

## **Press Release**

**30 October 2017**

### **Birmingham innovation centre builds up head of STEAM**

Construction work on the first phase of Birmingham City University's new creative innovation centre commences today (Monday 30 October).

The £3.5 million project known as [STEAMhouse](#) will include the refurbishment of a former car dealership in Birmingham's Digbeth area to house the new centre and maker space. By connecting Arts into STEM subject areas (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), STEAMhouse will provide support to 200 sole traders, start-ups and local businesses with access to expertise and finance for growth.

The refurbishment is being carried out by contractors [Paragon Interiors Group](#) and will open a test-bed for ideas next year, running until September 2019. It is a partnership arrangement with Birmingham arts organisation [Eastside Projects](#) that aims to bring Arts in line with STEM subjects, encouraging a closer way of working across disciplines and industry sectors.

The initiative will inform a later, second phase of the STEAMhouse project – which has already received £14 million from the Government in the 2016 Budget – and will see the development of incubation and office spaces, teaching facilities, co-working and maker spaces, and artists' studios.

Professor Julian Beer, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Birmingham City University, said:

"Our STEAMhouse project will optimise the potential to create jobs, skills, knowledge and alliances between businesses, academics, artists and citizens like never before.

"We are delighted that work is now under way with the first stage of STEAMhouse. We have a great team in place and a fantastic free programme of support for businesses, including research collaborations with our academics, to make every interaction a success."

Due to open on Digbeth High Street in early 2018, STEAMhouse's pilot phase will bring together academics, entrepreneurs, designers, makers, future talent and organisations to foster greater innovation, develop new products, and support economic growth with a programme of business support. It will house substantial new fabrication facilities with equipment and staffing to support production and making.

Ruth Claxton, STEAMhouse Creative Director and Eastside Projects Associate Director, said:

“We have been able to create really fantastic production facilities within the STEAMhouse maker space. With a range of tools and equipment in digital, wood, metal and print, as well as a team of talented technicians who are able to offer professional advice, we are confident that we have created a fantastic new facility which will transform the way that people are able to develop products and prototype new ideas.”

Funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Arts Council England, STEAMhouse will drive innovation and research to create business solutions that fuel long-term economic growth.

STEAMhouse supports the growth sectors of health and life sciences, low carbon, creative and digital technologies and advanced manufacturing across the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) region, in turn, aiding the development of the Government’s Midlands Engine.

Clayton Shaw, STEAMhouse Programme Manager, said:

“There is a growing trend recognising the value of art and the impact it can make when combined with digital technology, engineering and the sciences. We look forward to working across the STEAM disciplines and connecting businesses with the University to apply this new way of working for longer term benefits across the GBSLEP region, as well as nationally and internationally.”

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Issued by Birmingham City University, Press Office.

Tel: 0121 331 6738, Email: [press@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:press@bcu.ac.uk)