



## Digital Innovations Day @ FOCUS Wales 2017 Evaluation Report

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### 1. Event Summary

Digital Innovations Day was a brand new addition to the FOCUS Wales interactive programme for 2017. With a sharp focus on supporting the growth of the creative industries sector in Wales, it aimed to;

- Inspire new creative industries professionals in the potential of digital technologies;
- Equip them with the knowledge to exploit them, and;
- Foster new partnerships to make sure that this happened.

Held at community led social enterprise Undegun Art Space in the heart of Wrexham Town Centre on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May, the event featured;

- Live showcase performances from artists who integrate digital technology into their work.
- Panel discussions with international experts focussing on different aspects of digital innovation in the creative industries.
- An interactive expo, showcasing the best in regional, national, and international digital innovation in the creative industries.



Figure 1: 'The Space Race' - Panel Discussion at Digital Innovations Day 2017



The event's target audience was creative professionals, the advisors and agencies who can support them, and the education institutions which can breed the next generation of innovators. The event aimed to engage with;

- 500 individuals on the day itself.
- 5000 individuals through its online activity.
- Thousands of young Welsh individuals, through the dissemination of open access learning resources to the region's schools and colleges.

Overall the event was a great success, achieving and exceeding its targets, receiving a very positive response from its audience, and building the firm foundations which can lead to Digital Innovations Day becoming *the* event for innovation in the creative industries in Wales.

**Digital Innovations Day short promo film:** <https://youtu.be/ANT9oHkCLAO>

## 2. Attendance

Digital Innovations Day consisted of;

- 3x Live Music Showcases (with an average audience of 60 individuals per showcase)
- 3x Expert Panel Discussions (with an average audience of 50 individuals per panel)
- 1x Interactive Expo (with approximately 200 individuals visiting throughout the day).

This gives a total figure of **530 visitors** to the various activities taking place throughout the day, which equated to **220 unique spectator admissions**.

The diverse mixture of activities on offer at the event proved to encourage many visitors to stay for its entire duration, engaging with multiple panels and showcases as well as taking part in the interactive expo. As the venue itself it limited by safety restrictions to holding 150 individuals at any given time, at several points during the day the venue was near to capacity, with audiences peaking around live music showcases. It was also observed that the audience would tend to move en masse between the interactive expo (1<sup>st</sup> floor) and expert panels (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) creative periodic quiet periods within the expo. Going forward, the problem could be overcome with changes to the venue and layout of the event.<sup>1</sup>

Digital Innovations Day also engaged with its audience through social media. It reached **16,177** through Twitter and Facebook alone in this way in the run up to the event, and the full impact of Digital Innovations Day will be felt online when its digital resources are released in the coming weeks.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to festival wristband holders, paying members of the general public, and a number of freelance creative professionals, the event was attended by a diverse mixture of organisations including;

Coleg Cambria	Trackd	Businessline
Princes Trust Cymru	Welsh ICE	Calon FM
Quantum Soup	Studio Made	73 Degree Films
Magic Brew	SXSW	Big Ideas Wales
Games Wales	Salford University	Quantum Soup
Wrexham Glyndwr University	Arts & Business Cymru	Chester Zoo
Hugo	Techniquet Glyndwr	Federation of Small Businesses
Trackd	Vic Studios LTD	Creative Catalysts
Hybrid Coaching	Magnetic	

<sup>1</sup> See Section 6 – Key Learning Point, and Section 8 – Next Steps

<sup>2</sup> See Section 8 – Next Steps



### 3. Survey Data

An evaluation survey was sent out to all panellists, exhibitors, performers and invited delegates who attended Digital Innovations Day. Key findings of the evaluation were;

- **70%** of respondees were attending the festival for the first time.
- **90%** of respondees were attending a digital innovations themed event for the first time.
- **70%** of respondees gained new insights and ideas to support them in the work, teaching or business.
- **100%** of respondees would attend Digital Innovations Day again.

