News Release

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Major award aims to give arts in Edinburgh a creative edge

A pioneering initiative that seeks to enhance Edinburgh's reputation as a world-class centre for the creative industries has received a multi-million pound boost.

The funding will create a partnership that uses data from a range of organisations to encourage innovation across the sector. The award will help to create jobs and transform the ways that people experience culture, project leaders say.

The award is part of an £80 million nationwide creative industries initiative from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) – the largest-ever single investment in the sector. The Scottish Funding Council will provide further financial support.

Experts at the University of Edinburgh will work with Edinburgh Napier University, Creative Edinburgh, and CodeBase, the largest technology incubator in the UK. The new Creative Informatics R&D Partnership will serve the city and its surrounding region.

A key strand of the partnership will be a scheme to improve data literacy in Edinburgh. It will bring together more than 25 organisations – including the Edinburgh International Festival, the Fruitmarket Gallery and the BBC.

Over the next five years, it will also seek to create more than 60 new businesses. These will use data-driven technology to develop new products, services and visitor experiences.

The funding will also encourage entrepreneurs to work in innovative ways with the city's festivals, to collaborate with museums, libraries and galleries, and to create new tools for the city's design community.

Project leaders suggest that the collaboration could lead to new commercial products for home entertainment, new ways to buy products and services by experiencing them first, and innovative online experiences for remote participation.

It will also help to explore new synergies in the digital archives of the national collections, for example National Museums Scotland's unique archive of the work of fashion designer Jean Muir.

The Partnership is part of the University of Edinburgh's role in the recently announced Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, which aims to help 10 sectors, including the creative industries, to benefit from data-driven innovation.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

It represents a foundational part of the University's Edinburgh Futures Institute, which will open in the former Royal Infirmary in 2021.

Project Director Professor Chris Speed, of the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Design Informatics, said: "This significant grant from AHRC will deepen our relationship with cultural partners and industries across the Edinburgh region and beyond. Together, we will cultivate and support the growth of data-driven innovation for, and across, the creative industries."

The Creative Informatics Partnership is one of nine AHRC clusters across the UK, designed to encourage collaboration between internationally-renowned creative industries and universities.

Elsewhere in Scotland, Abertay University will establish a dedicated research and development centre for the Dundee video games cluster with a view to driving product, service and experience innovation across the industry.

A new Policy and Evidence Centre for the sector led by global innovation foundation Nesta, with partners across the UK, will connect organisations in the creative industries, research communities, and policy-makers to develop independent evidence and analysis that can inform decision-making across the industry and underpin future policy decisions.

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