Information Sciences building. This year, Northumbria was also named among the UK’s Top 50 universities by the Guardian. For more information about studying at Northumbria come to one of our upcoming [Open Days](#), or go to: www.northumbria.ac.uk

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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