### 4. Testimonials

"We visited the digital day at Undegun and it was great to see so many local innovators in one place. The panels were fascinating and informative, we really enjoyed listening to a range of ideas from using AI to help you compose music to collaborative music projects using Ableton and harnessing the communal experience of the internet. What a forward thinking event to have on our doorstep."

*Lauren Walker - Digital Learning Officer at Chester Zoo.*

"I enjoyed the panel and got a lot of great new contacts, no improvements needed as far as I can tell. I met with quite a few people from music industries from Canada and Wales as well as new contacts from my home country (the Netherlands). It was a great learning experience to hear from people from 'across the pond' about their challenges in their industry"

*Guy Kessels – Founder of Hugo.*



*Figure 2: Twitter feedback from Lisa Matthews - Arts Council of Wales*

"Very productive, interesting and innovating. Very good event, difficult to suggest improvements"

*Steve Jarvis – Programme Leader for Game Art – Wrexham Glyndwr University*

"Thank you so much for having me as a Guest on your Panel, and allowing me to display my wares. I really thoroughly enjoyed the event...in particular hearing about your continued work in the community following the event itself. You're an inspiration!"

*Huw McGregor – Independent Arts Researcher*



"The Saturday was a very small part of the Focus Wales conference but hit home some big ideas and progressions key to all of our futures, and of course all-consuming issues that we are now becoming more and more aware of. Around 210 artists and groups performed this year, 32 of which are international, and the event attracted 8000 visitors to the area, 12% of which were from overseas. The conferences burgeoning tech and digital platform will only accelerate those numbers in the coming years. FOCUS Wales seems set fair as a growing and very interesting conference."<sup>3</sup>

AP Childs – Freelance Journalist

"Well organised and good fun."

Grant Tilbury -A&R, Artist & Label Relations at Trackd

## 5. Business / Education Outcomes

A range of positive business outcomes were achieved as a direct result of Digital Innovations Day. Below are a small number of examples of new activities, investments and partnerships which have resulted directly from the event.

- **Una Johnston**, the senior business development manager for the UK & Ireland for **South By Southwest**, the world's largest music and media industry festival <https://www.sxsw.com/>, requested to attend Digital Innovations Day and participated in the 'Race For Space' panel. This led to a recommendation from Johnston for the organisers of DIDDAD and FOCUS Wales to submit a proposal to host a panel to represent the industry in Wales at SXSW 2018 in Texas. Decision will be in mid October. Full panel proposal here: <http://panelpicker.sxsw.com/vote/77315> **DIDDAD** guest speaker and delegate Huw McGregor was also invited by Una Johnston at the event to participate in SXSW in 2019.
- **'Level Up'** have expressed interest in integrating their own computer games expo and conference into the Digital Innovations Day programme in the future, building the audience for both events. Last year the event attracted over 500 delegates.
- London based computer games development company **Magic Brew** have expressed interest in supporting the development of new games professionals and indie games development companies in NE Wales, and have established links with the Game Art degree programme at **Wrexham Glyndwr University**.
- Researchers from the **University of Salford** will be participating in the Carbon Meets Silicon conference and symposium, in Wrexham's **Oriel Sycharth Gallery** in September 2017, exploring the relationship between arts and science, and leading to the production of a publication to be disseminated internationally.
- A local emerging artist **'Neat Sleeper'** was appointed at the 'artist in residence' for the event, producing a number of artworks during the day utilising digital technologies, which were both displayed at the venue, and disseminated live on line through a range of social media platforms. These were further supported by a

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<sup>3</sup> The above is an extract from AP Childs' Digital Innovations Day review for 'Record of the Day' contained within the appendix to this report.



number of digital art installations produced by the students of Coleg Cambria. The artist was used to event to populate his portfolio, and has since been accepted onto the Fine Art degree programme at one of the UK's leading Universities.

