

From Holywood to Hollywood!



Creative and Digital Technology is a growth sector with a highly skilled local workforce driving the NI economy. Ards and North Down is the location of choice for a concentration of leading innovators that provide specialist services to the global screen and digital industries forging a strong link from Holywood to Hollywood... and beyond.



Super-fast data transfer is critical for technology business and AND has a USP in this respect - OFCOM reports the Borough has the highest percentage of premises connected with full fibre in NI.

The proposed hub will be specifically designed to address the accommodation, security and power needs of entrepreneurs starting out in the screen industries as well as established organisations. It will provide a platform for networking, collaboration, and the development of emerging technology sectors.

DIGITAL SECTOR IN NI

The digital sector in Northern Ireland consists of around 1,700 companies and 20,000 workers and it is growing. In 2018, it had a GVA of £1.2 billion representing 3% of all economic output.

The screen industries' application of technology is flourishing. Movie and screen productions filmed locally pumped £330million into the region's economy between 2018 and 2022, and Northern Ireland Screen* has set a strategic target to increase that to £430 million by 2026. With state-of-the-art facilities such as Titanic Studios (one of Europe's largest film media campuses) and Studio Ulster (set to be a global leader in virtual production) the infrastructure is there and developing to support exponential growth. Numerous local companies provide specialist services to globally renowned clients including the BBC, HBO, Discovery Channel, Playtone, Paramount, and Universal.

HOLLYWOOD - CONCENTRATION OF DIGITAL TECH INNOVATORS IN THIS THRIVING TOWN

At the heart of this creative corridor between Belfast and Bangor, is the vibrant town of Holywood. It is home to innovators in production, post-production, game development and digital animation including key players such as Flickerpix, Italicpig, Paper Owl Films, Waddell Media, and Yellowmoon. These locally grown businesses work with the big global studios and have played a vital role in the growth of NI's screen sector working with clients including HBO, National Geographic, the Discovery Channel, and Channel 4 to name a few.

Hollywood was named as the 'Best Place to Live in Northern Ireland' by The Sunday Times in 2021, primarily due to its strong transport links, unique shops, café culture, vibrant community, and proximity to the sea. Our local digital companies are embracing and benefitting from this in terms of promoting work / life balance, which helps retain their skilled local workforce.

COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES - HARNESSING FUTURE GROWTH, DEVELOPING TALENT

The Council will seek collaboration opportunities with industry partners including Titanic Studios and Studio Ulster to align with 3D digital asset developers and freelancers based at the Hub. The project will also facilitate creative tech skills development by leveraging Council's existing strong links with educational partners such as South Eastern Regional College.

With the project at an embryonic stage, the Council is seeking to develop a long-term partnership with the right operator who would input into the specification to create and operate the facility. Recent market testing of the project to inform the Outline Business Case has demonstrated high level of support from industry experts and leaders in the sector.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN - GREAT LOCATION

Ards and North Down (AND) is ideally situated to develop and encourage innovation in this sector. Adjacent to Belfast and minutes from Titanic Studios and the Studio Ulster site, it is the chosen location for a concentration of screen industry tech experts. In 2022-2023, 50% of Northern Ireland Screen's "Screen Fund Production" (Animation/Children category) were awarded to projects based in AND. Just 3.2km from George Best City Airport and boasting a strong road network and public transport links; it is the perfectly positioned for international business. The local talent pool is significant with 38% educated to higher levels (NVQ 4+), well above the national average of 34.9%.

CREATIVE INNOVATION HUB

Ards and North Down Borough Council recognises creative and digital as a key growth sector and has identified a need for flexible workspaces, as well as high demand for quality space and bespoke facilities, to support this. The Council is actively pursuing capital funding through the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD)**, aligning to the Innovation and Digital Pillar, for the development of a Creative Innovation Hub in Holywood, and has pledged a significant level of aligned investment.

Could you partner with us or are you interested in finding out more about this exciting new opportunity? Get in touch via email:- signaladmin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or call 0300 013 3333.

Ards and North Down Borough Council offers a broad range of business training and funding opportunities to help businesses realise their digital transformation ambitions. The dedicated business support team is ready to work with investors and can deliver a range of digital innovation, growth, skills, and employability schemes, and provide links to key partners and Government agencies.

Find out more at www.ANDBusiness.co.uk

* Northern Ireland Screen - The national screen agency for Northern Ireland.

**Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is a bespoke package of funding and decision-making powers agreed between UK central government and local regions; aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and accelerate inclusive economic growth.