EXIST

Exeter Initiative for Science & Technology

insight

A focus on science, technology, & innovation for the business community

MEET EXIST'S NEW CHAIR
CLODAGH MURPHY SETS OUT HER VISION

TECH & DIGITAL EXETER
CHAMPIONING THE DIGITAL AND TECH SECTORS IN THE CITY

INSPIRED BY NATURE
BIOPHILIC ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING EXPLORED WITH TUNDE AGORO

Exeter Chamber
of Commerce & Industry

STEMM NEWS

DEVON SOFTWARE SPECIALISTS, RX-INFO BENEFITS FROM R&D TAX RELIEF | LIFEBOAT ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE ENTHRALS AT IMECHE FAMILY EVENT | KEY CITY PLAYERS JOIN FORCES FOR FIRST TIME TO CREATE A BETTER EXETER | EXETER COLLEGE PROUD TO HOST MICROSOFT TOUR TO SUPPORT LOCAL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS | VENTUREFEST SOUTH WEST 2019: MAJOR TECH INDUSTRY EVENT ANNOUNCED FOR REGION | SOFTWARE SOLVED SELECTED TO LEAD UK MACHINE LEARNING PROJECT | BUSINESSES LEARN ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES AT SOUTH WEST SPACE INNOVATION EVENT

ABOUT ExIST AND INSIGHT

The Exeter Initiative for Science and Technology (ExIST) is a sub-group of Exeter Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The group was founded in June 2011 by a group of business leaders in Greater Exeter. The group aims to optimise interaction between science and technology businesses trading in the area, to increase awareness of Exeter as a centre for science and technology, to build relationships between education at all levels and business, and to encourage investment in the STEMM industries in the region.

ExIST Insight aims to raise recognition of STEMM organisations and its community within Exeter and the local region, The quarterly newsletter enables us to share information within the network and for external promotion to encourage increased visibility of Exeter as a science city.

Find out more
www.existexeter.co.uk

🐦 ExIST_Exeter

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MEET EXIST'S NEW CHAIR

CLODAGH MURPHY SETS OUT HER VISION FOR EXIST

CLODAGH MURPHY BECAME EXIST CHAIR IN FEBRUARY 2019. CLODAGH HAS A TECHNOLOGY BACKGROUND, AS MANAGING DIRECTOR OF ECLIPSE INTERNET FOR EIGHT YEARS AND MORE RECENTLY WORKING AS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AT IT AND CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER TIMICO TECHNOLOGY SERVICES IN THE MIDLANDS.

Now just one month into her role as ExIST chair, following a three-month handover period, Clodagh is taking significant steps to build on the group's work to promote Exeter as a centre of science and technology. Clodagh's focus is to continue to build on ExIST's success, ensuring that the group facilitates connections between businesses operating in STEMM. She said: "Coming from a business background and knowing how hard it is to run and grow a business, I am particularly keen to engage with this community and do everything we can to help them with any challenges they may face."

One of Clodagh's first actions was to facilitate a strategy workshop with the organisations that sponsor ExIST as part of a process in re-establishing purpose and priorities for the group. The day saw representatives from sponsors Exeter College, NHS Digital, Thompson Jenner LLP, Exeter City Council and Michelmores, alongside steering group members to undertake a series of exercises to help define future activities. Clodagh said: "we were quickly able to see strengths commonly recognised by the group and furthermore to identify opportunities to support SMEs in science and technology more, helping to create a positive and

supportive environment in Exeter for those businesses.

The group also recognised that since ExIST's launch in 2011, the science and tech community has grown considerably with more groups, events and activities in place – including IMechE, Exeter Science Park, Digital Exeter, Tech Exeter and PRISM (see pages 6-8 for interviews with Digital and Tech Exeter and our next issue for an interview with Claire Davies, founder of PRISM). Clodagh said: "we would like to reach out with other groups supporting STEMM and work together, taking a joined up approach and developing a comprehensive yearly calendar of events."

Insight caught up with Clodagh to find out more about her vision for ExIST and her own route to a STEMM career.

How do you want to work with SMEs in Exeter and the region?

I want to speak with SMEs in the region to understand their challenges so that we can ensure ExIST is pushing their agenda. Having run a technology business, I know that time is your most precious commodity so you tend to be very careful where you spend it. We need to ensure that ExIST is attractive to SME leaders so that choose to spend a couple of hours to help us add the value back to them and their businesses.

