

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Economy and Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	27 th September 2012
TITLE:	X Media Lab
WARD:	ALL

AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

List of attachments to this report:

None.

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 X Media Lab – the international digital media conference took place on 16th March 2012 with the theme of Digital Entertainment: Media Music Mobility.

Alongside the conference programme ran an expo to showcase the best of Bath businesses who are leading the way in terms of cutting edge technology.

“The Lab” took place Over 2 days at Real World Studios in Box. It comprised 18 selected companies working directly with their selected Lab mentors on their own project ideas and the opportunity to explore partnerships and business opportunities with other Lab participants.

X Media Lab conference, expo and lab were part of the Bath Digital Festival 2012 - a week long series of events that took place across the city. The events included OpenMIC, the Big M, a Hack Day, BathSPARK Awards, ‘Web for the Terrified’, ‘Coding for Kids’ and ‘GovWest’ focussing on digital work within the public sector.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Economy and Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel is asked to agree to:

2.1 Note the contents of this report for information

2.2 To endorse the approach set out in 3.4 whereby next steps include exploring alternative delivery models and core sponsorship, such that the Council may make a fixed contribution but is not required to underwrite the project.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The total cost to the Council of XMedia Lab, the expo and Bath Digital Festival was c £144k to deliver the outputs and outcomes set out in sections 4.4 and 4.5.

ANTICIPATED FUTURE COSTS AND DELIVERY:

3.2 The total cost to re-run X Media Lab, the expo and the Bath Digital Festival is anticipated to be similar to 2012 at c £144k.

3.3 However, there is no secured funding or budget to deliver X Media Lab 2013 or the Bath Digital Festival and a commitment to re-run the event with support from the Council would be subject to the normal Council budgeting processes.

3.4 Next steps include discussions with X Media Lab about alternative delivery models and discussions with the Universities and the business community about core sponsorship.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 The primary objectives of X Media Lab were to:

- Support growth in our economy by showcasing and connecting the regions creative potential to a global market
- Position the world heritage city of Bath at the cutting edge of digital enterprise.

335 delegates attended the conference with 10% attending from outside the UK.

4.2 The Expo comprised 3 zones:

- A stand area for 25 interactive projects from businesses and the universities
- 'Play Area' showcasing apps / websites of local businesses through series of iPads / play opportunities
- Wall projections showcasing the best of Bath tech/creative businesses including live animation and film production.

4.3 Bath Digital Festival estimate that overall 2700 participants took part in 28 events.

4.4 TANGIBLE VALUE

- Bath has secured the Explay Festival and National Games Awards 2012. This is a major story for B&NES as we have secured the event ahead of Plymouth, Bournemouth and Bristol, clearly demonstrating Bath's growing reputation as a centre for digital and creative businesses
- **#xmlbath2012** trended worldwide on twitter on Friday 16 March. This means it was determined one of the 'hottest emerging topics of discussion on Twitter'. For a conference on digital media this is particularly significant
- A number of companies attending the Labs have reported valuable outcomes from their engagement with the programme, including companies who have secured new investment, who are launching new companies or who have gained a new global perspective on the value and potential of their business
- Jeff Gomez, President of Starlight Runner, one of the world's leading transmedia producers of films such as Avatar, Transformers and Pirates of the Caribbean has become engaged in the process to establish a new more competitive identity for the

City of Bath. Jeff and his team reviewed the Bath vision, our strategies and the brief for the competitive identity project and has given our lead officer a mini-masterclass in how Starlight approaches the identity process. He is also keen to stay involved as the work progresses

4.5 INTANGIBLE VALUE

- Placing Bath firmly on the map for Creative and Digital Media
- The international profile, with speakers from Beijing, Bangalore, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Toronto with the involvement of individuals from corporations such as MTV, Starlight Runner, YouTube and Sony
- The international profile with delegates from Amsterdam, Malmo in Sweden, Sydney and Auckland
- Raising the profile with Government through the involvement at the VIP launch event and the opening of the conference by Ed Vaizey, MP and Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries
- High-level networking opportunities with Senior Executives from Future, Double Negative, Fujitsu, Catalyst Venture Partners, MTV, European Broadcasting Union, Realworld Studios, Media Innovation Network, the Dutch national public broadcaster and Sweden's Media Evolution
- The identification and promotion of world-class digital media projects being developed within B&NES including
 - Artolo – an online platform for the sale, sharing and resale of artists work www.artolo.com
 - The Alphasphere – a new, truly innovative and remarkable, spherical musical instrument for modern musicians to program, play and produce any kind of music www.alphasphere.com
 - Art at the Edge – an augmented reality project promoting Bath's Heritage and a sculpture trail in Bath. Augmented Reality involves using an App, downloaded on to smart devices like iphones, ipads to introduce an experience into the space between your eyes and the object you are viewing through the device. These experiences can be all sorts of things such as illusions, holograms, information labels, sound effects, commentary or simply ways to link to videos. www.artattheedge.org/news/sculpture-trail

4.6 CASE STUDY:

ARTOLO

Tom Brereton Downs described XML as 'quite simply the best thing to happen in the city since the Roman's built the baths!'

Following the Lab, Tom reports that:

- Chris Deering – Former President of Sony Computer Entertainment is joining Artolo as an investor / advisory board member
- Ralph Simon – Mobile strategist for Lady Gaga, Madonna, U2 and the World Cup made an introduction into Comic Relief and they are now in discussion about a national project using Artolo. He is also joining their advisory board
- They are working with Rubedo (who have collaborated with Double Negative on the VFX for the Batman films, Inception and the Tree of Life) on shaping their message for the high end art world

- They have negotiated a development deal for equity with web software developers iPrinciples, meaning Artolo is nearly built
- They have secured their first round of funding from a syndicate of investors
- They report an increase in their confidence of 10 fold following the 2 days of mentoring
- They describe the outcome of XML as 'like an injection of high grade rocket fuel into our enterprise'.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations will be undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 *An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be completed.*

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 *Cabinet Member; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Stakeholders/Partners; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer*

7.2 Consultation was carried out through meetings, phone and email.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 *Sustainability; Young People; Economy;*

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	