



Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone

Annual Progress Report

2021/22

diz.org.uk



Foreword from our Chair and Vice-Chair

It continues to be incredibly important to acknowledge that the DIZ remains a truly innovative partnership of investors, service providers and users, and remains unique in its cross-border, cross-sector approach to achieving world-class and ubiquitous connectivity. The DIZ aims to do this for everyone that depends upon the ability to connect digitally, whether they are making their home in the DIZ or running their business here, so that everyone can gain the maximum benefit from digital applications and innovation.

The last 12 months has been another important year in the development and evolution of the Digital Innovation Zone. Critical infrastructure projects have been delivered on budget, key events have been held to raise our knowledge and awareness of the opportunities that digital offers to reshape our services and we have developed our networking with public and private organisations, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Everything the DIZ achieves it achieves as a partnership with the active support, knowledge and expertise of our friends in the public, private and voluntary sectors. This will remain our key aim to build resilience and opportunity for our place through a focus on improving our digital performance rather than on the boundaries between sectors and places.

This report highlights, in some detail, the work and achievements of our partnerships.



Councillor Alan Lion

Chair of the DIZ

Epping Forest DC Portfolio Holder for Customer

Councillor Linda Haysey

Vice-Chair of the DIZ

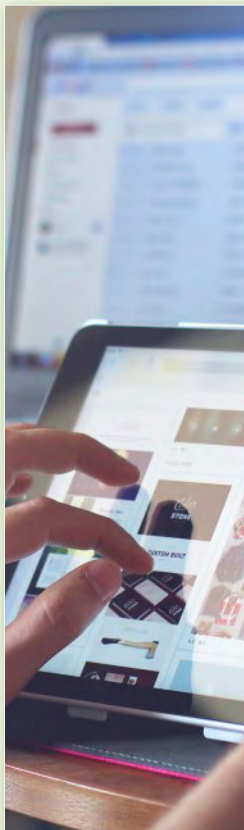
Leader of East Herts Council



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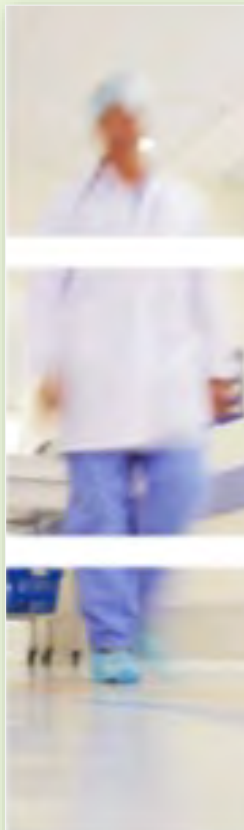
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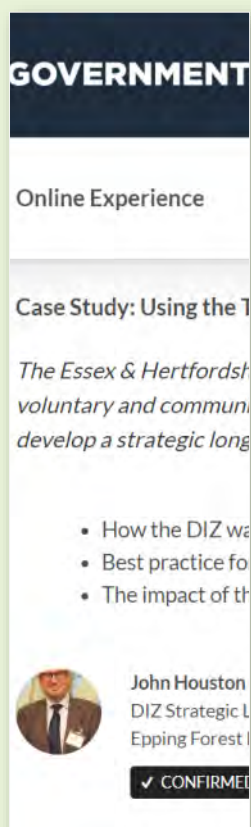
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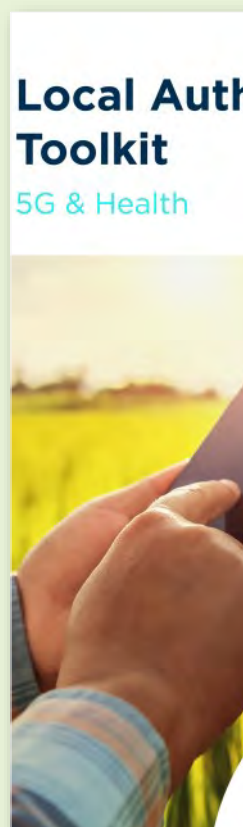
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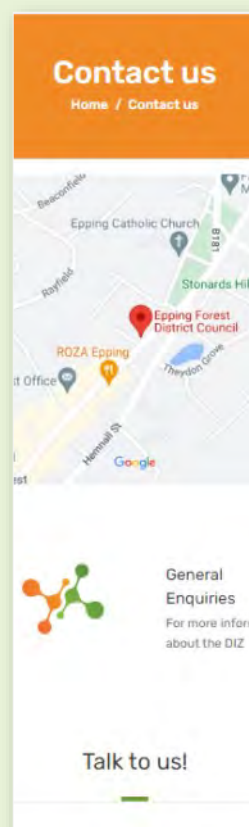
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Introduction by John Houston, DIZ Director