How will your work connect Exeter nationally / globally?

The answer has got to lie with a mix of technology and engagement. We need to keep the wider community engaged, create great events

discussing important topics and then use technology to engage the wider audience and promote all that is going on in the area.

Why Exeter?

I was working for a business that made an investment here and came down to help run that business. Little did I realise that this would be where I would settle. I don't know what it is, but there is something about Exeter, once it gets you - it gets you!!

Tell us about your background/ how did you get into your current role?

I was born in Dublin, but started my corporate career in San Francisco. After a few years there I decided to pursue my degree, so returned to Dublin and studied part time while working. Four years later I took a role in Hull with KCOM Group. My skill set is around business transformation and growth. I spent 3 years in Hull helping to transform the IT Dept and then moved to Exeter with a wide remit of bringing together three different Internet Service Providers and operationally making them efficient whilst delivering a great customer experience. In 2009, I took on the Managing Director role at Eclipse. I have to say this was a brilliant time in my career. Mark Lang (founder of Eclipse) had created a fantastic business which we took from strength to strength. We had a brilliant team and all had a lot of fun working really hard, growing the business. Then in 2015, when KCOM Group decided to make some significant changes and collapse the Eclipse brand I decided to step out. In early 2017 I took a role

in the midlands as COO for Timico Technology Services. Around early 2018, I saw the advert for this role and started to talk to the team, the rest as they say is history.

How would you encourage more young people to consider STEMM careers?

I think it's really important to provide positive inspiring role models and mentors. As a young person I found myself drawn to those areas where people were prepared to spend some time helping me or who had brilliant stories that they would share. I believe more and more of us, in leadership roles, should take a little bit of time to help younger people understand our journeys so that they can become more enlightened and hopefully a little bit interested. But, the journey needs to be fostered and supported for the duration, not just at the beginning, so there is lots of work to do to help keep young people engaged in STEMM.

www.existexeter.co.uk

DEVON SOFTWARE SPECIALISTS RX-INFO
BENEFITS FROM R&D TAX RELIEF

Image (left to right): Jon Westley Thompson Jenner; Colin Richman Rx-info

A continuous programme of research and development for software specialists Rx-info led them to benefit from R&D tax relief, with the help of tax experts from Thompson Jenner.

Rx-info, based at Exeter Science Park Centre, develop software for NHS Hospital Trust pharmacies and finance departments, providing them with instant access to high-quality business intelligence reports. The company's Define software sets national benchmarks for the cost and quantity of medicines used, and helped one Trust save more than £110,000 per year.

Colin Richman, founding director of Rx-info, says, "Rx-info produces a range of software packages designed to meet the needs of primary and secondary care professionals in the NHS. As such we are involved in a continuous programme of research and development to respond to changing needs."

The research and development that Rx-info invested in the Define software qualified for R&D tax relief but to make a successful claim submission documents have to clearly demonstrate how the project meets the qualifying criteria. Working with Rx-info, Thompson Jenner used its R&D tax expertise to create a comprehensive and robust submission which resulted in a successful claim.

Colin continues, "R&D tax credits have been an invaluable source of financial help for a company of our size, enabling us to offset some of our significant R&D costs and reinvest in the business. I strongly recommend that all companies consider their own innovation and seek the help and support of professional advisors such as Thompson Jenner to assist their review and claim process".

Thompson Jenner partner, Jon Westley, says, "Through the R&D scheme we helped Rx-info free up cash flow for further development and growth. Given the rapid expansion of science and technology firms in Exeter and the surrounding area there is still scope for companies to take advantage of this scheme, boosting their ability to innovate."

R&D TAX RELIEF: THE FACTS

- £1.6b extra R&D funding to provide increased investment in "housing, transport, digital infrastructure, and research and development (R&D)" was introduced in the 2018 Budget.

- Research and Development tax relief aims to support and encourage innovation, particularly in areas of science or technology.

- Funding announced mainly related to large scale initiatives but there is still plenty of scope for smaller businesses to benefit from R&D initiatives.

- This tax measure particularly benefits SMEs, enabling them to deduct an extra 130% of qualifying costs from their yearly profit on top of the normal 100% deduction.

