

DIZ Scoops Top Award for Collaboration at UK Digital Leaders Event

The Essex and Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) walked away at the annual Digital Leaders #DL100 Awards on 15th October with the top prize for digital partnership working across the UK. Having previously been recognised through a public vote as a Top 3 finalist alongside the Geospatial Commission at the Cabinet Office and the PiGIS™ (Pig Grading Information System) from Northern Ireland, the DIZ emerged as the winner in the 'Cross-Sector Digital Collaboration of the Year' category after a final round of judging that examined its work and approach.

Presenting the award Neil McKeown from Neueda praised the DIZ for its “great breadth of engagement across both public and private sectors” and reflected that it had established an “exemplar for regional development and collaboration” that could be usefully replicated by local authority organisations across the UK.

The Digital Leaders #DL100 Awards celebrate the individuals and organisations from the public, private and non-profit sectors who are demonstrating a pioneering and sustainable approach to digital transformation in the UK. Digital Leaders is a global initiative that has created a shared professional space for senior leadership from different sectors promoting effective, long-term digital transformation. It includes a number of globally renowned technology, finance and academic digital leaders as well as several UK government departments amongst its partners.

The award follows closely on the news that the partnership has secured an additional £1.7m of government funding to link up to 80 GP surgeries across the DIZ area with gigabit capable, ultrafast, fibre broadband connectivity to support local delivery of digital health care.

The DIZ partnership is made up of local government, health, education, business and community and voluntary sector bodies across west Essex and east Hertfordshire and aims to be the best-connected place of its type in the UK. A place of innovation and inclusion. A place where the benefits of digital investment are harnessed, maximised and shared across residents, commuters, businesses and borders.

Cllr Alan Lion, Digital Lead Member for Digital at Epping Forest Council and Chair of the DIZ commented:

“This award is a testament to both the approach and the hard work that has gone on by the widest range of partners across the five district council areas over recent years. Given the size of some of the organisations that were competing for this award, the fact that a small local partnership, that works on a very limited budget, could compete and win, shows we are doing something very right locally.”

Cllr Linda Haysey, Leader of East Herts Council and Vice Chair of the DIZ commented:

“There are some great digital innovations going on across our area, not least of these has been the work of our local partnership. It has been bringing partners and investors together, identifying good practice, securing external investment in digital infrastructure and raising the profile of ‘our place’ to new businesses for several years now. We are obviously all very proud of this national recognition for our work and we will be building on our achievements to get the best infrastructure and services for our residents and businesses”

Cllr Michael Hardware, Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Essex County Council and a DIZ Executive Board member commented:

“It is central to our message that businesses looking to invest in or relocate to our county, know that we work together to support the digital economy. We are keen to listen to new ideas and approaches and the Digital Innovation Zone model, with support from Essex County Council clearly shows that people in the UK can learn a lot from our collaboration.”

Cllr David Holliday, Deputy Leader of Broxbourne Borough Council and a DIZ Executive Board member, commented:

“While we have been working with the DIZ our Borough has secured major digital investment from both the private and public sector. This investment will be helping us to future proof our local economy and to work ever more closely with existing and new businesses to develop their digital trading capabilities. We will be using this award to further our marketing of this place as a great area for innovation and investment.”

Cllr Tony Durcan at Harlow District Council commented:

“Harlow is the home of fibre optics, the technology that underpins the digital revolution was invented here. The town has a proud tradition of innovation but is looking forward making the very most of the new opportunities that digital can bring to support our economy and our communities. It makes perfect sense to work together with our neighbours and partners across our local economic and health area to achieve this, and as this award confirms, the DIZ is the perfect vehicle to lead this.”

Cllr James de Vries at Uttlesford District Council and a DIZ Executive Board member commented:

“Clearly this announcement by Digital Leaders, a major national body with many industry leaders sponsoring is great news for the five areas involved. Uttlesford has a range of exciting plans for deployment of digital infrastructure and applications to support our High Streets, in particular, we are working with and support other colleagues across the DIZ to develop joint approaches to common issues and challenges.”

Clive Emmett Chief Officer of CVS Uttlesford and part of the DIZ presentation panel for DL100:

“The DIZ has set the benchmark for collaborative working. The voluntary and community sector has such an important role to play in ensuring all the people across local communities have digital services tailored to their needs and are involved from the beginning. The views and experiences of the voluntary sector serving these communities have been pivotal in shaping what the DIZ has prioritised and has influenced how it carries out its work. This award is a vindication of the importance of this approach.”

NOTE TO EDITORS

More information on the DIZ is available at diz.org.uk/

The DIZ is made up of partners from Essex and Hertfordshire representing local government, health, education, community and voluntary service and the private sector. It covers the districts of Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford. The partnership has attracted additional investment including for broadband infrastructure particularly in rural areas. It has also run a series of knowledge exchange seminars examining digital approaches and impacts for key local challenges, conducted exploratory research on new ways of delivering services and promoted the area as a location for digital investment. Details are available on the website.

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