- Digital remains fundamental
- The new utility
- Need to address climate change impact
- Huge opportunities - 5G

The DIZ continues to forge a ‘new way of working’ through digital to transform and modernise our place in ways that benefit individuals, families, businesses and communities.

The pace of change of digital innovation continues to increase. Many of the new ways of working deployed during the pandemic have now become mainstream and many of the investments made to digitally enhance service delivery are continuing and growing.

The digital discussion is now, more than ever, fundamental to how we enhance quality of life for all the people we serve. Digital connectivity is now viewed as a major utility, in the same way that we have viewed electricity, water, gas etc. underpinning people’s ability to work, rest and play.

New challenges are being addressed by the DIZ around sustainability and climate change. This will be a key focus for the year ahead, looking at how we can come together as a place to help deliver the potential gains on carbon reduction that all of our partners are committed to. Our recent and highly successful Smart Place Seminar ‘How Can Digital Help Save the Planet?’ launched our work in this area and we will seek to build on this, addressing the strategic and practical questions around how digital can #domoregood.

While we address new challenges, the DIZ remains committed to continuing its practical work on issues such as digital exclusion, support for our high streets, the growth of our new garden communities, digital skills and, critically, our digital connectivity infrastructure through 5G network opportunities.

While we will not be seeking to grow the area represented by the DIZ we will be targeting greater engagement and participation of new partners, particularly from the business and health communities.

The DIZ gratefully acknowledges the continued financial support of its seven local authority partners; the ‘in-kind’ support, resources and cooperation received from partners in health, education and the voluntary and community sector; and the sponsorship arrangements we have with our private sector partners that enable all of this work to be delivered. In particular I would like to extend my thanks to CGI for the financial support and ongoing advice that will enable the DIZ website to be significantly upgraded.

John Houston
DIZ Director

“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”



“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”

Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) - ‘Ultrafast GPs’ Project



16 project partners

7 local authorities

4 health organisations

DIZ project management

Cross-border working

3 delivery organisations



74 GP surgeries
connected



£1.6m DCMS
funding investment



170,000+ metres of
fibre infrastructure



Av. GP download speed
up from 54 to 247 Mb/s
Upload speeds increased
from 1 to 40 Mb/s



40,000+ premises in
scope for ‘fibre on
demand’



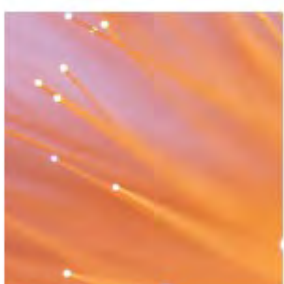
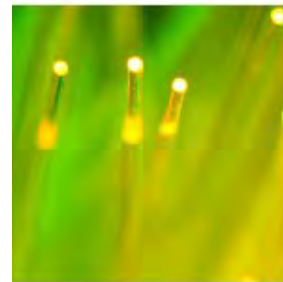
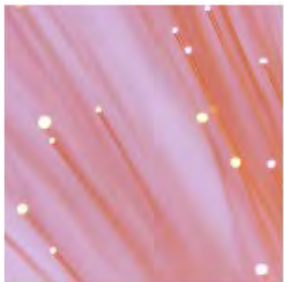
Delivered under
budget



Enabling NHS England
‘soft telephony’ trial



Annual cost
of GP
connectivity
reduced



“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”

- Delivery completed September 2021
- Delivered on time and under budget
- Underpinned Essex + Herts COVID response
- Underpins the future of healthcare delivery