- Larger corporations can benefit from Research and Development Expenditure Credits (RDEC) which currently provides a tax credit of 12% of qualifying R&D expenditure.

- Provisional figures released by HMRC reveal that for the 2016/17 tax year companies headquartered in the South West have so far successfully made 3,100 claims for R&D relief totalling £180m.

- In 2015/16 Devon saw 230 claims amounting to £10m

www.thompson-jenner.co.uk
www.rx-info.co.uk

KEY CITY PLAYERS JOIN FORCES FOR FIRST TIME TO CREATE A BETTER EXETER

Image (left To right): Glenn Woodcock, Exeter City Futures; Rob Bosworth, Exeter College; Jamie Hulland, Devon County Council, Liz O'Driscoll, Exeter City Futures; Prof. Mark Goodwin, University of Exeter; Karime Hassan, Exeter City Futures

Exeter City Futures have reached a significant milestone on their journey to creating a more healthy, inclusive and sustainable City of Exeter as they announced that the Exeter College, the University of Exeter and Devon County Council have confirmed membership of its Community Interest Company (CIC) board alongside Exeter City Council and Global City Futures.

This is an incredibly important step forward for collaboration across Exeter and the wider region, as this is the first time key organisations in the City have joined forces and committed to working together as a collaborative city in tackling Exeter City Futures 12 transformational goals. The goals include: Reducing the Dominance of Cars, Half of all journeys walked or cycled, Reliable Journeys and Resilient Roads and Clean Air for Exeter.

Liz O'Driscoll, programme director at Exeter City Futures, said: "We are thrilled to have some of the biggest employers in Exeter join us on this journey and become a member of the Exeter City Futures CIC. We believe it is crucial that the heads of these key Exeter organisations come together in this formal way to demonstrate a city-wide commitment to creating a better Exeter."

www.exetercityfutures.com

EXETER COLLEGE PROUD TO HOST MIRCOSOFT TOUR TO SUPPORT LOCAL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Exeter College has welcomed the Microsoft Education Team for a free one-day roadshow to inspire students, teachers, senior leaders and those in education in how technology can transform the learning experience.

The full day event, held on Tuesday, February 5th 2019, hosted by Exeter College, featured a variety of talks, workshops and demonstrations. The event highlighted how embedding technology into the learning experience can help students attain new skills, give teachers more time to focus on the things that matter most and reduce costs. There were more than 100 attendees at the event, including primary school children from local schools.

John Laramy, Principal and CEO of Exeter College said: "We were delighted to be asked to host such an innovative and exciting event. Exeter College has

championed innovation and technology for a number of years, and we were delighted to be named a showcase college by Microsoft last year.

"We were very excited to support this event by inviting our peers and colleagues from the local community to the college to show them the power of technology."

Exeter College was proud to announce late last year that it had been honoured with being named as one of the first 12 Microsoft Showcase Colleges in the UK and the first in Devon.

www.exe-coll.ac.uk

INSIGHT MEETS THE TEAMS BEHIND DIGITAL AND TECH EXETER

TWO ORGANISATIONS THAT WORK TO CHAMPION THE DIGITAL AND TECH SECTORS IN THE CITY.

Image (Left To Right): Philippa Carnelley and Sarah Marks, Digital Exeter; Jacob Tomlinson, Katrhyn White and Kris Sum, Tech Exeter

TECHEXETER IS LED BY DIRECTOR KRIS SUM AND COMMUNITY LEADERS, KATHRYN WHITE AND JACOB TOMLINSON. THE TEAM'S SISTER ORGANISATION, DIGITAL EXETER IS RUN BY PHILIPPA CARNELLEY AND SARAH MARKS.

Kris is a director of Switch Systems Ltd. Kris has been building computers, networks, software systems and gadgets since childhood, leading him to a BSc in Network Computing. Kris started an IT consultancy firm over a decade ago, and spends most of his day developing solutions to interesting problems with his team.

Kathryn is innovation manager at the Environmental & Big Data Impact Lab for University of Exeter.. Kathryn's background includes eight years in corporate innovation in financial services and three in Silicon Valley working on open innovation projects. A member of ExIST's steering group, Kathryn is a robot fanatic who has built her own 3D printer.

