

BIG



SOUTH LONDON

CELEBRATING THE IMPACT OF BIG SOUTH LONDON

A SOUTH LONDON SUCCESS STORY

CROYDON
www.croydon.gov.uk



 LONDON BOROUGH OF
MERTON

 LONDON BOROUGH OF
RICHMOND UPON THAMES



A SOUTH LONDON SUCCESS STORY

BIG South London, funded by the City of London Strategic Investment Pot, was launched by local authorities within the South London Partnership area in 2021 during the COVID pandemic in recognition that businesses in the region needed support to return to pre-pandemic levels of economic activity.

The aim was to enable businesses and the charity sector to tap into the wealth of expertise and facilities available through South London's universities and further education colleges to develop new products and services, open up new avenues for growth, and create higher-value jobs. We also planned to create a new, flexible, affordable workspace in each borough we serve (Croydon, Kingston Upon Thames, Merton, Richmond Upon Thames and Sutton).

Three years on, we can report that our ambitions have been realised, and we have delivered over 7,000 sqm of commercial floor space across ten workspaces - well exceeding our target. We have supported over 700 businesses and created over 100 new business and higher education collaborations. And in delivering all of this, we have supported the creation of over 800 new jobs and 80 new products or services.

Of course, there have been challenges along the way. The pandemic delayed the delivery of the workspaces, but interestingly, it also helped create demand for these co-working spaces. It irrevocably changed how we work, with hybrid working remaining mainstream post-pandemic. Co-working spaces now play an important role in this new working landscape by providing flexible, affordable ways for people to work whilst also giving our High Streets a welcomed boost.

Building on the success of BIG South London has helped open doors to new funding sources for our partners. London South Bank University is now leading a consortium of BIG South London University partners on the Business, Innovation & Growth Programme, funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Once again, this programme is creating opportunities for businesses to bring academic expertise into their organisations to develop innovative new products, services, and growth models.

Research commissioned by BIG South London identified five industry clusters essential to the growth of South London's economy: health & care, construction and the built environment, creative and digital industries, life and health

sciences and financial and professional services. Since the research, an emerging green retrofit cluster within our area has also been identified, which has been underpinned by the launch of the Retrofit Skills Centre. These sectors will continue to grow, and we have world-leading centres right here on our doorstep - such as the London Cancer Hub in Sutton and the Croydon Creative Enterprise Zone.

The headline figures are impressive but only tell part of the story. From improving support for South London's homeless and reducing the fashion industry's environmental footprint, to developing new innovative med-tech products, we're hugely proud of the wide range of societal, environmental, and economic impacts that BIG South London has catalysed. This brochure aims to bring some of these success stories to life with first-hand accounts from business founders and charity leaders who have participated in the programmes.

This wouldn't be possible without the vision and commitment of the local authorities that make up the South London Partnership and the willingness of key South London stakeholders and businesses to fully engage in the programme. That engagement has encouraged businesses and employers to increasingly see the South London Partnership area as the 'go to' place to allow innovation to thrive - let's now continue the momentum. Engage with the BIG Growth Programme, get involved in the South London Retrofit Skills Challenge to decarbonise 635k properties in South London and most importantly, keep championing business in South London.

Matthew Hamilton
Director, South
London Partnership



IMPACT IN NUMBERS

Between January 2021 and December 2023, BIG South London has:



Supported over
700
South London
businesses and
organisations



Leveraged more than
£9m
of additional investment
into Research &
Development activities



Supported the
creation of
**over
800**
new jobs



Developed over
80
new products
and services



Created
7,000
sqm
of new commercial
workspace



Supported
**over
100**
collaborations
between universities
& business

“ BIG has acted as a catalyst in bringing academics and innovators alongside businesses, entrepreneurs, local authorities and communities to provide opportunities and support to stimulate knowledge-based economic growth in South London. It has helped focus minds and activity on those key areas of potential growth through the networks, projects and relationships it has fostered.”

Dr Robin Hutchinson,
Director of The Community Brain



£30m+
additional net GVA created

WORKSPACES

THE CREATIVE DIGITAL LAB CROYDON



Facilities

- Visual production studio
- Audio production studio
- Post-production studio
- Macbook training suite
- The Green room - breakout room
- Virtual board meeting room

What businesses does The Creative Digital Lab Croydon support?

- Education Providers
- Creative Freelancers
- Business Owners
- Production Companies
- Game Designers
- Digitally Curious

“ The Lab is still taking roots but we have a few initiatives happening and have partnered with UAL to deliver an UNREAL ENGINE course this May.