- Computer games development company **Quantum Soup** reported establishing links with audio researchers which can help to improve the quality of their games output.
- Ana Berkenhoff, organiser of **PAF Music Week**, an invite only development event for musicians identified a number of Welsh artists to invite to the event, and offered to support FOCUS Wales in developing stronger links in Germany (her native country).
- The **British Science Association** North Wales Branch have expressed interest in sponsoring CPD events for North Welsh School teachers, build around the learning resources generated by Digital Innovations Day.<sup>4</sup> They have also committed funding and partnership support to the Carbon Meets Silicon exhibition and symposium, and the **Centre for Ultra-Realistic Imaging**, both of whom were represented at the event.



Figure 3: Artworks from Digital Innovations Day Resident Artist 'Neat Sleeper' were displayed both in the venue and shared online.

- **Never Such Innocence**, a charity promoting commemoration of the First World War through poetry and music, will be bringing their work to North Wales for the first time, with young people composing and recording original songs, powered through the **Trackd** digital platform.
- A number of freelance artists reported finding out about access to funding and support they weren't previously aware of, and **Big Ideas Wales** identified a number of new role models from the creative sector.
- The online assets developed as a result of the event itself, for use in school and other projects can be viewed in the the Appendix in section 9 of this document.

<sup>4</sup> See Section 8 – Next Steps.



## 6. Learning Points

Two key learning points have been identified, based on the feedback received from those present on the day.

1. A number of attendees reported the volume levels on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Undegun were too high. Live showcases took place in the same room as the interactive expo, with a number of DJ's providing electronic sets in between live performances. This provided a relaxed and informal atmosphere (which was well received), and allowed the event to cater to both the business and educational audience, as well as the wider festival audience (of which Digital Innovations Day was a part), however, potentially impacted on the effectiveness of networking for some attendees.

In the future, this issue could be addressed by moving to a larger venue, where the expo and live performances can be more effectively segregated, noise more easily managed, and/or by replacing live DJ sets with low volume background music in between showcases.

2. The safety restriction on Undegun Art Space entail that no additional visitors can be admitted, even when the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor is open and in use, in addition to the 1<sup>st</sup>. This resulted in a periodic ebb and flow of visitors to the interactive expo, as delegates populated the expert panel sessions taking place at 90 minute intervals.

In the future, this issue could be addressed by moving to a larger venue, with a higher overall capacity, allowing more people to be present at the event at any given time. Furthermore, making the interactive expo a free public event, which charged admittance to only the live music showcase and expert panel sessions could be considered, to enhance the accessibility of the event, and more effectively manage the relationship between these key elements.



## 7. Finances

With £16,000 sponsorship from Welsh Government, Digital Innovations Day was delivered on budget, with costs approximately breaking down as follows;