Jacob is a scientific systems manager at the Met Office. Jacob has eight years' experience in Enterprise IT and four years' in innovation, research and design. A self-described 'serial public speaker' Jacob has presented at conferences including GitHub Satellite, KubeCon, the Mobile World Congress and of course Tech Exeter and has organised hackathons and conferences including the NASA Space Apps Challenge.

Philippa is a UX designer at Flybe. Specialising in advertising and graphic design for her degree, Philippa's first job was for a local software house as a graphic designer. After being asked to work on some designs for its new software product she became interested in the power of design, the impact of psychological manipulation through technology and user experience.

Sarah is head of marketing and communications at Rezcomm. Sarah is a trained youth pastor who moved to the UK from Germany. After completing her degree, she became a barista and worked in different independent cafes, using social media to work on her latte art which sparked an interest in digital communications. Sarah is also a director of Become The Voice CIC, which works towards de-radicalisation and community cohesion.

Tell us about your roles at TechExeter and Digital Exeter

Kris:
TechExeter is a Community Interest Company and grass roots organisation. We're entirely self-funded from donations and sponsorship from the likes of Exeter City Council, Stephens Scown LLP and GreyMatter.

We've existed as a meetup group for 8 years and are proud to support our sister group Digital Exeter with over 2000 combined members. Between us we organise over a dozen events every year including free meetups, workshops and conferences. We cover a wide range of tech and digital topics accessible to all levels – from GDPR to GPS, Amazon Alexa to Augmented Reality, through to TensorFlow and Machine Learning.

In 2018 we held a 3-track tech conference at the University of Exeter Business School with 24 industry speakers plus a keynote from IBM UK CTO Andy Stanford-Clark.

Kathryn:
I recently joined Kris on the organising committee for TechExeter to help support the fantastic community he (and Rob, until recently) has built. I'm keen to explore new ways that we can make tech exciting for a diverse audience.

Philippa:
Host/organiser/branding and design - a little bit of everything and I absolutely love it all. Not so confident on the mic but I'm working on it.

Sarah:
At Digital Exeter I get to work with a really varied team to put on events that serve the community. I've been involved since May last year and am looking forward to putting all the ideas Digital Exeter's members have brought forward into practice.

What is the role and purpose of the two groups?

Kris:
TechExeter has three main objectives: to facilitate collaboration and run events - both within the tech community and between the tech community and the wider business community; to encourage diversity in our industry and to run an annual tech conference, showcasing both regional and national speakers who are experts in their field.

Philippa:
I want the group to bring people in Exeter's digital community closer and to encourage anyone interested to join. We want to share innovative ideas, theories and connect people with the networking opportunities that the meet-ups bring.

How do your day jobs and/or previous experiences inspire you to shape TechExeter and Digital Exeter?

Jacob:
As a member of a large Exeter based organisation, I have a lot of experience in driving forward the innovative use of new technologies. I'm very keen to break down the barriers between the internal Met Office tech community and the external Exeter tech community. Through events like the NASA Space Apps Challenge we've had lots of success in sharing knowledge with the community, and I'm excited to push this further through Tech Exeter.

Kathryn:
As a woman who worked in a corporate role at the cross-section between tech and finance, I have seen the lack of diversity in certain sectors first-hand. The problem can be even worse in the entrepreneurial sector, with women representing only 30% of start-up entrepreneurs across Europe, a figure which drops to 8-9% in some countries. I joined TechExeter because they value the importance of diversity and I'm excited to see what we can do to entice more women and other under-represented communities to careers in tech.

What do you see in the future for Exeter?

Kathryn:
I see in Exeter a chance to build a unique innovation ecosystem based in part around the fantastic environmental assets we have in this region. There is a huge amount of investment going into the development of STEM capability and the city is well-placed to be the hub of technology innovation for the South West. The key now is to attract talent and develop skills in the region, which is a core part of the purpose of groups like Tech and Digital Exeter.

Philippa:
I think that Exeter has a lot to offer and a lot to learn. I would love to see Exeter businesses embrace powerful risk-taking design in digital technology more. I think that AR and AI could offer huge potential to the city and the infrastructure with things such as virtual 3D maps and ways to engage with the younger generations to get more involved in becoming a part of the community.

How can SMEs in broad disciplines grow their skills / shape up for an increasingly digital future? Do you have any tips?