- Transformative upgrades to GP connectivity
- More mobile working for practice staff
- Enhanced resilience, connectivity, service offer
- Supports integrated telephony to cut call times

The Local Full Fibre Network project was a DCMS-funded project that aimed to fulfil a Government ambition to stimulate greater investment in fibre connectivity, working with Local Bodies to aggregate demand for Gigabit connectivity in the Public and Private Sectors

The COVID pandemic challenged our healthcare system like never before. The LFFN project was a completely new way of working with local government officers endorsing and leading on the funding and delivery for critical healthcare delivery infrastructure. This team approach of different partners rallying together with our health colleagues to deliver critical infrastructure at a time of great disruption showed the strength of a 'place-based' partnership approach in practice.

The scheme, that eventually connected up 74 GP surgeries across all five districts of the DIZ to world-class speeds through almost 200km of new digital fibre network, quickly became central to supporting the health response. It enabled many services and people to continue to work and meet local health needs; delivered

transformative upgrades in resilience, connectivity and service offer; and, underpinned new important developments in service delivery that worked better for patients.

The project, which was built out through the height of the pandemic, enabled partners in health to focus their time and energy on responding to the many health challenges while their partners in the public and private sectors, did much of the 'heavy lifting' around project delivery.

This infrastructure continues to provide a platform for evolution and enhancement of the local health economy across the DIZ area, enabling them to stay at the forefront of innovation in healthcare delivery. It has ensured that patients in west Essex and east Hertfordshire have access to these new approaches ahead of other areas. The work and approach is now being deployed across a much wider geography to ensure all patients can benefit.

The DIZ will continue its work with partners to ensure that the positive impacts of wider gigabit connectivity are realised and that we use this new infrastructure to bring the widest benefits to our patients and residents.



