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**Report to:** Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board (LEP Board)

**Date:** 20 September 2018

**Subject:** **Strategic Partnership with Digital Catapult**

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## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide LEP Board with the opportunity to enter into a strategic partnership with Digital Catapult.

## 2. Information

- 2.1 The Catapult Network was established by Innovate UK as a key way to support UK innovation in businesses. They are a series of physical centres (10 across the UK) where the best of the UKs businesses, scientists and engineers work side by side on late stage research and development, transforming potential ideas into new products and services to generate economic growth. Each centre has a particular focus (Energy systems, Cell and Gene Therapy, Digital etc.), and their geographic location highlights that areas particular strengths.
- 2.2. The Digital Catapult is based in Kings Cross (DC Central), however as part of an ambition to extend their reach across the UK a competitive call was issued in July 2014, for localities to bid to develop regional nodes (hubs) to work alongside the London Centres in developing projects.
- 2.3. Building on the then recent success of securing the DHEZ from the Governments University Enterprise Zones competition, a Yorkshire consortium came forward and was successful in applying to become one of 4 nodes across the country (DigiCat Yorks). The consortium was led by the University of Bradford (aligned with the DHEZ) with the universities of Huddersfield, Leeds and York, and both the York, North York and East Riding LEP and the Leeds City Region LEP taking a place on the Partnership Board. The focus of the hub was around Digital Health and Digital Manufacturing and was based at DHEZ Bradford until March 2018.
- 2.4 Given the natural end of the current contact in March this year, there is an opportunity to rethink the relationship that the LEP has with DC Central. For

example, Manchester recently signed a Strategic Partnership with DC which is a more equitable partnership arrangement based upon the principle of working together where it makes sense to do and is mutually beneficial.

- 2.5 This is a timely opportunity particularly in light of the emerging Digital Framework where we are setting out, for the first time, our ambitions and plans for growing the digital economy and taking control of the direction of travel.
- 2.6 The MOU will be a high level signal of intent to work collaboratively between DC and partners across LCR. Once agreed, a detailed action plan will sit behind this, setting out detailed opportunities and activities.
- 2.7 The Strategic Partnership will have two overarching objectives: to drive impact within the region through a coherent programme, connecting local and national assets and; to ensure opportunities available nationally are accessed and utilised by local ecosystems. Potential areas to focus on include:
  - Things Connected: an initiative to support UK businesses using alternative network technologies. It is a free-to-use network for the experimenting and prototyping of new Internet of Things (IoT) products and services that can benefit from the unique features of a LoRaWAN network (allowing low-powered devices to communicate with Internet-connected applications over long range wireless connections)
  - Connected Manufacturing: accelerating the number of trailblazer companies working with advanced digital technologies in UK manufacturing.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in signing a MoU with DC, however there may be project specific opportunities for the organisation and its partners at a later stage.

### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications in signing this MoU.

### **5. Staffing Implications**

- 5.1 There are no staffing implications in signing this MoU

### **6. External Consultees**

- 6.1 The MoU has been discussed with the original Partnership Board involved in DHEZ. Partners are content that the existing arrangement cease and a new more strategic relationship develop.

**7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 That the LEP Board supports the principle of a joint MoU with DC and delegates the sign off to the LEP Chair.

**8. Background Documents**

- 8.1 None.

**9. Appendices**

- 9.1 None.