Kathryn:

Don't get swept up in the excitement of a new technology. The key to a successful product or service is making sure you have a good product-market fit - it's too easy to build a product just because you want to use some new technology. It's always best to start by exploring the problem in detail (with real customers, not just with your friends!), and once you truly understand the problem, then you can see if there is an exciting tech solution. Most people do this back to front.

Kris:

I agree with Kathryn - so often, new technology is pitched as the solution to a problem when really technology has nothing to do with it. Blockchain and AI aren't going to solve the world's problems!

How would you encourage young people into STEMM careers?

Sarah:

Showcase diversity in people, skills and opportunities. STEMM is not just for people who are good at maths, we are a diverse and inclusive community where everyone has a place.

What has been your most interesting project to work on?

Kris:

Sorry, not without an NDA! Joking aside, working on events like LOST

WEEKEND and the upcoming GAME>PLAY festival (www.gameplay. techexeter.uk) means I get to collaborate with really interesting people.

Philippa:

I think this would have to be the new app for the airline. It has been hard work but luckily I have a great app team working alongside me. With this project I have had a chance to do invaluable usability testing and this has ensured that each design decision the I make is well and truly dictated by user needs and behaviour and I am sure that the release of the new app will be a great success.

What trends or inventions in digital and tech do you see coming forward?

Kris:

With advances in networking (specifically latency and bandwidth), I think we'll see the kind of shift like we did when DSL broadband was introduced in the UK which made streaming audio and video possible. Imagine streaming entire 3d environments and rich media to a low powered wearable display which was able to track your hand and body movements.

Kathyn:

I see us constantly advancing towards a 'contextual future', where the development of new sensors, improvements in data analytics, and creation of new types of portable displays will mean we will be presented automatically with contextual relevant information everywhere we go.

The other key development is in augmented and virtual reality, which will open up whole new ways of communicating and educating.

Find out more:
www.techexeter.uk
www.digitalexeter.uk

STEMM NEWS

BUSINESSES LEARN ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES AT SW SPACE INDUSTRY INNOVATION EVENT

Experts from the UK Space Industry share the fascinating range of space-related opportunities and activities taking place in the South West during a regional Space Innovation event.

Businesses, funders and academia gathered at the Met Office Collaboration Building to learn more about the rapidly growing UK Space sector at the recent South West Space Innovation Event.

The fully booked, knowledge-sharing and networking event, gave audiences an exciting opportunity to learn more about space-related challenges and funding opportunities, as well as providing the chance to develop collaborative capabilities.

Throughout the day, experts gave presentations on the challenges and opportunities of Space Upstream Services (design, materials, manufacturing, electronics and systems) and Space Downstream Applications (data, AI, communication, location and navigation).

Inspirational keynote speakers included Professor Mark McCaughrean, ESA Senior Advisor for Science & Exploration, Miles Carden, Spaceport Cornwall Director, Ian Jones, Goonhilly Chief Executive and Dr Maria Kalama, Innovate UK Space Innovation Lead.

During the afternoon, audience members were put into break out groups for discussion and building project collaborations.

Conrad Gillespie, (pictured) Impact and Partnership Development Manager for Space at the University of Exeter said: "It was an absolute pleasure to host our regional Space Innovation event, with such fascinating talks and an engaging audience full of innovative, like-minded people.

"The South West definitely has valuable assets, expertise and resources to strengthen the flourishing UK Space Industry, and we look forward to building collaborations going forward."

www.exeter.ac.uk

LIFEBOAT ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE ENTHRALS AT FESTIVE FAMILY EVENT HOSTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Families from across the South West were immersed in fun, facts and physics about lifeboats and the incredible work carried out by the men and women of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) during a special festive treat, organised jointly by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) and the University of Exeter.

The free IMechE Christmas Lecture, Saving Lives at Sea: The Science behind the Shout, was held in the University's Forum Alumni Auditorium on Wednesday, December 12th 2018, bringing together more than 400 people of all ages to be inspired and entertained at the interactive, light-hearted event about safety on the seas.

Steve Austen, currently engineering director and chief engineer at SC Group/Supacat, was head of engineering at the RNLI where he worked for 15 years on the design and support of a range of projects, including the new Shannon Class lifeboat and associated launching system. Drawing on his work for the RNLI and using hands on demonstrations and videos, Steve showed the audience how engineers use science and mathematics to protect craft and passengers throughout each lifeboat mission.