We have also partnered with London Learning Consortium to deliver a Creative Digital Roadshow across the South London boroughs by sharing assets and knowledge further afield to increase skills. We are incredibly proud of the incredible technology we now have here and how it will help local people to access new career paths in the months and years ahead.”

Saffron Saunders, CEO of Startup Croydon

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MITCHAM CLUSTER

Wimbletech, Wimbledon Library, Canons House and Vestry Hall



Facilities

- Workspace desk hire
- Access to business events
- Collaboration networks
- IT facilities and Internet
- Podcast studio

What businesses does Creative Mitcham support?

- Community Groups
- SME's Voluntary, Social and Community (VSC) organisations

“ We are delighted, that in collaboration through the South London Partnership and our neighbouring boroughs we have been able to provide a cluster of five affordable workspaces across Merton.

Through the BIG programme, we now have a range of facilities for our businesses and residents to access and engage with to enhance their knowledge and utilise as a network for entrepreneurship and growth.”

Gurpreet Mudhar, Business & Economy Officer

Address and contact:

Canons House, Madeira Road, Mitcham, CR4 4HD
Tel: 020 8274 5330

Vestry Hall, 336-338 London Road, Mitcham CR4 3UD
Tel: 020 8274 5200

The Workary at Mitcham Library, 157 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 2YR
Tel: 020 8123 1193

Wimbletech, Wimbledon Library, 35 Wimbledon Hill Road, SW19 7NB
Tel: 020 8123 1193

KINGSTON RIVERSIDE WORKSPACE



Facilities

- Meeting rooms
- Networking space
- Workshops
- Outdoor work space
- Café

What businesses does Kingston Riverside workspace support?

- Freelancers
- Networking groups and communities
- Entrepreneurs
- Start-ups

“ We've been overwhelmed by the response from the local community and level of interest to join as founder members, and the number of people who have signed up and participated with our Startup Club programmes.

Over the next decade, we hope that the site will become a beacon for creative professionals and ambitious founders who are creating endless opportunities for local residents and graduates.”

Gareth Jones, Founder & CEO, Townsq

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THE VAULT MORDEN



Facilities

- Workspace Desk Hire
- Room Hire
- Kitchen Hire
- Day and Night time event space offer
- Radio Station Studio ran by Flex FM
- IT facilities and Internet

What businesses does The Vault Morden support?

- Content creators
- Freelance creatives
- Start-ups and SMEs in the creative space

“The Vault, Morden is a fantastic example of high quality expertise and equipment being available to businesses, entrepreneurs and investors right on a South London high street.”

Krissi Bookye, Programme Coordinator, South London Knowledge Exchange

Address:
102-110 London Road
Morden
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enquiries@thevaultmorden.com

Website:
thevaultmorden.com

ORU SUTTON



Facilities

- Hot-desk co-working
- Fixed-desk co-working
- Private Office space
- Wellbeing quarter with classes and treatments
- Trinco Café

What businesses does Oru, Sutton support?

- Podcast producers
- Creative agencies
- Chiropractors
- Lifestyle coaches
- Photographers

“ We want to create workspaces where businesses can succeed more easily, attract, and retain the best talent the market has to offer – so the wellness aspect of what we do is important. Yoga and meditation classes are offered at accessible rates and are available to the community as well. We will only repurpose existing buildings and use materials that will have as little impact on the environment as possible. It's the way forward, and we hope other workspace providers will start to see that businesses and communities are demanding ethical and well thought out spaces where people can work flexibly.”

Vibushan Thurukumar, Co-Founder and CEO, ORU

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PATCH TWICKENHAM: 42 YORK STREET



Facilities

- Django's cafe
- Library of things
- Flexible use space
- Formal meeting room
- Podcast Studio
- Permanent workspaces for residents
- Private offices

What businesses does Patch, Twickenham support?

- Tech for ESGs
- Creatives
- Photographers/ Filmographers
- Property Managers
- Change Management Professionals
- Professional Business Coaches
- Council-related, e.g. WorkMatch
- Media industries

“ It's been fantastic to see so many people coming together at Patch in Twickenham. In the short amount of time we have been open, we've hosted a huge variety of local groups and organisations, ranging from cycling to cinema clubs, and from sewing workshops to events for startups. Looking forward, our aim is for Patch to continue developing as a meaningful local space where people can enjoy an exceptional workday close to home, discover new ideas, learn new skills, and collaborate with more people in their community.”