Supporting the High Streets of the DIZ

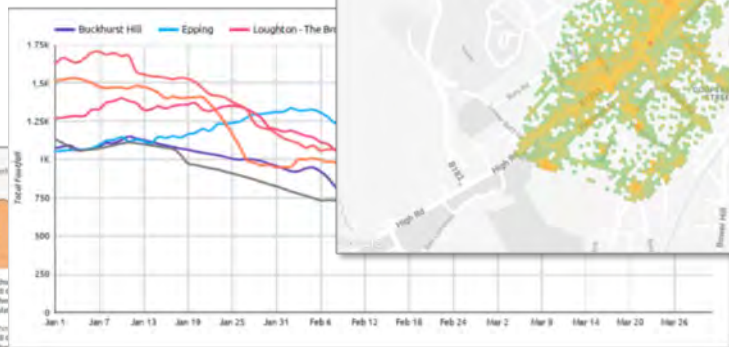
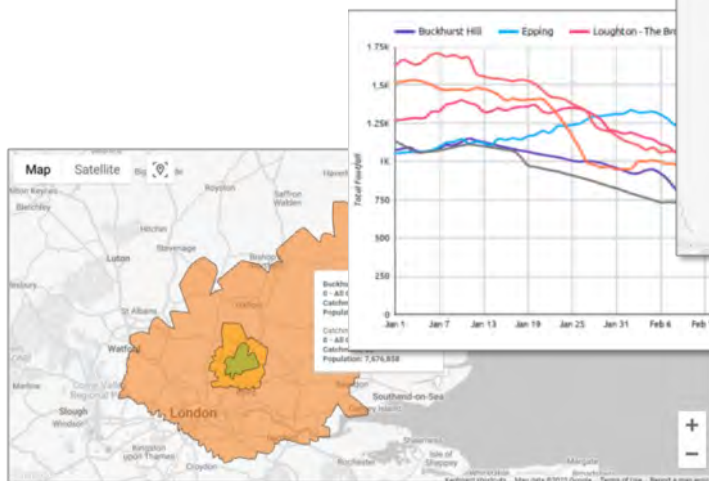
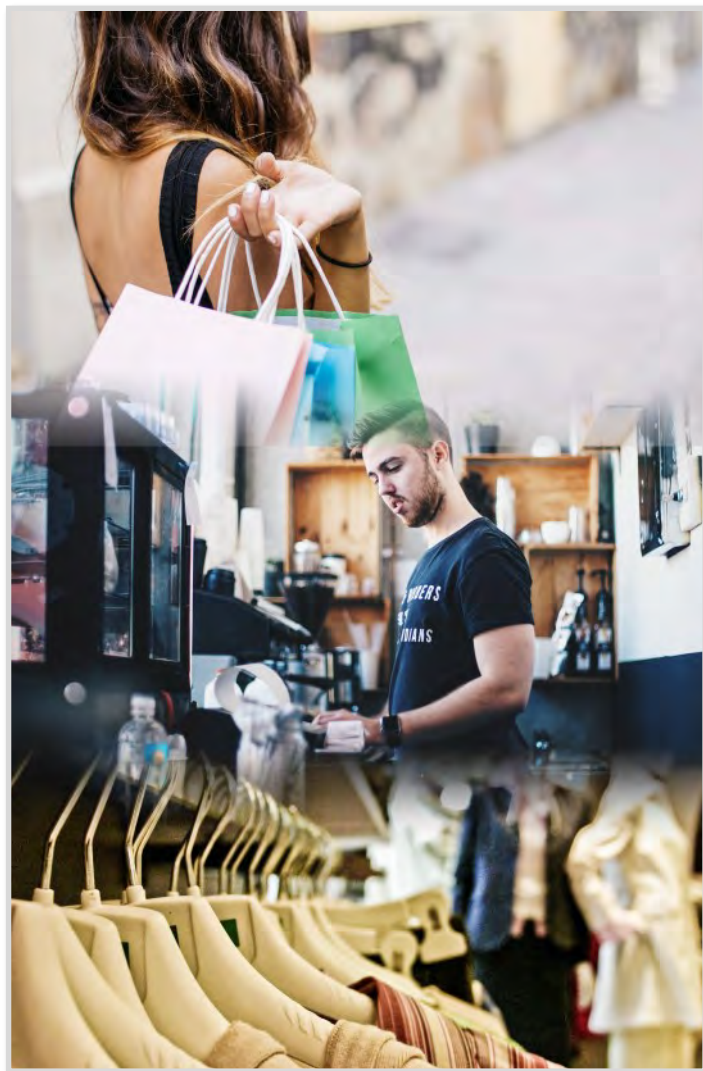
- **Special Interest Group (SIG) continues to drive work programme**
- **Jointly commissioned high street footfall monitoring**
- **Continued work to develop CCTV machine learning for footfall and ‘busyness’**
- **Mixed experiences of online shopping applications and platforms**

A key part of the work of the DIZ is to develop collaborative approaches on areas of real concern such as the continued dramatic impact of online retailing, the pandemic and changes in behaviour on the vibrancy of our high streets.

The DIZ Town Centres SIG, led by Broxbourne BC and Uttlesford DC, reviewed evidence and patterns of high street usage across the DIZ and following discussions with UK innovation leaders developed a set of proposals for action using digital tools.

A survey was undertaken, presentations received and a number of pilot projects initiated including commissioning a common digital footfall service across all market towns of the DIZ, an innovative partnership between Newcastle City Council, Urban Observatory and Epping Forest District Council repurposing CCTV equipment to measure footfall and a number of online trading platforms to support local traders including ShopAppy, Loyal Free and Click It Local.

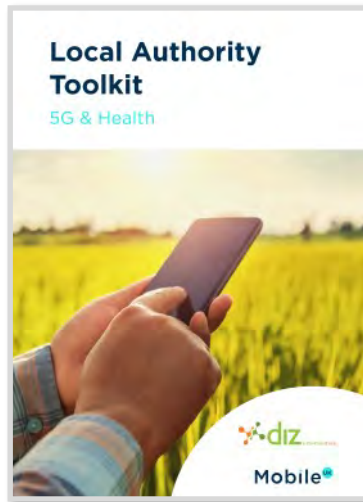
The SIG will continue to look at key opportunities such as smart parking and place-making Apps as well as other digital tools for making access for shoppers and users easier.