After the event Professor Chris Smith, Deputy Associate Dean Research (Industry), College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences

said: "It's wonderful to see so many youngsters show their fascination and interest in engineering and science and we are all really pleased to be able to host such a fabulous event"

John Earp, chair of the Devon and Somerset IMechE committee added: "These classic family Christmas lectures are the prestige event in our annual lecture programme and the largest event of its kind outside London. The talk itself was excellent; the most pleasing aspect being just how engaged the younger members of the audience were. If just a few of these young people decide to study science and engineering as a result it will be judged an outstanding success."

www.imeche.org

INSPIRED BY NATURE

BIOPHILIC ARCHITECTURE ENGINEERS EXPLORED WITH TUNDE AGORO

Tunde Agoro is a senior associate in the Sustainability Group at engineering consultancy Hoare Lea. He leads on the development and delivery of sustainability and wellbeing strategies, as well as being a member of the UKGBC Circular Economy Working Group, the WELL Building Standard UK group, and BREEAM industry liaison panel.

Tunde started his career in architectural design, working across the residential, commercial, retail and educational sectors. He developed an interest in sustainability while studying for a Masters in Environmental Engineering and Sustainable Development at Imperial College London in 2007. Since then, Tunde has pursued a career in sustainable development, becoming a lead consultant in the South West and Wales for a large sustainability firm, before joining Hoare Lea in 2014.

Tunde is an advocate of biophilic design/architecture, which stems from the phenomenon known as 'biophilia'; that is, our innate love for nature. Several studies – including a number of World Green Building Council (WGBC) reports (2013, 2014, 2016) and the 2012 "Economics of Biophilia" Terrapin

report – show that biophilia could lead to benefits such as improved recovery rates in hospitals, increased productivity levels in workplaces, increased sales and footfall in retail developments, and increased rates of learning in education institutions. Tunde said: "Biophilic design is an approach to architecture and building design which embraces nature by optimising human connections with the natural environment. It goes beyond symbolising nature and extends to actually mimicking natural processes in the design, delivery and operation of buildings." He stated that, "for instance, there are so many design decisions that could transform UK healthcare buildings: from a focus on daylight and air quality, to providing links⁄access to nature (i.e. biophilic design) and promoting healthy nutritional choices. All of these and many other measures could make a real positive impact on patients and staff alike."

The award-winning Genesis Building in Plymouth, is a stand-out example of biophilic design. The state-of-the-art office building, which opened in 2015, comprises flexible workspaces, meeting rooms, a full-height internal atrium and Plymouth's first living walls – as well as the use of green colour palettes in selected interior finishes. Taking this approach to building design has resulted in fostering stronger connections with elements of nature and a high level of occupant satisfaction. Ultimately, optimised levels of occupant wellbeing and increase in productivity can be anticipated. Tunde said: "Hoare Lea is a forward looking firm. We're engineers of human experiences, aiming to shape a positive experience in buildings for people by integrating appropriate technology and championing user-centred design solutions."

During his career, Tunde has seen the emergence of big data and technological innovations such as 3-D printing and virtual reality (VR) change the way buildings are designed, constructed and operated, enabling greater strides being made towards buildings that positively impact their inhabitants. The recently completed Deloitte UK headquarters building located at One New Street Square is an exemplar in terms of a super-connected building, an environmentally sustainable and human-centred workplace – where the optimisation of the health and wellbeing of its occupants is truly paramount.

Tunde is an ambassador for STEM in the South West, representing Hoare Lea within the Government's initiative as a STEM ambassador and through work with the Universities of Bath, Bristol and Cardiff, as well as with local schools. He said: "A number of students have approached me to tell me they want to do what I do. Two of the students I met even went on to join the Hoare Lea team. I hope that, by talking about our work, more young people are inspired into the increasingly high-tech fields of engineering and architecture."

www.hoarelea.com

Award-winning Genesis Building in Plymouth by FORM Design

STEMM NEWS

VENTUREFEST SOUTH WEST: 17TH JUNE 2019, SANDY PARK, EXETER

Following the hugely successful technology industry event in 2016, the organisers of Venturefest South West have today announced a second event to be held on 17th June 2019 at Sandy Park, Exeter. This one-day flagship event will bring the leading lights of the South West's tech industries together.

