

MEDIA RELEASE

Renaissance Southend Ltd

For Immediate Release

Southend set to be focus for digital technology in the UK

Southend is ready to take the next step in a process that could set the town apart from the rest of the country as a nationwide centre for digital technology, a focus for excellence designed to promote and develop innovations and expertise which have already transformed the business world, education, the arts and the community.

The concept for a new Digital Exploration Centre within Southend, which would be the only one of its type anywhere in the country, was unveiled for consultation at a special Forum held at the Cliffs Pavilion, Westcliff, held on January 28th.

More than 100 representatives from the business world, local interest groups, Southend Borough Council and education sectors, had been invited to attend the Forum organised by Renaissance Southend, to see first hand the advances in digital technology and the benefits it could bring to the town.

Should the ideas receive approval and support, the Centre will form a major part of the regeneration proposals for the town centre, by Renaissance Southend, and when completed will provide a physical location expected to attract interest for its services from across the country – bringing with it additional investment, job and educational opportunities and wealth creation.

The scheme, has taken nearly two years to reach this stage after being first proposed by Stephen Hetherington, chairman of HQ Theatres, operators of the Cliffs Pavilion and Palace Theatre. After initial research and consultation, his idea, to form an institution that would bring together the most innovative commercial, artistic and academic work in the field of digital technology, is now closer to becoming reality.

“Stephen’s idea was based on a similar concept launched by Ars Electronica in Austria, 10 years ago. The organisation was originally formed to be a major economic regenerator which has been very successful and would act as a model for Southend should everything go ahead,” said Theo Steel, chairman of Renaissance Southend. “We believe it would be a massive asset for the town but the Forum will help shape what the next step should be.”

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“Ars Electronica will be at the Forum, one of eight digitally based interest groups and organisations who will be demonstrating the advances in this type of technology and the potential benefits this type of expertise could bring to the town.”

Other groups showing modules at the Forum include The University of Essex, Essex Business School, Entrepreneurship Group; Olympus Key Med, Robotics from the University of Tokyo, Land Design whose work includes projects with Google Earth; Southend based artists Harwood, Wright and Yokokoji and Roll7, who have developed “socially responsible” video games.

All these groups are heavily involved in the world of digital technology either in design, robotics, the arts, education and business and will demonstrate these advances on screen and be available to answer all questions.

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