Paloma Strelitz, Head of Product and Creative Director

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REACT INNOVATION CENTRE

Research, Engage, Academia, Community and Technology



Facilities

- Enterprise area
- Labs and state of the art equipment facilities
- SME Innovation & demonstration space
- Exclusive 5G VPN installation
- Mammowave equipment

What businesses does REACT Innovation Centre support?

- Large industry
- Local schools
- Colleges
- Local businesses
- Councils



LSBU's new REACT Innovation Centre in Croydon is a commitment to both the local community and greater London. By working with internationally leading technology companies and local partners who have intrinsic community knowledge, we are proud to have created an intelligence driven, evolving and immersive infrastructure, which can support ground-breaking research, create and attract local talent, and ultimately provide an excellent co-creation and deployment experience for better outcomes across the chosen areas. We want the centre to lead and support the mindful adoption of technology in healthcare across the UK and internationally."

Professor Sandra Dudley, Professor of Communication Systems at the School of Engineering

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Website:
lsbu.ac.uk/research/
centres-groups/react-
innovation-centre

PROGRAMMES, INDUSTRY NETWORKS & FUNDING

Since 2021, we've been on a mission to unite businesses, communities, and people in South London with the wealth of resources, expertise, and facilities available at the universities and further education colleges in our region.

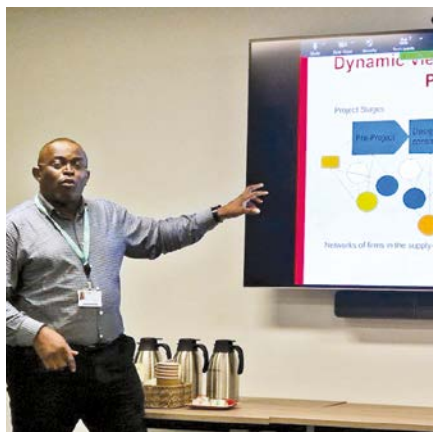
From world-class academic researchers to promising students – our educational institutes are a hotbed of talent and ideas. For businesses looking to innovate – be that developing a new product, service, or process – they can bring a fresh perspective and new expertise that wouldn't be available in-house. With innovation comes growth and the creation of new jobs.

To catalyse these partnerships, BIG South London has provided a range of free business support programmes, industry networks and funding opportunities, many of which have led to longer-term research collaborations, student consultancies and projects.

Take a look back through our past programmes and find out how they have been an integral part of participants' journeys to business success.

PROGRAMMES

INNOVATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME



Delivered by

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LSBU

Kingston
University
London



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

108

businesses supported

20

new business & higher education collaborations created

20

new products & services created

10

new jobs created

Innovation can take many forms. It doesn't have to be disruptive or revolutionary. It can be small changes such as evolving internal processes or workflows, rethinking a business model, or tweaking a product range to increase productivity and profitability and embed sustainability.

The Innovation Support Programme was packed with content and workshops to embed innovation into every fibre of the businesses it supported. Topics included funding and investment readiness, strategies for growth, branding, pitching, and embedding an innovation culture. Businesses were also supported to engage with a local university partner.

“The Programme really helped us to refine what we're doing, think about our daily activities and how we promote the company. We learned a lot from the experts and from the other businesses. It was very inclusive; sharing our experience with others was really helpful, and a very positive experience. The Funding, Finance and Investment Readiness Workshop was particularly useful and covered a lot of detail in a short space of time.”

Emily Curtis, Co-Founder, The Exercise Clinic

INTEGRATE



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LSBU



Crystalisr

38

businesses supported

12

new business & higher education collaborations created

12

new products & services created

12

new jobs created

Integrate was designed to help South London SMEs position themselves to win more business through public and private sector tenders and contracts. It aimed to help businesses understand and create a bespoke supply chain value proposition, understand supply chain resilience, develop a brand proposition and pricing strategy and ultimately understand all elements of the supply chain.

Workshops included supply chain readiness, tender and bid writing, social value and identifying market opportunities.

“ The collaboration between BIG, south London SMEs, and the students of LSBU Business School has been transformative. Leveraging the Community Wealth Building framework, we have not only met the expectations of Anchor Institutions but have also fostered a vibrant learning environment. This partnership has unlocked immense potential, catalysing mutual growth and deepening knowledge. Together, we are crafting a thriving and sustainable future.”