Organisers expect more than 800 businesses, entrepreneurs, investors and academics to attend. The event will showcase cutting-edge innovation and entrepreneurship coming out of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset and bring people together to network, hear insights and predictions from industry leaders, connect with entrepreneurs, investors and academics and make valuable business connections.

The full-day event will see presentations from technology trailblazers, panel discussions and a diverse programme of workshops, as well as a schools competition (Hackfest) and a pitching competition (Pitchfest).

The themes for Venturefest South West 2019 are:

- Digital Health
- Blockchain
- AI and Big Data
- Agri Tech
- Marine Tech
- Creative
- Space
- Environment
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Funding and Start Ups

Tickets for the event, due to go on sale in March, cost £40 (plus VAT) for the full day, and including lunch. The 2016 event was oversubscribed with a waiting list and tickets for this event are expected to be in similar demand.

Photo Caption: Jennifer Nimmo, One Voice Media; Mark Wray, Knowledge Transfer Network; Ellie Zahoui, Plymouth College Of Art; Richard Adams, University Of Plymouth; Michael Dickinson, University Of Falmouth; Lisa Vanstone, One Voice Media; Oli Raud, Plymouth College Of Art

Venturefest South West will be held on Monday 17th June 2019 at Sandy Park, Exeter. The event is supported by: The Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN), Falmouth University, the University of Plymouth, University of Exeter, Plymouth College of Art, Heart of the South West LEP and South West Academic Health Science Network.

www.venturefest-sw.co.uk

SOUTH WEST FIRM SELECTED TO LEAD UK MACHINE LEARNING PROJECT

A technology firm based in Exeter has been selected by the Government's innovation research programme to lead a two-year study into machine learning and advanced data analytics.

Software Solved is one of the UK's market leaders for software, online customer portals and real-time data solutions in the insurtech sector.

The firm, which is set for a 40 per cent increase in its workforce at its Exeter headquarters this year, has been selected by Innovate UK to run a major two-year research programme into machine learning and advanced data analytics in partnership with Plymouth University.

With the company's expertise in data, the firm will work with the university to research and develop ways to use machine learning to intelligently automate the integration of large volumes of data, predict future risks using open data, and to analyse data to model the interactions between implementing risk mitigation programs and reduced ongoing claims.

Jon Stace, principal technical consultant at Software Solved, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to explore how machine learning can be applied to predict future risks at a level of precision that was unthinkable just a few years ago. Focusing on how we understand, measure and predict future risks, by applying machine learning, has the potential to improve how we assess,

Photo caption: Group shot (L-R) Andy Treen and David Marshall, Knowledge Transfer Network; Ian Howard and Aneeq Ur Rehman, University of Plymouth; Jon Stace and Tom Rooks, Software Solved; Luciana Dalla Valle, University of Plymouth

carry out and automate risk assessment across the insurance sector.

"We're really looking forward to teaming up with Plymouth University and some of the key insurance brands, including RSA who will work with us on the project. It will feed into ongoing 'risk' work by the insurance industry and we will be reporting back to the Government via Innovate UK as we progress."

www.softwareselected.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

INTRODUCTION TO EARTH INFORMATION WITH GOOGLE
12th March 2019
Impact Lab @ Exeter Science Park,
12:00-16:30

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/intro-to-earth-information-with-googles-geographer-ed-parsons-tickets

TECH EXETER MEETUP
3rd April 2019
Exeter Phoenix, 7-9pm

(events every other month,
sign up on meetup:
www.meetup.com/techexeter/)

TEDX EXETER
5th April 2019
www.tedxexeter.com

PRISM SPEAKERS
11th April 2019

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/prism-speakers-april-2019-tickets-55284130322

FUTURESYNC CONFERENCE
25th April 2019
University of Plymouth

www.futuresync.co.uk

DIGITAL EXETER MEETUP
1st May 2019
Exeter Phoenix, 7-9pm

(events every other month, sign up on
meetup: www.meetup.com/Digital-Exeter/)

DATA VISUALISATION
24th May 2019
XFi Building, University of Exeter
Streatham Campus

www.exeter.ac.uk/business/consulting/datavisualisation

A focus on science, technology,
& innovation for the business community

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