

Somerset and Devon digital schemes land £2m cash boost

A pair of programmes providing digital skills and business support in Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay have received a £2m cash injection from the Heart of the South West LEP.

The Digital Skills Programme will be delivered through Devon County Council, while the Digital Skills Utilisation Programme will be delivered by the local authority and the Heart of the South West Growth Hub. Both programmes are due to run until March 2025.

The Digital Skills Programme will build on a previous pilot that encouraged better engagement between schools and key business sectors across the Heart of the South West area and will involve the Heart of the South West's Career Hub.

The Digital Business Support Utilisation Programme is a £500k investment to help small-and-medium-sized businesses (SMEs) make better use of digital technology in their firms. The programme will place a particular emphasis on supplying digital support to the tourism, retail and agriculture industries.

Debra Steele, senior economic development officer for external programmes at Devon County Council, said: "I am excited and proud to be involved with the Digital Skills Series. The programme will support and enable digital skills capability across the region, as well as supporting the aspirations of our future workforce, future business owners and leaders."

David Hynd, programme manager at the Heart of the South West Growth Hub, said the aim of the digital business support scheme was to help companies grow "through enhanced understanding and exploitation" of digital technologies. Both programmes are currently in the setup, recruitment and

development phase, before launching later this year.

Karl Tucker, chair for the Heart of the South West LEP, added: “The support and training provided can be used as a springboard for SMEs to grow and prosper. We look forward to getting the programmes underway and seeing the benefits take effect for businesses across the region.”

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