Valerio Ficcidenti, Associate Professor, LSBU

DESIGN LAB



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ual: university of the arts london

Kingston University London



University of Roehampton London

300

people involved

20

new business & higher education collaborations created

5

new products & services created

20

new jobs created

A series of 12 half-day collaborative, creative and interactive events which brought together a mix of participants from across our South London communities to develop solutions for a particular societal or environmental challenge. The challenges included employment and skills, the climate emergency, revitalising our high streets, improving business resilience and productivity, health and well-being and reducing inequalities

“ Being a CEO and running a creative business in a post-lockdown, hybrid world can be a lonely journey, where solutions must be found independently while displaying unique flair and originality. The time spent with such interesting and intelligent people was so important, as these conversations have really helped me to deepen the quality of the workshops, studio experiences and exhibitions that we offer.”

Saba Khan, Founder of ArtEase (Health and Wellbeing Design Lab participant)

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES



Delivered by



80
businesses
across all events

8
new business &
higher education
collaborations
created

13
new products &
services created

10
new jobs
created

Unlocking Opportunities was a strategic initiative to stimulate innovation-led economic growth within South London. A series of one-day collaborative workshops helped businesses unlock innovations for revenue growth, market expansion, product development and customer engagement.

The workshop gave businesses/entrepreneurs the time and space to step back and work on their businesses while collaborating with like-minded organisations in the local area. Studio Zao took them through tried and tested exercises to define a new product, service or growth opportunity, as well as providing a structured and repeatable framework for innovation.

“ One of the best things about the workshop has been it really helps you with that framework and structure to get a lot of the ideas that you might already have in your head, but also by having the ability to speak to other founders who have similar problems or who can help fill in the gaps for you by looking at your business from a fresh perspective is super useful as well.”

Workshop participant

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS INTERNSHIP



Delivered by



30
researchers &
research students
supported

The Postgraduate Researchers Internship was designed to help Early Career Researchers and PhD research students to boost their entrepreneurial skills and innovative thinking and connect with industry experts and business owners.

It provided the skills and training needed to help turn academic knowledge into innovation and collaboration that can be applied to business, connecting students and businesses more effectively. It also enabled the University of Roehampton to make academic research more relevant to the local business environment.

“ It was incredibly exciting building this programme and engaging with the PGR community on how their disciplinary expertise has helped them curate a unique set of useful employment skills which are transferable beyond their research specialism - it was just a matter of seeing how to optimise this. The surprise was also how well businesses received and benefited from the internship, it has wet their appetite for research engagement with our highest degree students.”

Melissa Jogie

INDUSTRY NETWORKS

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES NETWORK



Delivered by

**Kingston
University**
London

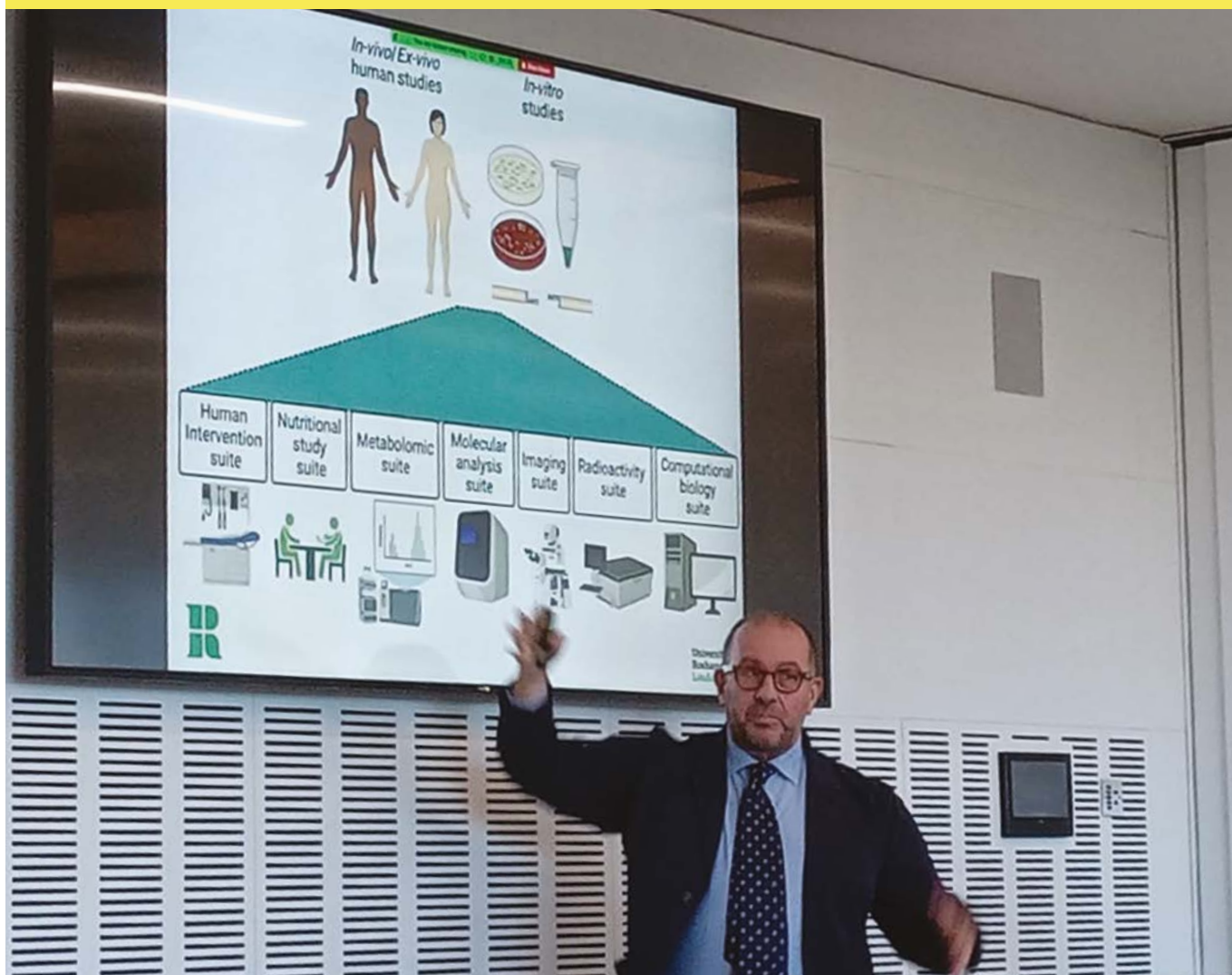
The Creative Industries Network was a dynamic network of practitioners and researchers from across the creative sector in South London. It brought together the sector to share common challenges, opportunities, and best practices.

