

Local partners collaborate to launch immersive technology innovation in Northern Ireland

Submitted by: Kainos Group plc

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Belfast, 19th October 2016 – Today sees the launch of Immersive Tech NI, a new initiative designed to bring together the most creative minds in Northern Ireland to explore and expand the possibilities created by immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR).

The initiative is led by Kainos (<http://www.kainos.com>) staff Luke McNeice (Innovation Lead) and Matthew Fitch (Software Engineer), and Dr David Trainor (Founder and Principal of Sentireal Ltd (<http://www.sentireal.com/>)).

The group's first event - an immersive tech Hackathon

(<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/immersive-tech-ni-launch-party-and-hackathon-tickets-27936909047>) – will take place on 5 November, and will be preceded by an official launch event on 4 November. Both events are being supported by Belfast City Council (<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/>), Digital Catapult (<https://www.digitalcatapultcentre.org.uk/>), Kainos Group (<http://www.kainos.com>), Northern Ireland Screen (<http://www.northernirelandscreen.co.uk/>) and PwC (<http://www.pwc.co.uk/who-we-are/regional-sites/northern-ireland.html>). They will be held at The Hive, PwC's collaborative, technology innovation space in Belfast and are open to anyone with an interest in this exciting field. Attendees will get to experience the latest innovations in immersive technology, including interactive demos of the Microsoft HoloLens and the HTC Vive.

The Immersive Tech Hackathon on 5 November is a 12-hour event open to technical developers, designers, product developers and more, who will be encouraged to develop ideas on the theme of immersive technology in education. Attendees will be mentored by industry experts and will get hands-on experience of the latest immersive technologies.

"Immersive Tech NI will create space for people working with AR, VR and beyond to discuss the latest innovations, collaborate on projects," said Immersive Tech NI co-founder Luke McNeice. "We aim to support the growth of this industry in Northern Ireland and to help enhance the region's reputation for ingenuity and creativity."

Councillor Aileen Graham, Chair of Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee, said:

"Over the past few years, Belfast has developed a reputation for being home to some of the most creative talents in the digital industries, and is rapidly establishing itself as a centre for innovation and cutting-edge innovation. At the Council, we are keen to nurture the sector and its continued growth, as it is very much at the centre of our own long-term economic development and regeneration planning. That is why we are pleased to support events such as this Hackathon."

Tom Gray, Head of Digital Catapult Northern Ireland, commented: "Digital Catapult NI is delighted to support the launch of Immersive Tech NI. Immersive technologies, including virtual, augmented, mixed reality as well as new forms of human-computer interface and advanced data visualization, form one of Digital Catapult NI's key strategic areas. We feel that Northern Ireland's existing strengths in software development and the creative industries leave us well positioned to become world leaders in the

development of both immersive content and industrial applications for positive economic impact.”

Dr Brendan Mooney, CEO of Kainos, added: “Kainos has a long history of fostering innovation in Belfast and beyond. We’re extremely proud to support this exciting new initiative: immersive technology offers potentially life-changing opportunities for businesses and society as a whole, and Immersive Tech NI will help secure Northern Ireland’s position as a leader in this arena.”

Richard Williams, Northern Ireland Screen CEO, said: “Supporting Immersive Tech NI is a great way for us to work directly with industry to help our local game developers reach their commercial and creative potential. Digital content is highlighted as a key priority in our latest strategy, where VR/AR is quickly changing how content is developed and new market opportunities are emerging. Initiatives like Immersive Tech NI allows ideas and expertise in VR/AR to be shared, encouraging an environment where innovation can flourish.”

Seamus Cushley, Director, EMEA FinTech and Digital, PwC, concluded: “PwC in Belfast is a centre of excellence for disruptive technology, Blockchain development and is home to one of only three collaborative Google Labs worldwide. We are passionate about helping clients transform their business in the digital age through rapid experimentation and implementation. We are delighted to welcome the event to our PwC Hive. We want to help the growth of the sector and provide an environment for a new generation of leaders.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

Immersive Tech NI is a new initiative designed to bring together the most creative minds in Northern Ireland to explore and expand the possibilities created by immersive technologies, including virtual and augmented reality. Formed by Luke McNeice, Matthew Fitch and Dr David Trainor in October 2016, the aim of the initiative is to enhance Northern Ireland’s reputation for ingenuity and creativity in digital technologies.

Belfast City Council is working to provide a supportive business environment to allow the creative sector to reach its full potential; by establishing creative clusters, providing relevant business mentoring, supporting international growth and by developing the appropriate supporting infrastructure. For further information, please contact Brendan McGoran, Creative Industries officer: mcgoranb@belfastcity.gov.uk

Digital Catapult Centre Northern Ireland helps organisations across public and private sectors to increase innovation and productivity by utilising digital technologies. It works closely with a network of organisations from all over Northern Ireland, who share in the mission of supporting Northern Ireland based-companies scale and grow.

Kainos Group plc is a global provider of IT services and digital technology solutions. Headquartered in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Kainos employs almost 1,000 staff across eight offices in Europe and the USA. Kainos is listed on the London Stock Exchange (KNOS). For more information, visit: <http://www.kainos.com>

Northern Ireland Screen is the government-backed lead agency in Northern Ireland for the film, television and digital content industry, driving global growth through boosting our economy, celebrating our culture and enhancing our children's education. Northern Ireland Screen is funded by Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI), Department for the Economy and by the Department for Communities and is delegated by the Arts Council of NI (ACNI) to administer Lottery funding for film in Northern Ireland. For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.northernirelandscreen.co.uk/>

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Interviewees available:

Luke McNeice, Matthew Fitch, Dr David Trainor (co-founders of Immersive Tech NI); also, representatives from Belfast City Council, Digital Catapult, Kainos, Northern Ireland Screen and PwC

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