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Lighting the fuse for economic growth

A major new project is being launched to explore how the creative, digital and IT (CDIT) sector in the North East can be developed in order to play a leading role in the region's economy.

The new £3m 'Creative Fuse North East' project will involve all five of the North East's universities – Northumbria, Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland and Teesside – and is funded jointly by the universities and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The universities will work with the 12 local authorities in the North East, businesses, artists, cultural organisations and partners to research how the

CDIT sector can ensure it has the right skills for a sustainable future. The project will also look at how the skills within the region's CDIT sector can benefit the wider regional economy, for example by exploring opportunities for placing creative practitioners in businesses in other sectors as a way to increase innovation, along with how to develop more entrepreneurial graduates.

The 30-month project will begin by mapping the creative, digital and commercial landscape of the North East in terms of the mix of skills, knowledge and support available. This will be followed by work to identify opportunities for more effective use of resources and best practice in workforce development as well as highlighting ways in which the region's universities can support the sector more effectively.

The project will draw on expertise from more than 40 academic and business support staff from across the five institutions, from creative arts, cultural heritage and digital humanities to business schools and cloud computing.

Northumbria University's [Pro Vice-Chancellor \(Research and Innovation\), Professor George Marston](#), said: "Creative Fuse represents a real opportunity to sustainably build innovation and growth across the creative, digital and IT sector by bringing together the unique expertise of the North East's universities, local authorities, businesses, artists and cultural organisations.

"Northumbria's recent achievements in the Research Excellence Framework 2014 and our reputation for world-class research, design innovation, business engagement and award-winning partnerships, puts us in an excellent position to contribute to this exciting, collaborative project."

Professor Eric Cross, Dean of Cultural Affairs at Newcastle University and the project's Principal Investigator, said: "To ensure that the North East's CDIT sector can realise its full potential, businesses and creative practitioners need to be able to connect with, and benefit from, the best that our universities have to offer in terms of research, training and talent.

"Creative Fuse North East will work hand-in-hand with the CDIT sector to discover and promote best practice, join up support, and drive creativity and innovation across the North East's economy.

“By bringing businesses, artists and academics together, this project will create value – both in economic and cultural terms - regionally and nationally.”

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.

Professor Andrew Thompson, CEO of the Arts and Humanities Research Council said; “Creative Fuse North East combines the research strengths of the region’s five universities with a range of local authorities, cultural, creative and digital sector partners in ways that will facilitate new interactions between researchers and businesses, education and entrepreneurship.

“A multi-disciplinary range of subjects are involved from the initial scoping work, business analysis and networking through to potential platforms for deeper engagement between creativity and economic growth.”

Northumbria offers a range of courses across the arts and humanities. In the Research Excellence Framework 2014, Art and Design was ranked in the UK top 10 for research power while English and History were rated 15th and 20th respectively for the quality of their research publications. To find out more click [here](#).

For more information about Creative Fuse, email info@creativefusene.org.uk

Image: Professor George Marston, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) at Northumbria University, Newcastle.

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