A dedicated series of workshops included topics such as digital transformation, business resilience, skills, and talent development.

“A network of creatives is already in itself such a valuable thing! Everyone, from tutors to students in workshops and presentations were supportive, open-minded, truly interested in understanding, then suggesting, solutions for individual challenges faced by creatives.”

Siglint Kessler, SK Design

HEALTH INNOVATION NETWORK



Delivered by



The Health Innovation Network brought together a network of experts, practitioners and researchers from across the health sector in South London to share common challenges, opportunities, and best practices such as regulatory guidance, funding and marketing.

A dedicated series of workshops included building a brand, social media marketing, understanding innovation processes and types of funding.

“ I joined BIG South London's Health Innovation Network to connect with health academics in South London to explore possibilities for a research project. One of the challenges we have is that our technology represents such a step change in the therapeutic setting that not many researchers and therapists are willing to trial it. Our discussions are ongoing, but we're really looking for those early adopters willing to take it to an ethics committee and start working with us.”

Kevin Flanagan, co-founder of Co-Optis

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

INNOVATION VOUCHER



Delivered by



20

businesses received funding

25

new business & higher education collaborations created

28

new products & services created

7

new jobs created

The Innovation Voucher Scheme helped businesses and third-sector organisations access expertise, research, student talent and specialist facilities at BIG South London's partner universities and further education colleges.

By teaming up with academic partners, businesses developed their innovation capabilities to create new products, services and business models.

“ BIG South London's Innovation Voucher Scheme gave us the opportunity to tap into the wealth of knowledge of Kingston University students and staff, and develop our original idea into a final front-end design ready to be executed. The insights from potential customers that the team captured initially were key to understanding how valuable they found the product's features. The outcome is an application structure that will really improve the user experience of the Zen Indoor Food Garden.”

Blanca Peña-Méndez, Founder and CEO, Our Lady of Greens

HOT HOUSE RESEARCH INNOVATION FUNDING



Delivered by



51

businesses received funding

7

new business & higher education collaborations created

12

new products & services created

7

new jobs created

The BIG Hot-House Research Innovation Fund helped South London-based businesses and third-sector organisations undertake research and development activities to grow through partnerships with academic institutions.

It offered businesses the opportunity to access the world-class knowledge and expertise of one of BIG South London's partner universities and further education colleges, to bring in new skills and the latest academic thinking to deliver a specific, strategic innovation project.