“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”

Knowledge Uplift

- Monthly DIZ Advisory Board programme delivered and weekly weblinks newsletter published
- Online Digital Skills and Digital Sustainability Smart Place Seminars delivered
- ‘The Power of Collaboration’ seminar delivered during DL Public Sector Insight Week
- Co-branded 5G guidance and briefing paper prepared



Innovation in digital has the potential to enable everyone in our place, and the services that support them, to do better. The DIZ has a key role in making sure that we are at the forefront of understanding how best we can respond and how we can make sure we are using the new technology and approaches to best meet the needs of our place.

Bringing thought leaders together with a wider range of local partners to explore the issues and challenges of these innovations and how they can respond to critical pressures in a place like ours, and not just in big cities, is a core element of our mission.

In the last year, we have addressed issues ranging from the potential benefits of 5G to how we can use the latest digital approaches to address climate change locally; from the benefits of data-driven smart operations to how ‘innovation hubs’ can drive the local economy.

Accessing expert advice and guidance from external bodies ‘on what works’ enables partners to look forward and address future challenges and opportunities with increased confidence.



<https://diz.org.uk/diz-resources/>



11 DIZ Boards,
36 organisations,
80+ attendees



11 guest speakers



8 DIZ /
Mobile UK
5G guides



2* Smart Place Seminars

***(Mar 21 - May 22)**



140+ seminar attendees registered



49 weblinks newsletters

470+ links

100+ recipients

“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”

Recognition of the DIZ’s ‘Place-based’ Approach to Digital

- Guest speaker at Connected Britain
- UK Procurement Expo presentation
- Western Gateway ‘Smart Region’ event
- LGC Awards Finalist

Promoting DIZ as a place for inward investment and raising its visibility is a critical priority.

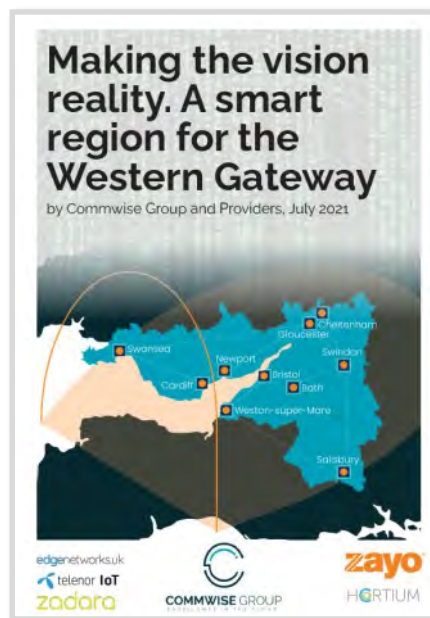
Building on recognition and awards received last year, DIZ has been asked to present on its unique ‘place-based’ approach to digital innovation. Recognised by iese (Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise) as having a proposition ‘unique across the world’, DIZ has introduced organisations to its work at gatherings from London to Gloucester and at events focusing on topics from economic development to procurement as well as digital.

The DIZ advocates for ‘place-based approaches’ and seeks, where possible, to encourage other areas to do the same, in whatever way makes sense for their ‘place’. The Commwise Group white paper **‘Making the vision reality. A smart region for the Western Gateway’** held the DIZ up as an exemplar for other areas seeking inspiration for a similar approach.

This collaborative approach to the DIZ work programme, where everything done, learned and achieved is a result of our cross-border, cross-sector partnership was further recognised in 2022 when the DIZ was nominated as a LGC Awards 2022 Finalist in the Public / Public Partnership category.

“We would encourage the Western Gateway to look to comparable smart regions for inspiration here. For example in Essex and Hertfordshire the Digital Innovation Zone...”

‘Making the vision reality. A smart region for the Western Gateway’ (Commwise Group)



“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”

Digital Inclusion - ‘No-One To Be Left Behind’

- Appointment of digital inclusion platform Project Manager and Digital Inclusion Facilitator
- Development of the Digital Share programme by WECAN
- Digital Share platform launched
- Supporting those most at risk from health inequalities disadvantages



DIGITAL SHARE INCREASING DIGITAL CONNECTION FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND MINORITY GROUPS IN WEST ESSEX

CAN YOU HELP US BY DONATING YOUR UNWANTED DIGITAL KIT AND DATA?

