

## THE HIGH TECH LEGACY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Publication City AM  
Date 5 June 2017

# The high tech legacy of the Olympic Games

**Tracey Boles**  
visits Here East to  
see how the giant  
tech campus is  
taking shape

**I**N LONDON'S Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, on a former wasteland site once home to a mountain of discarded fridges, a gigantic digital and creative campus called Here East is coming to life.

Already two-thirds let, Here East houses BT Sport, the Infinity data centre, dance collective Studio Wayne McGregor, and the arms of two universities: UCL and Loughborough University London.

They will soon be joined by a car manufacturer and Plexal, an innovation centre whose opening on 12 June will kick off London Tech Week.

Plexal is a joint venture between ENTIQ (the accelerator specialists behind Level39), DV4 (Delancey's evergreen investment fund), and Claire Cockerton who was founding CEO of fintech firm Innovate Finance.

The organisations at Here East may seem like strange bedfellows but the tenants are being carefully curated under CEO Gavin Poole. He believes the "co-location" of the right universities, companies and innovators on the vast Here East site will generate ideas, contracts and jobs. "The idea is to curate and connect people in a cluster", he says. "Then knowledge is shared."

Near Stratford but based in Hackney, Here East started out as the broadcasting centre during the London 2012 Olympics, catering to the needs of 20,000 journalists. Once the games had finished, what was left were the remnants of the centre in a building so large that is longer than One Canada Square is tall. However, the empty shell had many things going for it including space, location and digital connectivity.

These factors attracted Poole and de-

veloper Delancey. They wanted to build on the legacy of the games and help create a new economic district in the capital as part of the regeneration

of Stratford. Twenty thousand homes are being built on the site's doorstep and the V&A and Sadler's Wells are moving in nearby. The opening of a leg of Crossrail this month is expected to deliver another boost to the area.

So far, around £100m has been ploughed into Here East, creating 1,500 jobs on site. That is set to rise to 3,000 by the end of the year and is expected to reach 5,500 by 2018.

Poole, an engineer and former RAF officer who used to run the Centre for Social Justice think tank, says innovations spawned by the campus will be "designed here but made in the UK". The Plexal innovation centre could also be rolled out to different locations around the country.

Ultimately, the halo effect from the giant Here East incubator and accelerator could create up to 10,000 jobs nationwide, 6,500 of which will be local. The boost to GDP is expected to run to hundreds of millions of pounds.

It is hoped the hipster restaurants and bars that have been invited to open up where the main building meets the Lee Canal will encourage the desired networking, creativity and knowledge transfer. The artists in nearby Hackney Wick, which has 700 studios, are expected to provide further inspiration.

Some of the building's Cathedral-sized space, 24m from floor to ceiling, will be given over to events as well as

to more studios. The mayoral hustings and a Samsung launch were both held on site.

The wasteland is long gone, replaced by gardens planted with lavender. There is a nod to the area's industrial past in the artwork that will be used to decorate 21 artist studios being constructed along one edge of Here East. This legacy, which stretches back 150

years, includes the makers of wire-rimmed glasses, matchbox cars, and Trebor refresher sweets.

Here East's future identity will likely be determined by the startups that spin out of the universities on the campus. UCL will join Loughborough

on site this September with a robotics institute. Poole says the current buzzwords on site are smart cities, connected vehicles, AI, robotics and virtual reality. The researchers from both universities are all at post graduate level. How people interact with AI and robotics is set to be one area of focus and collaboration.

Brexit will be challenging for Here East in Poole's view, but he believes that London can remain successful through ties with other cities, both in Europe and within the UK.

"City to city relations will reduce the impact. We need to forge them early," he explains. But he warns the UK will need to find ways of keeping the talent pipeline flowing.

Will he stay once the massive regeneration project is fully up and running? "Yes," he says firmly. "That is when the fun starts."

## THE HIGH TECH LEGACY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Publication City AM  
Date 5 June 2017

**The idea is to curate and connect people in a cluster**



Gavin Poole carefully chooses tenants



Here East is as long as One Canada Square is high. Right: A robot created for Here East by John Nolan Studio