

Eight North East tech start-ups use Gateshead scheme to boost sector

A group of North East start-ups focussed on virtual and augmented reality have landed places on a support scheme designed to boost uptake of immersive technologies among businesses.

Eight companies have joined the Government-backed ImmexCity Programme, led by Digital Catapult North East Tees Valley and covering use of immersive technology in heritage conservation projects and application in mental health. The programme has received £562,000 through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and is tasked with driving adoption of the technology, building skills development and supporting regional employment.

The latest cohort of companies will be based in Gateshead, with several setting up at the PROTO building to take advantage of the Advanced Media Production studio – a space for producers of content, including 3D animation, for virtual platforms. One such firm is PixelData, founded by Tom Scarborough, and offering tools to enhance workflows for virtual production projects. Meanwhile Paul Trickett, a creative specialising in immersive technologies, will be supported in establishing a start-up that will provide immersive and virtual production services.

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Digital Catapult hopes the North East can build a lead in the immersive technology market – which it says will be worth £71bn by 2025 – drawing on computer science skills in the

region and using ImmexCity to nurture talent. Since launching in 2022 the programme has helped 14 start-ups by providing workshops and access to industry experts and investors.

Alex Cook, head of innovation delivery at Digital Catapult NETV and programme lead, said: “The commercial and industrial value of immersive technology must not be underestimated, as industry revenue of immersive technology in the UK is expected to reach approximately £2.8bn by 2024. In light of sustained growth and mounting interest in this technology, ImmexCity will continue to play a critical role in sharpening the UK’s immersive expertise, and will undoubtedly yield significant benefits for the North East’s local economy. We will ensure that the next generation of immersive technology pioneers receive the support they need to turn creative ideas into commercial opportunities.”

Dominic Lusardi, ImmexCity’s start-up champion, said: “Supporting immersive pre-start-ups is vital for fostering innovation and driving economic growth. These early ventures are the foundation of creativity, pushing the boundaries of what’s possible in technology and offering transformative potential across industries. I’m delighted to support the ImmexCity programme and work alongside the team to support budding entrepreneurs and helping them realise their potential.”

Chrissie Pitt, founder of the Xposed podcast, said: “It’s an intense programme in a good way, that’s providing step-by-step help to get our ‘Xposed Podcast’ idea off the ground. I feel very supported by Sophie, Dom and everyone involved in the ImmexCity programme. I think it’s an incredible opportunity for anyone in the future with an immersive business idea to get it to launch level.”