

Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone

Press Release – 5th November 2020

How Can Digital Save our High Streets?



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Following on from the news of the DIZ winning Digital Leader of the Year for the ‘Cross Sector Digital Collaborations’ category, the DIZ hosted an insightful webinar, ‘Can Digital Save the High Street?’ as part of the Digital Leaders Week event. Over 290 delegates, drawn locally and from across the UK and beyond, registered to watch the webinar which is now available for viewing at <https://week.digileaders.com/talks/how-can-digital-save-the-high-street/>

Addressing the challenge to high streets is critical to all of the DIZ partners and for all of the high streets across the DIZ area. Digital responses to the challenge are increasingly coming to the fore and the DIZ brought together the line-up for this event comprising leading thinkers on how digital can support high street businesses to thrive.

Speakers, Polly Barnfield OBE from Maybe Tech*, Jenny Nelson from Newcastle City Council and Emma Jones MBE from Enterprise Nation joined DIZ partner and host Julian Gibbs from Anglia Ruskin University to talk about the unprecedented challenges facing our high streets as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each of the speakers gave a different perspective on the challenge, looking in turn at how traditional high streets can maximise engagement through social media, how to drive footfall by giving shoppers the confidence to return and how digital training offers can help support high street businesses to make the most of online opportunities.

Digital Leaders weeks aims bring together those who are driving forward digital transformation in the UK, gathering leaders who are focused on three key questions that organisations face: What works? How to? And where can we get advice? This is done through offering free workshops, sharing the very best practice and offering solutions that are practical and real.

Cllr Alan Lion, Chair of the DIZ and Lead Member for Digital at Epping Forest DC said “The High Streets all across the DIZ are critically important to our place, its economy and its communities. We all know our high streets are facing real challenges, particularly from online retailing but this seminar aimed to bring leading thinkers together to demonstrate new digital approaches and applications that might help to sustain and transform our high streets going forward.

“A key role for the DIZ is to ensure that we are learning from these new approaches and applying them in the ways that work for our own local high streets”

Note for 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.

For more information contact Mike Warr DIZ Programme Manager on 01992 564472 or by email at mwarr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Further information on the speakers and their organisations is available here:

Maybe* - <https://www.maybetech.com/>

Newcastle Digital - <https://nccportal.newcastle.gov.uk/digital>

Enterprise Nation <https://www.enterprisenation.com/>

Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone - <https://www.diz.org.uk/>

