

## From paper exercise to an unrivaled scheme

[Jan 22 2007](#) By Evening Gazette

By now, hardly anyone in the Tees Valley will be unaware of the region's DigitalCity project.

Unlike anything we have seen before, it is literally a huge scheme which, at its heart, aims to regenerate the region into a world-class supercluster of vibrant creative businesses, allied to a dynamic centre of culture, entertainment, education, community, infrastructure and finance.

Over the last three years, this and other elements within the DigitalCity project have matured from a simple paper exercise into an unrivalled scheme, attracting investment and collaboration in unprecedented degrees. Thanks to unparalleled levels of innovation, its radically different approach has already produced some stunning results, making it rightly regarded as one of most original projects of its type anywhere in the world.

But, DigitalCity is much more than merely a building. "Just as important are the processes behind the bricks and mortar," states business director Mark Elliott.

"The real power of a great creative centre lies not in buildings, equipment or the projects already in production, but in the cafés, bars and restaurants where people meet, talk and come up with new ideas.

"This is the level at which the project will really start to make a difference to our region. Over the next few years, it will create a physical infrastructure capable of attracting go-ahead industries into the Tees Valley and beyond, as well as a vast network of support channels, including highly qualified consultants from business sectors across the board - all bundled together within the unashamedly entrepreneurial DigitalCity cluster," he adds.

One of DigitalCity's early successes was to secure the relocation into Middlesbrough of e-learning technology company Nisai, formerly located in India, and with a London head office.

Reversing the trend of business outsourcing from Britain to Asia, the move by Nisai Group's educational technology division heralded the first in a series of achievements for DigitalCity Business.

Nisai's educational division provides live interactive teaching through an internet-based Virtual Academy. Representing the largest ever investment in the North-east by a company operating in this sector, the move to Middlesbrough resulted from Nisai's frustration at losing highly trained graduates to other businesses in India, causing the company to look towards the UK to establish a stable workforce.

Current reports suggest that there are 150,000 children out of school every year in the UK. Since relocating, Nisai has already benefited more than 33 local education authorities right around the country, with its Nisai Virtual Academy offering live, interactive lessons to any pupil equipped with a standard computer and a normal internet connection. Nisai Education has also succeeded in securing funding for post 16 pupils who do not receive financial assistance from their Local Education Authority.

DigitalCity has made it its business to attract, nurture and support some of the region's most talented digital and creative industries. As part of this aim, it offers world-class business

mentoring for businesses in a variety of sectors, including the arts and culture, computer games design and animation, as well as other companies operating in the digital media marketplace.

One example of a successful mentoring project is 3rd Dimension Creations, a young team of innovative and highly skilled computer, video and handheld games developers which, together with several other DigitalCity based companies, recently visited Japan on a fact-finding mission.

The company has just announced a new partnership to develop a brand new PC, PlayStation Portable and mobile phone-based poker game unlike any previously seen. Also underway is work in connection with Sensie's Su Doku, for publication on a mobile, PC or web-based platform.

Another example is Animmersion, a company that uses incredibly vivid and accurate 3D computer modelling techniques to bring to life complicated concepts, presenting them in a form that enables the user to understand how equipment, static objects or machinery actually operates. A novel feature of Animmersion's enterprising work is that sequences can be paused, restarted and even rotated to permit complex or partially hidden movements to be examined from different angles.

### Animex Is Coming

As well as creating what many have described as the UK's digital hub, DigitalCity is also involved in the organisation of the Animex International Festival of Animation and Computer Games. Now in its eighth year, Animex is a whole week of screenings, talks, presentations, workshops, parties and a fabulous opportunity to network with the industry's movers and shakers.

Taking place this year from February 5 to 9, the event will culminate in the presentation of the Animex Awards. For more information, log onto [www.animex.net](http://www.animex.net)

### Unrivalled Creativity

As well as involvement in events that set the whole region buzzing, projects in which DigitalCity businesses feature are also at the creative and technological forefront.

Take Headtown for example - a project aimed at providing multimedia users with a service that will enable them to feature in a web-based community. The winner of a recent Northern Film and Media funding award, the project is a joint venture by Andrew Liddell and Sam Harrison, created with a view to automating the production of personalised content for mobile phones.

If all this sounds exciting, why not see about getting in on the action?

Whether you're a start up, already live or even at the pre-start business idea stage, DigitalCity Business can help turn concepts into reality. Its unique start up and acceleration system is driven by successful industry professionals, offering insider expertise and contacts, industry knowledge and mentoring that's the best there is.

In addition to business training and networking, DigitalCity Business offers round the clock help, funding opportunities and expertise, cheap, easy in easy out accommodation and a host of other benefits to help businesses develop swiftly, cost-effectively and painlessly.

"As much as anything, DigitalCity is designed to help talented, ambitious people accelerate their ideas and business models within the creative industries sectors. The support available from our team of interventionalist mentors includes specific sector guidance on how to set up a company,

where and how to obtain expert sales and marketing advice pertinent to the sector, as well as general business assistance," states business director Mark Elliott.

"Having already helped over 100 digital and creative companies in the Tees Valley and the North-east, DigitalCity Business proves that our region is exactly the right place to do great business," he concludes.

Keep up to date with the news. Sign up for [News Alerts](#)

Have your say on the latest news and sport in our [Forums](#)