

Wired Sussex Proposal: Strategic Activity to Build on the Benefits of RIFR

Both Wired Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council agree that the growing importance of our digital, media and tech sector both during and beyond the current pandemic suggests benefit would accrue to the city by enhancing the strategic activity between the local authority and Wired Sussex.

It is in our mutual interest to share and align opportunities and ambitions, support a growing and sustainable digital sector, and ensure that our citizens feel they have the chance to benefit from the employment and other opportunities that this sector can provide.

Together, we have these goals:

1. To enable Brighton & Hove's digital, media and tech sector to engage effectively and consistently with BHCC, so that there is mutual understanding, aligned goals and common ambitions. To achieve this, we will:

a) Set up regular 6-month business check-ins between Wired Sussex and BHCC, broadly modelled on Brighton Chamber's Construction Forum.

b) Coordinate knowledge sharing between the private and public sector on opportunities and challenges around EV infrastructure.

c) Deliver a programme of activity that helps generate value from BHCC's fibre ring project.

2. Enable those in Brighton & Hove who are currently under-represented in the city's digital sector to learn directly from those who work in the sector about the opportunities it provides and how they might benefit.

3. Enhance existing BHCC-funded initiatives that support the creative industries, especially as they look at responding to, and rebounding from, pandemic-related challenges.

For all these goals, Wired Sussex will work to compliment and enhancing existing BHCC initiatives and connections, rather than duplicating them.

Specific activity will include:

1. The Digital Forum: The Digital Forum will run every 6-months as an open, managed event at which useful and facilitated discussion within the regional digital sector and with the local authority can happen. The Digital Forum will launch with a larger scale event, which will include speakers from Wired Sussex, BHCC, the UK Tech Cluster Group and Tech Nation. Two additional forums will be delivered during 2022/23.

2. Destination EV: Destination EV will be a Wired Sussex-convened and managed working group. It will look at the technical, social and environmental challenges and opportunities around non-street / non-home electric vehicle charging deployment. It will share best practice and opportunities amongst a range of professionals interested in engaging with BHCC's developing EV strategy. Wired Sussex will organise and host a series of workshops that bring together BHCC, property developers, EV charging operators, academics, data scientists and others.

3. Supporting business access to BHCC-funded infrastructure: Wired Sussex will help businesses direct engagement in (and use of) the BHCC Research and Innovation Fibre Ring. Focussing on its

growing network of high-bandwidth users, Wired Sussex will work to ensure that they understand and benefit from the opportunities that the new 5G-compliant Innovation Ring will offer.

4. Ensuring all communities in Brighton understand the opportunities in the digital sector: The sector recognises its obligation to ensure that those from parts of our community that are currently under-represented in our digital workforce (for example, East Brighton) have access to the opportunities it provides. Wired Sussex will work with a set of mutually agreed organisations and institutions to facilitate information and activity about the local digital sector and how to build a career in it. The activity will be based around building ongoing and sustainable relationships between digital companies in the city and selected community organisations. To kickstart the programme, a number of Wired Sussex member companies have committed themselves and their staff to support the project.

5. Supporting the sustainability of our city's creative sector: Via access to its technology innovation centre, the FuseBox, Wired Sussex will provide advice and training to selected individuals or businesses taking part in BHCC's ABCD Creative Bounce Back programme. The focus will be on those participating in the Ignite programme (liaising with BHCC-appointed programme providers Always Possible) to help them learn about and experiment with the opportunities that immersive and other new technologies can provide.