

Creative Exchange opens today



New workspaces for creative businesses will be opened formally in Leith later today.

Creative Exchange Leith provides 80 workspaces for individuals, groups or businesses, and aims to create a new hub for creative talent in the city.

Based in the former Corn Exchange building, a local landmark located close to some of Edinburgh's leading creative agencies, the hub has been renovated to Grade A standard with an award-winning design.

All members can access a wide range of facilities and support including super-fast broadband, space for meetings, networking and exhibitions. Plus there are business support services ranging from start-up advice through to mentoring and help securing investment.

Councillor Frank Ross, Economy Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "What Creative Exchange offers is flexible and affordable workspace combined with the support that both new starts and existing businesses need. This is another major milestone in our strategy for jobs and I'm delighted that the Council has been able to work with others to make this happen – not just those who have funded it directly but many other private and public organisations that have given their very welcome backing."

Iain Munro, Director of Creative Development at [Creative Scotland](#), said: "Edinburgh needs affordable flexible creative spaces, with super-fast broadband, to support emerging and established creative entrepreneurs. This development is a welcome new opportunity to create a vibrant hub for networking, collaboration and showcasing of the Creative

Industries in the capital city.”

Mandy Exley, Principal of [Edinburgh College](#), said: “Edinburgh College is committed to excellence and innovation and the Creative Exchange provides an exciting opportunity for new and emerging talent to develop their businesses in a supported environment. We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with the City of Edinburgh and partners to support new business start-ups which contribute to the economic development of the region.”

✘ Costs range from just £80 a month for a weekend member, through to £320 a month for a ‘super member’ with full access. Users can also opt for a day rate. Rent, rates, heating and lighting are all included.

Funding for the project has come from the City of Edinburgh Council, Creative Scotland and Edinburgh College. Edinburgh College has also agreed to fund around six students every year to take entrepreneurial residency at Creative Exchange Leith, receiving guidance and mentoring to start a new business.

The Creative Exchange’s first tenants moved in on 10 June 2013 and five businesses are now operating from there including [Iglu Studio](#), Border Crossing Media, [Voluntary Arts Scotland](#), [SME Professional](#) and [Designers on the Run](#).

The Edinburgh Reporter spoke to Dan Jeffs one of the partners in [Iglu Studio](#) which he set up with partner Paul Morsley. Dan explained why the space was perfect for their business:-” We are an urban design company and provide services to large landowners and housebuilders

“We started our business only about six months ago now and so we are still very new. That said we had expectations which we have exceeded and that made us think about office accommodation. Looking on the market price are quite good for tenants at the moment, but the ability to have a rolling contract which reflects the way our business runs was

attractive.

“We can pay the charges month by month. There are loads of different options – they charge you for a weekday, week evening price and a weekend price. We have taken the week day and week evenings which makes it £270 for each of us per month.

“We may only be six months old but we have ambitions to expand, so we have taken two desks upstairs in the building. We need quite a large space for two of us to work on some of the projects with large project teams. Creative Exchange have classy looking meeting rooms which enable us to make an impression as well.

“Over the last six months we have worked with mobile phones. There is no phone system at the moment

“The fast broadband set up is also key. We use Dropbox so that we can then work off the same file system, so good fast broadband is central and has been perfect for us so far.

“Also having a receptionist is really good. When we go out to the market and advertise that we have a new phone number there will be real people there to take messages.

“The space is a cathedral of creativity and we get a buzz from the energy of others using the space.”

Esther Stringer from [Border Crossing Media](#) said:-“When we first walked into the Creative Exchange we were struck by how beautiful and inspiring the building is. That combined with the potential to collaborate with other creative digital companies meant that this was too good an opportunity to pass up. What’s more it is also incredibly good value for money and we have actually reduced our overheads by making this move.

“Our aim is to collaborate with the other members of the Exchange to build better digital products and services. We

wish to grow our business over the coming years and see the development of these relationships as key to achieving this.

Given the skill sets of the other members we are incredibly excited at the prospect of conceiving, testing and releasing new products and services for both private and public sector clients together.”

Another tenant, [John Duncan](#), is a freelance filmmaker. He said:-“I decided to move in as there is going to be such a wide variety of businesses and individuals. I’ve worked out of various office space in Edinburgh where you’ll find it’s usually an established business renting out a few desks to freelancers so you tend to feel a bit of an outsider – I have a good feeling about Creative Exchange! I think I was initially persuaded by the space itself, for me I think the environment you work in is so important.”

Potential tenants and others interested in Creative Exchange Leith can get more information and follow its progress through the Website www.creativeexchangeleith.com Or follow them on Twitter @CExchange