

Speech: Audience of the Future Launch

I am delighted to be here at Unit 6, a showcase of the UK's world leading contemporary art. Contemporary art is at the cutting edge. Its practitioners are always innovating and engaging people in new ways. So it is fitting that we're here today to launch the 'Audience of the Future' demonstrators, which will be doing the same.

Imagine being inside the world of a Shakespeare play, or in a video game as professional players battle it out for millions of dollars, or immersed in a national museum, solving a detective narrative involving dinosaurs and robots with fellow virtual museum-goers.

These are only some of the experiences that will be afforded to everyone by immersive technology. The number of possibilities is only set to grow with the rate of technological change and our creative expertise.

It is estimated that by 2023 the global immersive technology market will be worth between \$95 billion and \$105 billion. In the UK, we have around 1,000 companies specialising in immersive, generating £660 million in sales. I have a feeling these predictions will turn out to be underestimates.

With our world-class creative businesses, researchers and technologists, and our expertise in arts, design, and computer science, Government has seen the opportunity for the UK to establish itself as the world's most innovative economy.

The Industrial Strategy includes a range of measures to improve our ability to turn new ideas into commercial products – including investing £725m in new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund programmes.

The Creative Industries Sector Deal was announced in March 2018 and leverages £72 million of this funding to support creative innovation – with a further £50 million being committed by industry.

The Audience of the Future Demonstrators programme is a key part of this Deal, backed by £16 million of Government Industrial Strategy Challenge Funding and £6 million from industry.

The programme will bring together globally renowned intellectual property, storytellers and technology companies to explore and pioneer cutting-edge immersive experiences.

Today, I'm delighted announce the winning Demonstrators for three areas which UKRI have identified as having major opportunities to grow new audiences through immersive technology:

In Performance, the Demonstrator will be led by the Royal Shakespeare Company and involve 15 specialist immersive organisations from theatre, music, video production, gaming and research.

They will explore what it means to perform live, and use emerging technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality.

Using devices such as mobile phones, extended reality headsets and streams into live performance environments, or even in the home, audiences will experience live performance like never before.

In the field of Visitor Experience, the demonstrator will be a pioneering collaboration led by Factory 42 and involving the National History Museum and the Science Museum that will bring dinosaurs and robots to life by placing audiences in new worlds and giving them the ability to interact with them.

Two multi-sensory and interactive worlds will be created in the iconic rooms of the Natural History Museum and the Science Museum, combining mixed reality technology and immersive theatre.

Finally, the Sports Entertainment Demonstrator will focus on esports – which has the fastest growing global live sports audience. The consortium will include ESL, the largest esports content producer in the world, as well as leading academics and innovators across immersive technologies, data-driven content production and broadcast.

This demonstrator will produce a new platform called Weavr to leverage the data-rich environment of esports and transform how the hundreds of millions of remote esports viewers can use virtual to reality to experience esports. Further down the line, Weavr could even change how we play physical sports.

So I would like to offer my congratulations to the winning Demonstrators. I have every confidence that you will build incredible experiences that will change the way we engage with art, theatre, sports and more.

One of the greatest privileges of the job I do is getting to experience the cutting edge. The experiences are truly transformative, and the more people we can bring them to, the faster we will build the market and the faster we will build more world-leading businesses.

I am thrilled that we here in the UK are able to lead the world on immersive experiences. I'm excited to see what you all do.