### Digital Innovations Day Spend Breakdown

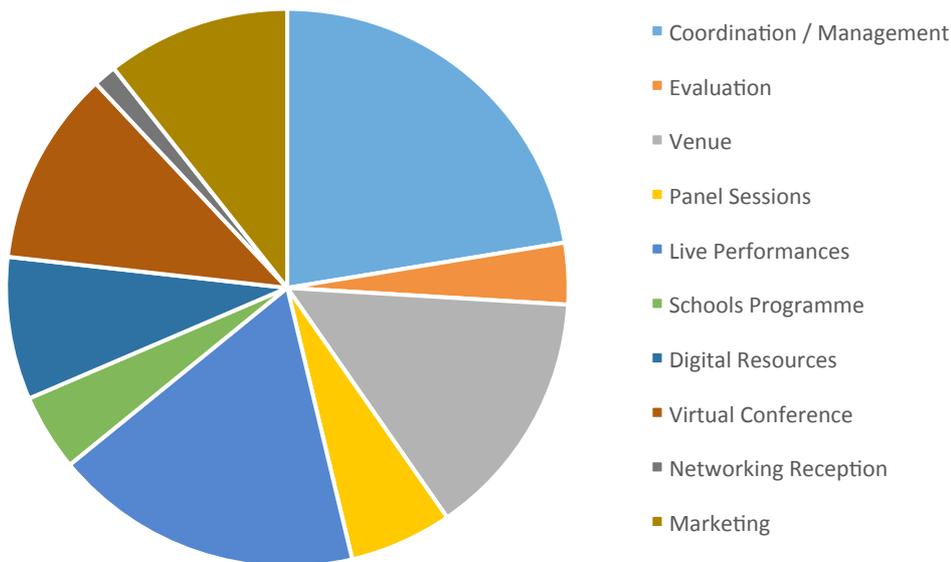


Figure 4: Digital Innovations Day Costs Breakdown

## 8. Next Steps

Digital Innovation Day 2017 was not exclusively about the activities which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> May;

- The event was comprehensively captured on film, with each expert panel session recorded in its entirety, and each exhibitor producing a one minute pitch offering their own expert advice. These films are currently in their final edit, and will be disseminated via FOCUS Wales website and social media platforms in the Autumn of 2017.
- Each digital resource will also be supported by a curriculum linked lesson plan, mapped to the national curriculum for music in Wales, and suitable for use by a Welsh High School Music Teacher. These lesson plans will be collated and disseminated to every school in North Wales (as well as being available for download via the FOCUS Wales website), ensuring that the cutting edge expert advice shared at Digital Innovations Day, is fed directly into the classrooms of the next generation of



innovators. As noted in Section 5, the British Science Association are keen to work in partnership with FOCUS Wales, to deliver CPD to teachers in Wales based around these resources.

Looking forward to 2018 and beyond, FOCUS Wales wish to grow Digital Innovations Day, make digital technology a significant feature of the events interactive programme;

- Amalgamation to with key regional events in the sector (for example, the Level Up expo), maximising impact and reach, whilst reducing operating costs.
- Moving to a larger, more flexible venue, capable of hosting a larger audience, and supporting a more diverse range of delivery formats (for example, utilising the new 'Arts Hub' development, scheduled to open in Wrexham in April 2018).
- Become a multi-day event, integrating with the full FOCUS Wales interactive programme, and engaging with those for whom a Saturday conference was not practicable. This would also increase the scope for teacher / business CPD to be more thoroughly integrated into the programme.
- Exploring options for making elements of the day free to attend (for example, a free expo room), ensuring maximum accessibility and community engagement.
- Exploring a sponsorship and funding opportunities to secure this continued growth.

**With these actions, Digital Innovations Day will take great strides to becoming the key event giving birth to innovation in the creative industries in Wales.**

## 9. Appendix

### 'Record of the Day' Review – AP Childs

#### review

**RECORD of the DAY 18.05.2017:**  
AP Childs reports back from this year's FOCUS Wales conference



In a week that saw shocking cyber attacks to the UK's National Health Service as well as other service sectors both on a domestic level and international, it was an appropriate move for the seventh edition of Focus Wales to further enhance its conference with a bijou but convincing step into the deeply engaging sphere of digital innovations, and touch on the now very real question of digital ethics too.

Over 120 music industry delegates, of which 25 were international, seemed to enjoy what was on offer this year at the ever-growing event. But it was a small handful of discussions which landed on the Saturday and final day that set a sure-fire marker as to which way this conference is heading, and many others like it too.

A full room at the Undegun Arts Centre enjoyed a series of panels that examined the complexities involved for us all whilst we attempt to learn and embrace such technological advancements, whether it is from the music/arts creator, administrator or consumer.

The previous two days were of course stacked with the more traditional panels and discussions that ranged from Bedroom Career Building and DIY PR, through to a thoroughly reflective and deeply personal discussion on song writing with 2017 The Voice finalists, Into the Arc and singer-songwriter Sarah Howells. Ex Damned and Eddie and the Hotrods bass player Paul Gray presented the now annual and indeed very helpful Musicians' Union workshop designed for young artists starting out.

