

# '5G Immersive Lab' to open in Eldon Square offering firms access to tech test bed

A 5G-enabled workspace is set to open in Eldon Square, offering businesses chance to test new products and access virtual reality technology.

The Immersive Lab is being delivered by Digital Catapult with £700,000 funding support from the North of Tyne Combined Authority. Located in the former Giraffe restaurant, in the Greys Quarter section of the shopping centre, the space will feature a Vodafone 5G standalone test bed and immersive technologies such as virtual reality, and will offer co-working areas, meeting rooms and event spaces.

Organisers say it will host technology workshops, business challenges and demonstrations to help businesses understand 5G and then begin to innovate with it. Members of the public will also be invited to the lab to learn about 5G and immersive technology.

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The initial co-working space, delivered in partnership with Floe, will open this spring with the full 5G Immersive Lab to follow later in the summer. And while Vodafone will supply the communications tech, tech membership organisation Dynamo North East will help identify SMEs across the North of Tyne area to participate.

North of Tyne Mayor Jamie Driscoll said: "5G is more than just

being able to stream videos faster on your phone. It helps businesses to innovate and solve problems. So it could mean better gaming experiences through virtual reality, more automation in our offshore renewable energy sector, driverless cars and even improved customer experience in shops. Imagine a digital mirror where you can see what a new outfit might look like – without getting physically changed.

“We don’t yet know the full capabilities of 5G and it will mean different things for different industries. That’s why this lab is really exciting, as it will provide the right environment and tools for businesses to test it out in a low cost, low risk way.”

Coun Richard Wearmouth, cabinet lead for clean energy and connectivity at the North of Tyne authority, said: “5G development is a key milestone in our journey towards a better-connected region and I’m excited about the opportunities this new lab will offer businesses – especially those in our rural areas, where we know there are still improvements to be made. It’s great to see this project get off the ground and I look forward to seeing the innovative ideas that come out of it.”

Ashmita Randhawa, director of research and development at Digital Catapult North East Tees Valley, added: “The new 5G Immersive Lab in Newcastle represents a tremendous opportunity for local companies to access the latest immersive and 5G technologies that will shape the future of business. As part of Digital Catapult’s nationwide network of cutting-edge facilities, the lab will break down barriers to digital adoption and empower local businesses to embrace new solutions to drive productivity, efficiency and growth. The North East is home to some of the country’s most exciting start-ups and businesses, and I’m excited that Digital Catapult will continue to play an important role in supporting the growth of the local economy and technology ecosystem.”

Funding for the project, which is linked to the [Advanced Media Production](#) studio at PR0T0, is part of a wider £3.5m Innovation Accelerator programme that aims to overcome barriers to 5G and future connectivity,