

## **Belfast Looks To The Future With a Fifth of Jobs Now in the Tech Sector**

- Historically associated with shipbuilding and textiles, Belfast has become a vibrant tech hub with 20% of the working population employed within the tech economy.
- Tech Nation's Bright Tech Future Tour stops at Belfast on September 30 bringing together entrepreneurs, policymakers and key players in the local digital ecosystem to celebrate the wealth of available tech talent
- The rapid growth of tech sector jobs in Belfast illustrates how all regions of the UK are benefiting from the growth of the sector
- 16,853 jobs were advertised in Belfast's digital tech economy in 2018 and the sector had turnover of £875million in 2017
- Tech Nation is working with the Department of Digital, Media, Culture and Sport's Digital Economy Council to launch the Bright Tech Future awards and calling on businesses in Belfast to nominate their team members for an award

### **Belfast, 30 September:**

Historically associated with shipbuilding, textiles and aerospace, the economy of Belfast is being radically transformed by an expanding digital sector that is creating thousands of new, high-value tech sector jobs. A fifth of the city's working population is now employed in the digital tech sector and Tech Nation will bring its nationwide [Bright Tech Futures](#) tour to Northern Ireland's capital today to discuss ways to nurture the digital skills base with local entrepreneurs and investors.

### **The Belfast Experience**

Research by Tech Nation into digital tech jobs advertised across the country in 2018 showed that Belfast's digital tech sector had almost 17,000 vacancies over the year. The [Bright Tech Future Jobs and Skills](#) report shows that Belfast's thriving digital tech sector currently employs 60,041 people, or around a fifth of the city's workforce. Those working in the sector also enjoy significantly higher-than-average remuneration. The median average for tech sector salaries in the city comes in at £40,000 compared to £34,000 across all sectors. For developers, in particular, the report shows that Belfast is the best place to live in the whole of the UK when living cost information is compared to salaries.

As Belfast's experience demonstrates, the benefits of innovation economy growth are being enjoyed in every region - not just in well-publicised hubs, such as London, Oxford, Cambridge and Bristol.

Higher than average salaries in the digital sector salaries reflect not only the premium placed on tech skills but also growing demand. Annual Business Survey figures reveal that between 2011 and 2016 there was a 143% rise in digital business births in Belfast. And while startup companies are the main driver for tech sector job growth, there is also demand for staff from more traditional companies that are undergoing digital transformation.

## **Belfast's Ecosystem**

As things stand, the majority of the Belfast cluster's digital businesses are startups but they are already having an important economic impact on Northern Ireland's economy. According to the Business Structure Database, Digital tech business generated a collective turnover of £875 million, breaking down to a figure £98,000 per employee. There were 97 digital tech businesses founded in the city in 2016, the last year for which figures were available.

Belfast's new generation of technology businesses and entrepreneurs are being supported by a range of initiatives, started by the public and private sector. In addition to the province's two universities - Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University - Northern Ireland is home to a number of programs created to directly support digital innovation. These include the government-sponsored Immersive Technology Catapult and innovation labs and co-working spaces, such as the Pixel Mill, and the Catalyst Springboard. Meanwhile, Barclays has set up an Eagle Lab innovation centre in Belfast and Ulster Bank runs an entrepreneur accelerator.

## **The Bright Tech Futures**

The figures on Belfast's tech sector are published as Tech Nation, the UK network for ambitious tech entrepreneurs, and the Digital Economy Council visit the city on 30 September as part of a national series of roundtable discussions. The talent and skills challenges and opportunities facing the tech sector in Belfast will be considered at this event by local companies, investors, university representatives and other ecosystem participants.

The Bright Tech Future discussion will be hosted at Belfast's Ormeau Baths on September 30, 2019. Tech Nation's Head of Insights, George Windsor and Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, will look at the facts behind Belfast's digital tech sector and lead a discussion on how that talent pool can be grown in line with ever-changing demand for specific skills.

The aim of the roundtable, one of a tour of eight cities across the UK, is to meet with regional tech leaders to discuss the opportunities in the area's tech ecosystem.

One key theme of the day will be the importance of the unsung talent that all successful digital businesses rely on. When technology businesses are written about, it is, quite naturally, the founders who take centre stage and the parts played by key members of staff, such as lead developers go unreported.

Tech Nation's Bright Tech Futures Awards - launched in collaboration with the [Digital Economy Council](#) and the Ministry for [Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#) - is encouraging businesses to nominate key members of staff for recognition under the scheme. To find out more about the awards and to nominate up to three team members, go to this [awards website](#).

**Digital Secretary, Nicky Morgan, said:** "Belfast has established itself as a leading tech hub in the UK, employing over 60,000 people in well-paid, highly skilled jobs."

"I'm thrilled that the Bright Tech Futures tour is bringing together so many of the region's experts to discuss how we can help further strengthen the UK's reputation as a leading player in the global technology sector.

"I also urge Belfast chief executives and founders to nominate their staff for the inaugural Tech Nation Bright Tech Future Awards."

**Joe Boyle, co-founder and CEO of SaltDNA, said:** "Belfast's digital economy is growing rapidly but that continued growth is dependent on our ability to nurture talent locally and also attract skilled people from elsewhere in the UK and beyond. The good news is that Northern Ireland has a lot to offer in terms of quality of life and standard of living and we're seeing that in our ability to retain great people."

**George Windsor, Head of Insights at Tech Nation, said:** "What is apparent from our Bright Tech Futures report is that the digital sector is transforming the UK economy. That's true in London, Oxford, Cambridge and Bristol and it's also true in Northern Ireland. Belfast is a city often associated with traditional industries but today one in five workers are employed in tech and that number is growing. The city's digital tech sector may have started with back office and customer-focussed work but it is rapidly becoming home to fast-growing startups and scaling businesses that have emerged from the vibrant ecosystem."

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