

TECH NATION REPORT PUTS TOWN'S DIGITAL HUB IN SPOTLIGHT 8TH AUGUST 2018

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AN influential national report has put Middlesbrough's thriving digital sector firmly in the spotlight. Tech Nation 2018 singles the town out as being in the vanguard of the UK's burgeoning digital and hi-tech economy. The latest report gives an upbeat overview of the strength, depth and breadth of a vital sector that continues to expand at faster rate than the wider economy. And Middlesbrough is highlighted as one of 16 booming 'digital suburbs and tech towns' with a higher proportion of digital tech employment than the UK average.

The online report is a snapshot of the tech sector across the UK, and features recommendations for tech businesses, policymakers and corporates looking to accelerate growth. And the picture in Middlesbrough shows healthy growth in digital tech jobs of 19.5% to nearly 7,200 in 2016-17, with a total business turnover of just under £190 million. Digital GVA has increased locally by 44% from £211m in the 2017 report to £304m in the latest edition. The town's worldwide reputation in digital animation is highlighted, including Teesside University's specialist degrees in the field and the city's hosting of Animex, the UK's largest festival of animation and computer games.

The report showcases 14 tech companies from across the region that have recently completed DigitalCity's three-month SCALE programme that pairs entrepreneurs with a dedicated business mentor. Other case studies include co-working space Studio 109 whose 6,500 sq ft of renovated space includes studio offices as well as co-working and hot-desking spaces, bringing together creative minds and fuelling innovation and growth.

Animmersion CEO Dominic Lusardi said Middlesbrough had been the perfect location to grow the business, with support from DigitalCity, Middlesbrough Council, Teesside University and the Combined Authority: "Add to this, the rich digital cluster and high quality graduates, and Middlesbrough is the perfect location."

And the town's pioneering digital start-ups have themselves singled out Dan Watson, Middlesbrough Council's Digital Middlesbrough Manager, who formerly worked as DigitalCity's Cluster Manager, as an influential figure in their growth. Dan said: "The drive and aspiration of entrepreneurs really ties in with Middlesbrough's city-scale ambitions. "The businesses are incredibly open to collaboration and supporting the next generation, while also welcoming those moving into the digital industries in Middlesbrough."

Laura Woods, Director of The Forge, Teesside University's business hub and Chair of DigitalCity, said: "It is fantastic that the thriving digital sector in Middlesbrough has been recognised once again in the Tech Nation report and Teesside University is very proud of the role that we have played in its growth. "As an anchor institution for the region, helping to drive economic growth, we are looking forward to continuing to work with our partners in industry and local government to ensure that businesses can be helped to grow through digital innovation and access to graduate and academic talent."

Councillor Lewis Young, Middlesbrough Council's Executive Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, said: "The Tech Nation 2018 report makes fantastic reading for this vital and growing sector in general, and for Middlesbrough in particular. "We've got a great track record as a breeding ground for digital and tech businesses, and the success stories and figures really speak for themselves. Middlesbrough truly is on the verge of one of the most exciting phases in its long and rich history, and it's particularly fitting that one of the cornerstones of that resurgence should be the cutting-edge technology of the 21st Century."

To view the Tech Nation 2018 report, visit: <https://technation.io/insights/report-2018/>



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