Digital Share is a project focusing on the digital inclusion of people in West Essex that are experiencing poor mental health, social disadvantage, and those from minority ethnic communities.

It will address four key elements of digital exclusion:

- Lack of recognition of being “in need” or digital inclusion support
- Lack of access to digital services
- Lack of access to affordable digital connectivity, mobile and fixed broadband
- Lack of access to the digital skills needed for life and work

What Digital Share offers:

- **Donated Devices** - Recycled IT equipment free of charge e.g. laptop, smartphone etc.
- **Donated Data** - Provide Digital Share users with donated data so they can get online and gain valuable access to help and services
- **TEC Mates** - Our TEC Mates programme can help increase confidence and understanding of using digital devices and services
- **TECH advice** - Our tech advisors can answer specific technical questions and help resolve IT issues.
- **Recycle your Tech** - Providing you with an alternative way of recycling your unwanted devices to help someone that needs it, rather than sending them to landfill.
- **Learn new skills** - Access to online training courses, to help improve skills and employment opportunities

<https://digitalshare.org/>

We want everyone in our place to benefit from the real opportunities of the digital revolution. Ensuring ‘no-one gets left behind’ has been a key focus of the DIZ since its inception. As more and more services are moved online the inability to connect can have an enormously negative impact in business, employment, skills and health.

DIZ partners in the voluntary and community sector have been central in devising approaches to bridging this gap in the best way. The WECAN Digital Share project is an excellent example of colleagues from the VCS sector working with major service providers in local government and health to devise a joined-up approach to reconnecting those most at risk of digital exclusion. It looks at all aspects of the problem from lack of equipment to lack of skills to, critically, the lack of data and connectivity. Public and private sector partners have been at the heart of support for this project - donating data packages and donating devices for reuse.

Other partners are looking closely at the learning from the pilot project to ensure we develop high standards that keep our services fully accessible while investment continues.



450+ people supported by Digital Share



200+ 1:1 digital skill sessions



90,000 Gb of data donated - 750 SIMs



50% of kit donated allocated



22 drop-in digital skills sessions



350+ people supported 42,000+ Gb of data (to Jun 22)

Looking Ahead - the Future DIZ Work Programme

- Acknowledging emerging digital priorities
- Advocating for place-based digital approaches
- Addressing digital's climate change impact
- Continued delivery of inspiring events
- Maximising the use of public sector assets to support connectivity
- Promoting 5G's benefits and addressing common concerns and misunderstandings

The pace of digital change continues to be often bewildering for our communities and the organisations that design the services that support them. It is the role of the DIZ to represent the place in discussions on how we collaborate and integrate our work to meet existing and emerging challenges linked to these developments.

Our partnership has an enviable reputation for consistently being ahead of the curve in anticipating and responding to new opportunities. The partnership is committed to continuing to do so.

Increasingly, our sub-region is benefitting from enormous investment by the public and private sectors in areas that have a significant digital footprint. The DIZ needs to ensure that the maximum advantage for our place, communities, economies and service provision is derived from this investment.

The key aims of the DIZ around economic vibrancy and great health and care still remain.

The partnership is currently examining options for the next significant infrastructure investment, particularly around 5G, to make sure we remain at the forefront of connectivity as we aim to be ‘the best connected place of its kind in the UK’.

Specifically, we will work on the following key areas over the next 12 months and beyond:

- Going further, faster on 5G investment
- Becoming a beacon place for digital innovation on climate change
- Building the digital SME eco-system
- Promoting our place for inward digital investment
- Developing the digital skills offer
- Expanding our digital inclusion platform

The DIZ monthly Advisory Board will continue to bring the insight of leading figures in digital to a local audience and we will continue to run our ongoing series of Smart Place Seminars tackling the digital issues of priority for our partners. We





will continue to work closely with Central Government through our membership of the Early Adoption Group of the DCMS Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA) programme and through our 'one public estate' approach to the reuse of public sector assets in order to unlock growth and promote enhanced digital connectivity.