At NURVV, we have been delighted with the opportunity that BIG South London support has provided to develop our collaboration with researchers in the School of Sport, Allied Health and Performance Science at St Mary's University. As a start-up company, we have some great ideas and technology, but also benefit greatly from access to the wider expertise and facilities available at the University."

Dr Grant Trewartha, Head of Biomechanics at NURVV Run

BRINGING TOGETHER PEOPLE ACROSS SOUTH LONDON

Tackling everything from skills and training and the future of work to reimagining South London's High Streets and Net Zero, BIG South London has united business, public sector, and academic communities at a series of large-scale events and summits.

REIMAGINING SOUTH LONDON'S HIGH STREETS & TOWNSCAPES CONFERENCE

On 11th May 2022, BIG South London brought together key stakeholders to develop an ambitious, post-pandemic vision for the future of South London's High Streets.

Over 100 delegates spanning the public sector, further and higher education plus retail, construction, design, and architecture sectors came together to develop creative solutions to answer one BIG question: how can we create quality places in South London that we want to live, work, play and learn in?

Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon, commented: *"Consumer habits have changed, and the council has an important role to play in helping our fantastic local businesses meet the new opportunities this presents. We want to harness ideas and innovation to create an environment that is ripe for investment and a destination people want to visit. I look forward to working with all our local businesses and partners to achieve this."*

BUSINESS, INNOVATION & GROWTH SUMMIT 2022

On 29th November 2022, over 200 entrepreneurs, academics and policymakers came together at Kingston University's Town House for the first Business, Innovation & Growth Summit.

Skills, training, higher education, the future of work, business clusters and prosperity were all on the agenda, as the summit aimed to examine how the ecosystem for innovation can be developed across South London.

Speaking on universities' role in their communities, Diana Beech, Chief Executive, London Higher, said: *"Universities and further education colleges are true lifebuoys for their localities. Yes, they do fantastic teaching and research, but they also consciously attempt to help the communities they serve. For example, climate-conscious activity to help make places greener, providing legal support to disadvantaged groups and building cultural relations with minority communities. Universities keep their communities afloat."*

BUSINESS, INNOVATION & GROWTH SUMMIT 2023

On 10th November at The Exchange, Twickenham, our second Summit highlighted the need for all parties to come together to support South London's journey towards Net Zero.

Themed around South London's green transition, the event attracted an audience of over 200 delegates from across business, central and local government, higher education and the third sector. It provided a packed agenda of keynotes, panel discussions and breakout sessions, which aimed to inspire discussion, forward momentum, and define action around climate change.

Keynote speaker Jace Tyrell, CEO of Opportunity London, commented: *"Our mission at Opportunity London is to drive business development and investment into London's real estate, regeneration, infrastructure, and energy. We want capital deployed across all 32 London Boroughs to fund new green infrastructure, EV charging, and retrofitting of old buildings at scale and pace. We know that if London has a long-term investment in low carbon, transport, and the new economies and living infrastructure, it will have better outcomes for communities and thriving business here in South London."*

LOOKING FORWARDS...

BUSINESS INNOVATION & GROWTH PROGRAMME

The success of BIG South London has helped unlock new funding for our partners. London South Bank University is now leading the Business, Innovation & Growth Programme, funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, so there's still plenty of support available for businesses and charities in South London.

Taking place across 2024, this exciting new programme is broken down into three cohorts themed around the growth areas of digital health & wellbeing, circular economy, and low carbon.

Each will provide a series of informative online webinars aiming to ignite your business growth and develop your products and services, plus the opportunity to access world-leading expertise at LSBU to evaluate existing products and develop prototypes for new ones.

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Find out more

INNOVATION VOUCHERS

Also funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the University of Arts, London and the University of Roehampton are offering funding of up to £5,000 to support businesses in accessing their expertise and facilities to develop new ideas, initiatives, products or services and help you or your business develop in new creative ways.

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Find out more



Find out more

RETROFIT SKILLS CENTRE

As demand to decarbonise homes across South London increases, the South London Partnership has launched an online hub to support the construction workforce to access training and qualifications in retrofit.

The Retrofit Skills Centre is a one-stop shop for retrofit training and qualifications and aims to support the goal of making 635,000 South London properties more energy-efficient over the next decade.

Commenting on the launch, Polly Persechino, Head of Economy, Skills and Employment at the South London Partnership said: "The scale of the retrofit opportunity in South London is huge, estimated at £17bn, and we want to make sure sole traders and construction businesses put themselves at a competitive advantage by being ready to harness it."

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BIG SOUTH LONDON

THE BIG SOUTH LONDON PARTNERSHIP



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