On Saturday though, a discussion entitled Innovation Inspiration focused on highlighting a selection of new and/or developing digital platforms in a chatty, yet heartfelt style and connected with a fully engaged audience still going strong at the end of a busy week. Gareth I Jones, talking from the heart to describe a series of troubling, personal issues several years ago - his inspiration for setting up the Welsh Ice campus in Cardiff as a vehicle to empower people and provide opportunity.

Bringing together a community of over 150 people and small businesses/entrepreneurs in the belief that success is easier to achieve when we are working and having fun together, and those early and quite often tough periods in business's life is easier to bear when shared with others.

Originally a Wrexham lad, Jones, in partnership with Business Wales, recently announced that The Hub will soon launch in his native town and support the creation of 100 new enterprises and the creation of 260 new jobs over the next two years. The two-year pilot, which aims to help secure at least £1m of private investment for its members, will remain true to the Welsh Ice brief and wrap around support for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Geared more specifically to music creation, Trackd is a collaborative 8 track ideas and writing network app that hooks into the principles of social media sharing and messaging and was presented to the panel by artist manager Grant Tilbury, and software creator and former musician/manager Russell Sheffield. Trackd is global community of

buzzing users all swapping ideas and creating music and songs, and a very exciting prospect.

Tilbury later informed RotD that Trackd is looking to roadmap a writer splits feature into the app, naturally something of a concern for the app's users given it is dependent on creators working with people across the network they do not know and often have never met. The company is keen to make this process more transparent, clear and aid PRO's in their mission to getting their members paid and rewarded correctly.

The final panel of the week, The Space Race talked about how attempting to embrace the ever-moving curve ball of the digital age can give music creators, and indeed all areas of the industry the edge. North east Wales scenester, multi-instrumentalist and go-to person for production needs Steve Nicholls, SxSW's Una Johnston, 3D Spherical Soundman and Sonics researcher Huw McGregor exchanged thoughts on AI and VR alongside the composer/researcher Manoli Moriarty and the director, actress and sound sculptor Ana Berkenhoff and discussed the ever changing lines within modern technology that music creators are now working to.

It was a thought-provoking panel and all present agreed that despite the endless options now available to music creators in terms of new techs like AI and VR, simplicity in work practice must be sought. Nicholls astutely made the point that it is all fair and well utilising those ground breaking and maybe experimental technologies to perhaps write, change or render a piece of music,

but absolutely pointless if the piece of music in question had not been recorded correctly in the first place.

The clear concern amongst all on the panel was digital ethics and accountability, with panel moderator Mike Corcoran (Creative Business Consultant) highlighting the very real concern, and potential future nightmare scenario, as to whose responsibility it would be if for instance a driverless car crashed. And whilst legislation and acts of Parliament would come open to scrutiny from within the 'Artificial Intelligencia', Una Johnston warned all those in the room that the internet for one is no longer the neutral space we once knew it as and it is clear there are 'big forces' in the background trying to change the internet, and as voting citizens we should be careful to ensure this does not happen.

The Saturday was a very small part of the Focus Wales conference but hit home some big ideas and progressions key to all of our futures, and of course all-consuming issues that we are now becoming more and more aware of. It is still a young event and the organisers are young and those delegates who attend are all largely starting out in their careers. Around 210 artists and groups performed this year, 32 of which are international, and the event attracted 8000 visitors to the area, 12% of which were from overseas. The conferences burgeoning tech and digital platform will only accelerate those numbers in the coming years. FOCUS Wales seems set fair as a growing and very interesting conference.

<https://www.recordoftheday.com/>

**Digital Innovations Day at FOCUS Wales 2017 – Online Assets**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/esx8x83vbrmfosr/AACaK4xfyLLHuMAN2KuytX6wa?dl=0>