The fact that the DIZ has established itself as a 'go to' organisation for public and private investors will be utilised to help enable the implementation of ongoing workstreams, particularly around high streets. The ability of investors to meet with local leaders of place, better understand the opportunities for growth and see a clearer pathway to investing for the benefit of our investments will remain a pivotal aspect of our work.

The DIZ has already established excellent working relationships with central Government departments and a myriad of agencies working in the digital field. We will continue this approach with organisations such as Mobile UK,

Connected Places Catapult and UK5G to see how the latest learnings and approaches can be delivered in the DIZ area.

While the DIZ has made major strides in 'making the whole greater than the sum of the parts' digitally in our place, there is a need to continually challenge how we manage and deliver our core services and realise our ambitions for the area. This includes our leadership and governance approaches as well as our joined-up procurement and operational delivery.

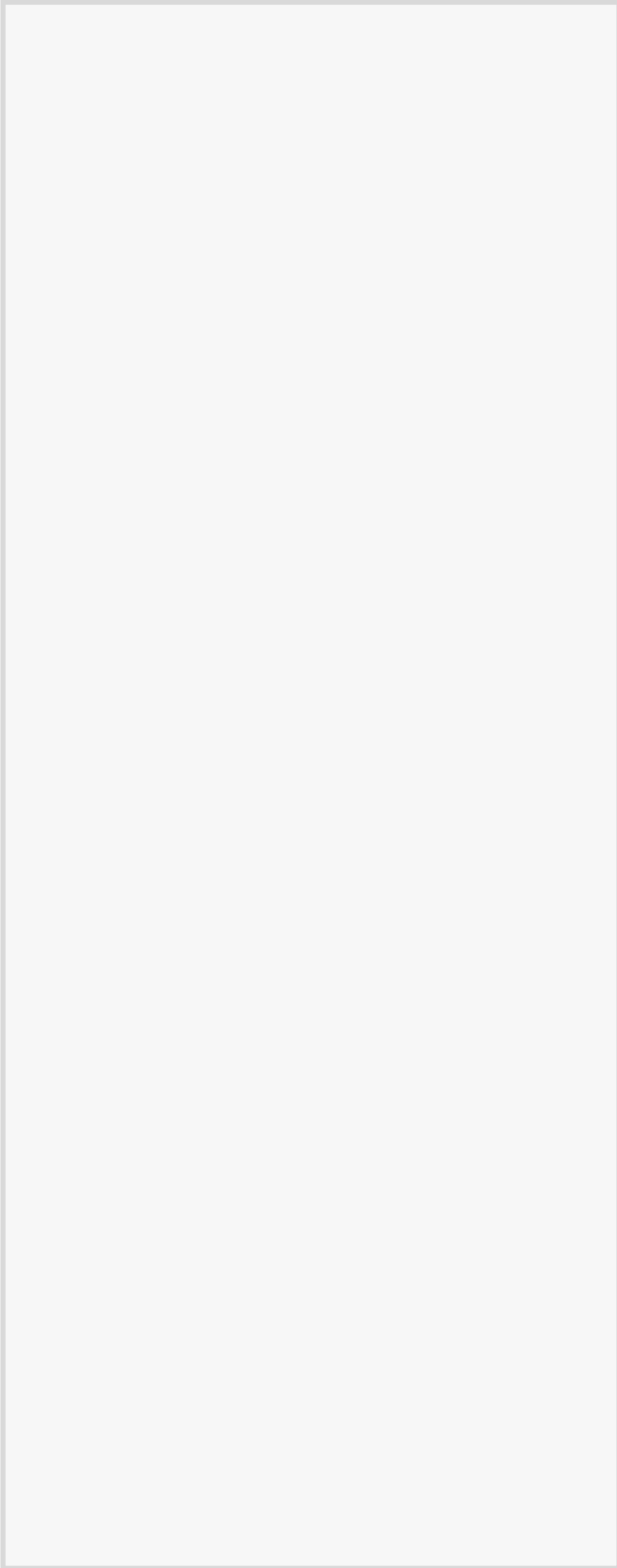
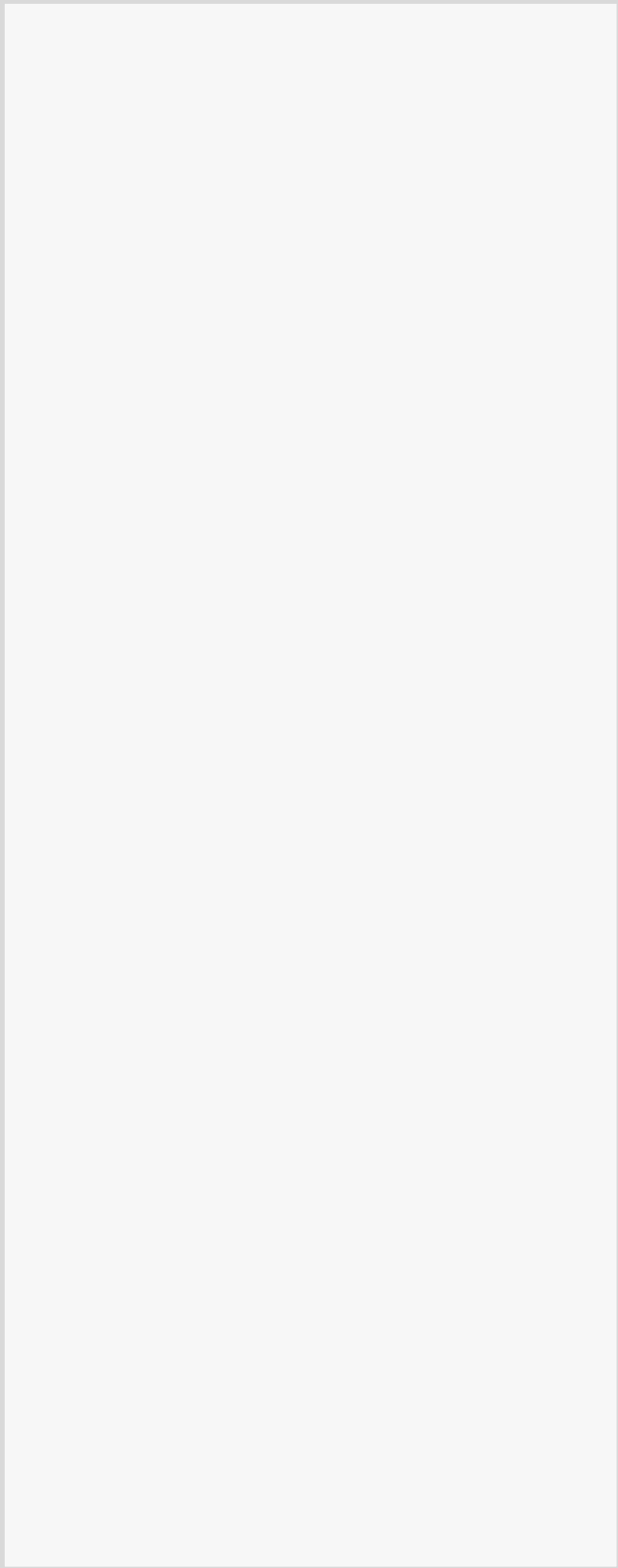
As always, the DIZ will approach these key workstreams in an inclusive, collaborative manner providing a voice for all our partners on our digital journey.

The DIZ would like to thank, again, all of its partners for their commitment, insight and enthusiasm over the last twelve months and looks forward to providing the space to unlock the digital opportunities of collaborative working over the next year.

“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”

Notes

“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”



“We want the DIZ to be the best connected place of its kind in the UK”

Our Mission

While the partners of the DIZ, individually and collectively, are committed to innovate and flex an approach to deliver a better served, better connected place, our mission statement remains the same:

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.

For more information about the DIZ and its work programme and to explore opportunities to get involved, please get in touch:

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John Houston

DIZ Director

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Our front cover image shows the Kao Data campus, home to Kao Data London One (KLON-01), a state-of-the-art data centre facility that has achieved industry wide acclaim for its innovative design and engineering capabilities. [\(C\) Image supplied courtesy of Kao Data](#)

Thank you to our core funding local authority partners for making the work programme of the DIZ possible:



Thank you to our corporate sponsorship partners and supporters for their contributions and support to the ongoing work programme and the production of this report:

