

Place and Purpose

Paul Durrant OBE

So we're here to talk about place and purpose, can I just see who was in the session this morning? Most of you, brilliant. What an amazing session, I think we're going to struggle to, to top that, we really are. But in a way, there were some neat segues airing in that discussion into us talking about place and purpose. And I want to make this a kind of more of a kind of roundtable discussion than than anything. I'm not going to stand here and bash away with a great long presentation to you but I did think, maybe let's split the time, if you're happy with us talking about place first, and then purpose, and then maybe just see what happens when we join those two things up at the end if that's OK.

Paul Durrant OBE

So to get us talking about place and energised and thinking about some of the things that are important in the context of place and games, I was going to tell you a bit of a story about the Dundee cluster, and how that had come about. Because hopefully that'll be interesting, some of you will know the the story and the background. But the reason that I'm going through this is not really to do some massive promotion of Dundee, it just happens to be the place where the UK games fund is located but we're a company registered in England and we serve the UK. But unlike a lot of other media and funding organisations, we are well outside London, which we find is beneficial. And the place element of that has actually been really important for us as a funding organisation. Because we really tapped into the local cluster and the local community and have been part of it for a long time. And that really does help us.

Paul Durrant OBE

So I just wanted to say a quick thank you to Cornwall games. And Katie, who's here today for helping and supporting this discussion today and contributing to it. And I think that we you know, we're gonna come back to this in terms of when we joined purpose and, and place, and seeing organisations like Cornwall Games come into being and start to engage with a community is something that's absolutely fabulous for us because we're a community interest company and everything we do is about serving our community. And when we see nodes of activity across the UK that we can engage with, it's really good. So big shout out to Cornwall Games. And just say, you know, we run the UK games fund and transfuser programmes, you may if you're up with the news have seen that we've had a fantastic announcement this morning. We've got 8 million pounds of funding for three years, which will help us do a lot more. It's been some time coming to an actual announcement and been quite frustrating along the way but we are now at the opportunity where we can clearly say we're going forward with our programmes more of the same over the next few years.

Paul Durrant OBE

I think that's part of the context for the discussion today is actually will help me understand this whole kind of place and purpose issue, particularly where we think about games that might have a purpose beyond the sole entertainment and economic impact cases. That's our sole driver, and UK game fund and transfuser are very much driven by economic impact but we are keen to see what else we can do.

And in some ways that taps into some of the comments that were being made in that discussion this morning about the challenges of going and getting funding, we've always tried to make ourselves an organisation that isn't just, you know, filling in a form. And we do a lot of guidance. For our applicants. We have a kind of lesser stage of application which is called our pitch development programme, which has allowed some applicants to come to us and we work with them just with a small amount of money while they develop their idea a little bit further. So we are trying to reach out to people but we've got a lot more to do. And so things like this discussion and coming out meeting people really, really helps. So thanks a lot to all of you for for being here today to contribute to that. The UK games fund gives prototype funding to early stage games developers and transfuser supports earlier stage graduate teams in their final year of university and we have a transfuser team, who have been funded by us here today, which is fantastic.

Paul Durrant OBE

So really, just let me just talk about the Dundee story for a while. Because I think there are things in that timeline that all of us will need to look for, in the place that we're at, in terms of change agents, and seminal moments where the Critical Mass is there so that good things happen, essentially. And our story goes right back into the, to the 80s. And microsystems courses, what was the Dundee Institute of Technology, then developed into games programming courses, as some early games development companies came into being in the 90s, in dandy, some of those stories are actually around, there's a really great YouTube video about the early GTA, I don't know if anyone seen that at all. But it's just recently out there. And really interesting story that tells some of that background. And there's a whole lot more in terms of the serendipitous nature of the fact that the Spectrum was being built in Dundee. But the really interesting thing was that, what you had there, then start, there are some similar things to to the way that Cornwall and Falmouth is developing in terms of this kind of centre and hub for, for talent, people beginning to sort of focus around on that, and a few smaller developers come into being some of them beginning to be quite successful. And I think there's some really interesting signs in that in terms of place to kind of say, okay, you know, where does this need to go now? Now, it should be said that what we're seeing on this timeline is happening in a very urban setting, and not in a dispersed setting. And I think the cluster in its broadest sense, is is a covers quite a big area in Cornwall, and there might be many clusters within it from what I've seen. So I just give that caveat in terms of maybe the difference between this. And what we might see in terms of place here.

Paul Durrant OBE

Essentially, there were these kind of four phases, the emergence phase and the transition phase, things became established and now really, it's a mature cluster. And that maturity and really the slide hopefully speaks for itself in terms of the things that were happening, as really sort of moved into the sense where, you know, Dundee attracted the V&A to come and locate there. In a sense, Cornwall was already got its with the Eden Project, I guess. But but when you see those wider cultural references, being attracted to a location, because of things like the emerging games cluster and the success, then I think it is, you know, the beginnings of a sign of maturity. And I think, you know, what we've seen is that great situation where there are enough companies, for someone who's moving to the city, to be in games development, to feel comfortable about it not being too big a risk. Because if that job doesn't work out, and they've moved, house, or flat or whatever, then here they are, you know, in a location where there are plenty of other employers, this was really just when we were when you talk about

locational choice, and you think, where you're going to establish your company. And you tend to look at these sorts of things as the kind of the choice and the and the influences. And one of the exercises I did early on with the UK games fund was actually I spent half my time working in London and half in Dundee, because I wanted to sort of test and sense check, you know, is this really the right place to be and I used a kind of a scoring system based on that, you know, to kind of come up with that. And of course, you know, scoring is somewhat subjective and arbitrary, but really, what you can see there is, a lot of that was driven by, really by quality of life as much as anything, whilst still having reasonable enough connections, albeit not as good as London. We had the quality of life And there was enough there to attract people to be there for my team to want to stay there. And for us to attract other people into the team. So it was clear that we could serve the UK from there.

Paul Durrant OBE

And it was more than that. This is where the urban bit comes in, and where it's sort of challenging for, for Cornwall in the sense that I don't know if any of you've heard of the concept of the 20 Minute neighbourhood, but this is one of the things that people were quite interested in, during lockdown on the pandemic about the fact that, you know, people had a better quality of life where they live when they lived somewhere where they had this kind of 20 minute access to all of these sort of services and facilities, and it was that gave them quality of life. When we look at the urban location of Dundee's cluster, it's really a kind of a 20 minute games cluster, because all of those things really are actually mainly within walking distance of of each other. I can cycle to work and sort of wave a cheery hello to a few CEOs of games companies along the way. And that's really quite a nice thing, but hard to hard to have. We're lucky to have our own Eden Project coming. I'm lucky enough for that to be my office. And this the Eden Project. So really interesting coming here today and knowing that before too long, we might be hosting you folks in a in a game event here. How can organisations like the UK games fund, when they interact with Cornwall, do things better to make sure that we're engaging with people is great, because I've kind of picked up already how, you know, lots of people here are connected. But equally, it's that classic case where you kind of see that some people don't really know each other either, you know that yet they're in the same games cluster. So does anyone want to come in with a with a comment or thoughts about the games cluster, I am going to have to pass this around to make sure that we capture your audio.

Audience

Well, for myself, I started transitioning really from being an artist and a performer into developing my app development gaming skills. I did the MA at Falmouth in creative app development. And the only reason I was able to do that is because it was far more flexible, which is 100% online. And that's what I wanted to share really, which has been transformative for Cornwall is that because of COVID lots of things went online. So I was lucky enough, that's a fairly new programme that wasn't connected to COVID, that was fairly new, but it gave me the opportunity, I'd just had a baby and I have PTSD as well, which makes environmental stimulus difficult for me, especially at that stage. I've moved on now but that was incredible for me, from a mental health perspective, and from being a single mum, to give that incredible opportunity, I probably wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. That was just followed up by the hit of COVID, which suddenly made everyone put all their stuff online and how that impacted me was that SETSquared Exeter, their tech accelerator, opened up their doors to Cornwall because they said, Oh, now everything's online. [Previously] you had to go into the science park in Exeter. But

now they opened it up so it was all online. So suddenly they opened it up to Cornwall. So then I was able to get tech accelerator support. And there we don't have a Silicon Valley in Cornwall, we have an incredible movement of young companies and new companies but we don't really have an accelerator. We have the Falmouth Launchpad, which I think you get the do their accelerator as part of your MSc in entrepreneurship but that's not open to people like me who just really want to run their own game studio. And so having that tech Accelerator has been absolutely transformative because I did actually apply to the UK games fund while I was on the on the MA and the feedback I got was that the business model wasn't really clear. And that's one of the reasons I chose to do the accelerator because that's exactly what they do is they work on the business side of things. And so getting that support from them has then you know, my ideas haven't changed my values, my missions, they haven't changed. But getting that support where I stopped to learn the language of bid writing. I learned the language of applying for funding has just been transformative because as a result of the accelerator, the tech accelerator, I was then able to be part of the creative UKs accelerator who specifically opened up for Cornwall, you couldn't apply to the creative UK games accelerator if you're from London I don't I don't think or preference was given over companies outside of London. And because I've the entrepreneur residents that supported me through the tech accelerator was SETsquared I was able to do a successful bid, and I can tell you the first bid that I wrote would not have been successful. So it was just having that support of being able to reach out and say, you know, so I think putting things online, for example, my I live in Bodmin. My journey is an hour to the university and my journey to the Science Park in Exeter, which I've both got access to because the accelerators I'm on is another hour in the other direction. So I around Bodmin, I think they're, they're building a STEM centre centre now. But I'm quite lucky in terms of those those the quality of life, I'm 10 minutes from Bodmin Moor, and I've got like, cultural things going on in the town now, because there's been a lot of investment. Yeah, and there's cafes, and I've got five supermarkets within five minutes of me.

Paul Durrant OBE

You've got your 20 Minute neighbourhood on your doorstep, but you can engage more widely.

I haven't really got the games cluster 20 minute neighbourhood and the only way you make that for me is by bringing it all online. Yeah. Because of those travel distances because of the logistics of that. Yeah. And because of the numbers of people because it strikes me I went for residency in pervasive Media Studio, it wasn't gonna work out in the end. But when I went there, it was, it was amazing. I spent 15 years in Brighton, and you walk into the town and there is I mean, there are people that were in that space was incredible. And you go down to the air studio, which they set up in Falmouth, when they first set that up, it was like tumbleweed, you know, because it's not in the middle of a town, that pervasive Media Centre is in the centre of the city, and get these amazing people coming. Yeah. So that is a problem, which I not sure how to solve. I've got some ideas but it is a problem that needs solving and the only way I think to start tackling that is by taking everything online and having breakout rooms and people getting to meet each other.

Paul Durrant OBE

Well, I think that's good. And, you know, we've taken, you know, we working really hard to get our kind of online interviewing and not requiring people to attend in person for our kind of pitching and

interviewing and that's been working. Matt, I don't want to pick on you. But just because you you did, Matt had to do a version of transfuser online and I don't know if you can tell us something about that kind of experience, because it was different to anything else in the in that you were having to kind of work from.

Audience (Matt)

So from my perspective, doing transfers online was probably the best decision for not only for COVID. Also, I think, for transfuser and the games fund, because there was no way that our team was going to be able to all come to London for pitching, it just wasn't going to happen just because we'd just finished university so spoilers, students poor. And then we had the whole, some people having to move home, and then some people having to try and stay in Cornwall like we did for our Masters. But the pitching stage of that was really helpful because I did all the prep in the world, but still being able to do the pitch online and having the cue notes in front of me, essentially, to make sure I do the pitch. It was just so much easier to do and it was less frightening, which I know you need to prep people for the real world where you aren't me pitching in front of people. That is a roadblock you have to eventually but being able to do online certainly from a graduate team perspective is a lot easier.

Audience (Matt)

Falmouth University in terms of game courses, we also had to do game pitches for our third year project. Thankfully, it was the same project so we were in a much better position. I think some other teams were doing online was such a good decision seriously, like being able to be a little calmer, have your notes ready on and it doesn't look super obvious that you're looking at your notes when you have your camera position in the right angle. So glad I got that right. But yeah, basically, I pretty much agree with everything you said there needs to be a push for online until there is a fiscal infrastructure, that kind of stuff. And there's two ways you can go about that. One is more accommodation, which has been a big problem from only a student perspective also for someone who wants to stay here long term, that's gonna be really hard for me, purely because I'm not made of money. And a lot of the accommodation here is very expensive. So considering the environmental impact that has, there's a leeway of okay, so how do you make sure we can have accommodation for people to move down here and be a part of that tech sector, also not completely destroying the environment with it. And then I guess the other way would be thinking about is like, actually define where that sector is, because you've got the launchpad building and you've got the thing that's going to Bodmin and there's one in Exeter is stuff that's happening Truro, which is really good. If you find the way to link them that should be online, but there needs to be at least somewhere in person that's not too far away from everywhere, but it is Cornwall. Where people can sort of go to do Game Dev or anything like that, or just having somewhere where you can find a middle ground and rent studio space. Because a lot of people are not doing that anymore, just because in terms of game dev, you can put the rent cost of your studio in the budget. But people are still doing that. Because remote learning remote working is a little more accessible.

Audience (Grant)

I've seen online has helped in terms of facilitation, especially in areas geographically fraught as Cornwall. But there's always a danger in putting everything that you lose that sense of place, which is what you're quite keen on. And I think there's obviously gonna be things that we should be able to do to

capture both. So the question is probably more broader question for the room. But what are the things that the the facilitators, the region? So the universities, the council's all of us together? What are the things that we need to be doing in order to create that sense of place, as well as accommodating a manager to get that balance?

Paul Durrant OBE

That's a really interesting question. Because I think, Katie, I think, going to say something, because as an outsider, one of the first things you think is, surely these things need to be really, really formally joined up. But anyway, sorry, over to Katie.

Audience (Katie)

There's this concept of like, a central location for a county. So basically, talking from Bude where's basically, there's no transport whatsoever, and to get here via bus would have taken me a day and a half or something ridiculous. So I'm finding actually, and of course, now there's a whole massive trend of work from home. And actually, that's good for the environment, etc. And I'm seeing more of this idea of offices, like Central Offices being almost like social locations, and like event-y spaces instead. Which feels more like, I can see a high concept of having somewhere on your high street, like, effectively, like a working coffee shop, right? Where you can go to and socialise with local creators within your town, and then have a more central location somewhere like Truro, that is also still in the High Street, where people can feel like they'll want to go to if there's like a special event going on. But that's still connected. So it could still be streamed online, and people could still come in. And then that's maybe, because there's still you still want like people like UKI, you still want people like BAFTA, you still want those people to come down here, and be physically here to show the fact that we exist. Like, you know, we're not just online, we're present somewhere. So you still want them to physically come here.

Paul Durrant OBE

Maybe even you know, in terms of, you know, when people do an event here, or in one of the centres, exactly as you say, they're able to kind of distribute that content just within the the Cornwall sort of macro cluster so that you can have little gatherings of people who haven't had to travel too far, but can still engage in and share. Sorry, Lindsay, will you just translate it?

Audience (Lindsay)

Yeah. Hi, Lindsay, from real ideas. Um, yeah, I think that's absolutely right, that sort of distributed approach. And I mean, what's interesting in Cornwall is, there are, you know, reusing things like libraries. So we're involved with the discard library at the moment, I know, into Bodmin and what Fin's up to with the old library Bodmin. There's, there's lots of different spaces, which are sort of emerging across the county, where co-working or there's the potential for sort of meetups and people like software Cornwall have done that pretty successfully over the years. So I think that idea that people could come together in different locations, but you're right, some sort of platform, which meant that it could all be easily accessed. So I suppose it's sort of what we're doing here is we're, you know, we're contributing to an online festival, but from a physical location. So how we get to do that in a more effective way. And in a way, which also potentially connects in the universities and other things. Because that I don't know whether anybody else has experience of it, but my sense was that certainly for a while, software, Cornwall was working quite effectively like that, that they had a couple of regular

meetups ones, one East, one West. And they were getting good traction with people coming but there was also a platform that you could access to find out about it all quite easily. So it's whether there are already models that we could sort of bring a bit of several models together to find a way of doing it. You know, there's definitely an onus for those of us who have those facilities or for the universities to also get better. I'm actually creating access because, you know, again, it's one of those things, we talk a lot about it, but how are we actually having the conversation and the dialogue? To make sure that we're hearing exactly like you're saying, what are those key things that need to be in place for it to work for you. And we can't just invent that it's got to be a co created process.

Paul Durrant OBE

It's really interesting to me from outside, because, you know, these are real kind of physical infrastructure problems. But one of the, you know, when when I think about the strengths of, of the clusters that I've been involved in, so much of it has come from the people, and then networks, and that sort of interaction between people. But I think it's such a crucial thing that you really need to find a way of it happening, even if it's a number of it happening at micro levels. And then, you know, the some sort of macro distribution or whatever, because it is about, you know, and it always has been really in in the Dundee cluster particularly about the people. And the great thing is that we've you know, we've got founders made good, who are now investors. And, you know, just I think, yes, it was yesterday, we announced the chroma ventures investment and workshops. So that was a Scottish company we'd funded and it's a Scottish investor, who's a founder made good, you know, coming back in, and that is more of a sign of maturity. But I think you do need to find those ways for that to happen. And it's very difficult to substitute virtual, for that kind of physical interaction of serendipitously sitting down at someone who might be able to help you with funding at a little table somewhere and quickly showing them what you're doing, which is so often, what takes you to the next level.

Audience (Lindsay)

Do you think it's coming? I mean, yeah, I don't, I'd say that, you know, the fact that even this, lots of us are talking to each other. It is definitely much further ahead. Like you're saying that. Yes. So I suppose just taking the message from this morning of, yeah, there's a long way to go. Yes. But it's not all doom and gloom. I

Audience

just wanted to give you an example. Yeah, I was saying in terms of people, just quickly. Caitlin, who is entrepreneur in residence for the SETSquared pro accelerator programme, had founded tech girls, which is about getting girls and Cornwall into tech and STEM and gaming. And Shona who's actually an entrepreneur in residence for Falmouth Launchpad accelerator. Basically, she came here from, I think, from London, or she came from outside outside of Cornwall, and she said, where are my people? And Caitlin said, Well, we're here but should we just do get everyone in the same room, and they had no idea how it was going to be received. And the first meet, we've had two meets now tech women connect it's called. And we had a first meet at Falmouth, there was 80, women there, all working in tech. And it was just, I mean, I think I cried about three times during the evening, it was so moving, to have everyone in that space together, and everyone sharing and everyone being supported. And then I had like five or six women say if you want to talk to me about startup stuff, if you want to talk to me about funding, get in touch, let's connect. So it does start with the people. I think.

Audience

It's a very interesting discussion. So I just wanted to because when you said oh, there's a certain thing that you get when everyone's showing a physical connection which you can't get online. So I just wanted to interrogate that a bit more. So you know, I live in Cornwall now have done for about three years. But before that I lived in London for a long time, which, if you're making games, wow, it still is the best place in the UK, I think to make games because I was involved in so many different community events and things done by TIGA done by UKI done by ourselves as part of an indie community. So I was in that environment where it was just Oh, yeah, this person's got to deal with Sony, this person's got a game published, and it kind of sets you're not Oh, all of these things are possible if you're a small 1, 2, 3, 4 person team, you can do that. Of course, well, why can't I do that? I'm going to do that. So it kind of just puts you in an environment where things feel possible. So then I was thinking, okay, maybe Paul's right, maybe you need to be in that physical location. Because I remember all those meetups, I love them. I went back to develop this year for the first as many people did for the first time in a long time and it just felt so good to walk around bumping into old friends. But to push back on what you were saying and what I say myself, I'm still involved in so I'm involved with Katie slack group Cornwall Games, but also another one which was based off that London indie things, and we get new members that come through so I've only ever met them through video chats, I've never met them in person, but there's some similar effects going on. So one guy he's doing well to his game, he's quit his job because he's got all these pre-sales coming through and he's doing great on tiktok, he was teaching us all about his tikok marketing methods. And then another guy on the call was, Oh, tell me what you're doing so they have a private call. And he's trying to emulate that success now. So some similar things there in a virtual space, through video chats are happening that were happening in a physical space. So I just want to question, as has already been kind of pointed out, do we need the reliance on physical spaces as much as we think we do? Is it just that we're not using the right tools online? And actually, if we use better tools, so it's not just 100 people on a video call, and that doesn't make any sense. There's some other thing where you have little breakout pods where there's three people now you wander over? So it's somehow mirrors, we're all going to do after this and have little conversations. So I question the need for purely physical and, and suspect we can do much better online with a better use of tools. But really, all we need is familiarity of we're seeing the same faces, we're sharing things, we're open to giving each other help, and we do so freely.

Audience

I certainly agree with a lot of that. Let me just give one example from today, though, you know, in the sense that, in that, if this had been an online event, and certainly I think at one point, Charlotte correct me if I'm wrong, it there was talk of it being a virtual event, probably if if things hadn't improved, you know, and I was thinking, okay, great, well, fair enough, I'll interact with a virtual event from from a distance and fine, but not particularly looking forward to it. But because I was here, and you know, walking in this morning, with Gabby, who's next door, doing the other session from the BBC, working on, you know, some sustainability messaging associated with content. And, and chatting to her about things, was actually incredibly informative and useful. And it was pure serendipity that if she'd been running that, that bit from a distance, and I'd been running this from a distance, our paths wouldn't have crossed, I might have quickly looked to say, Who's that who else is on the programme? But that little bit

of serendipity of that quick chat wouldn't have happened. And, in a way, that's my segue into talking about purpose, if you wanted to, did you want to say anything?

Paul Durrant OBE

[Audience discussion, inaudible]

Paul Durrant OBE

It is, it is a useful thing, talking a little bit about purpose. And one of the, you know, the there's a selfish reason, as I was saying, for bringing that here today, but, but also, of course, it relates to the, to the broader theme here today about the environment because, you know, what better purpose than addressing some of the climate change challenges could games have. But for us at the Games fund, you know, we're driven primarily by economic measures. And if you think about Daisy earlier, reflecting that GVA story, to us all, that that very much is the thing that tends to drive public funding for content. Because, you know, and we have to make the narrative fit some time, but fortunately for us, we can now tell and give solid cases that are good stories around the fact that, you know, we supported hutch, in the early days, we support the coat sink, when they were a two person band and sensible object and companies that have brought hundreds of millions of dollars into the UK in terms of inward investment. And for an economist, that's a kind of a tick. But, you know, as we now as only today have got this new funding, and we look ahead. The last six years, we've had quite a few applications for games, you know, with a purpose, and very few of them have been funded. And the main reason for that has been the fact that we can't judge efficacy really, you know, someone comes without the basic thing is an application hypothesis. We want to build a game that's going to do this, give us the money and we can do it. And of course, the challenge for us is okay, it might be a really good team, you know, great background. If we were lucky, there might possibly be a scientist from the discipline related to the hypothesis, but quite rare that is. But really, there's nothing else. And there's very little in in terms of an evidence base that we can then say, in the same way that we'd make a business decision around the fact that we want to fund somebody because we can see they've got a track record, or they've almost made it with their first game, they shipped it, they delivered as planned, didn't quite make it, they've come back to us with a pitch that essentially says, This is what we've learned, this is where we're going. And we can kind of go, Okay, we get that, and we can fund it. That's very rarely the case with a with a game with a with a purpose.

Paul Durrant OBE

And just to give you an example of some of this, here's a here's a game that we did fund autonauts, not an education game. But the reason I'm I'm putting it up there is that there is some kind of evidence emerging, which is genuine kind of A and B testing that if autonauts had been pitching to us as an educational game, and they said, look, we've taken one of our early prototypes, we've exposed it to some kids in classroom in kind of A and B cohorts a bit like is described in that experiment. And we've managed to show that our game has been effective at teaching programming. And so we want to move the game on and, you know, take it as an educational tool into schools, that there is a kind of basic evidence base there. And so as we move into looking at how we might fund games with a purpose, if we had pictures that we're able to do that with some kind of early version, or some sort of exposition around the hypothesis, that's being you know, someone had said, we're building alternates and describe the game, and then went on to say, and we think it can have this other impact, then at least it

makes it a lot easier. And the reason for me putting that up there, as a provocation is really just to say, you know, it's possible, sometimes with relatively modest resources to come up with something that creates some kind of evidence base. And I'm sure that people in teaching and education and pedagogy design would, would read that and challenge all sorts of facets about experiment design and, and things. But nevertheless, for us as a funder, it's, it's a, it's a basis.

Paul Durrant OBE

I mean, a game that we did fun with the purpose was it was a company called conglomerate who were making a game to teach children with cystic fibrosis and breathing exercises. And they were able to come to us with a kind of some evidence from clinicians, that they put an early version of the game in clinicians hands, they'd used it, and they'd had some impact. So for us, great, you know, really good. But how do we move to that, because you get in this chicken and egg situation where it would be quite reasonable for someone to say, we'd love to do that but until we have the prototype funding to build the game, we can't do it. But there are other, here's a game we didn't fund but it came from storm cloud, who we did fund for other things. And they were actually funded by NatWest. And I, and I just put it up there to show really one other dimension to this in terms of other impacts. You know, in the islands saver is a game which talks a lot of it's a little bit about money management, which is where the NatWest sponsorship connection came. But actually, they styled it very much around the notion of reducing plastic waste. And there's a lot in there about plastic pollution, and it was incredibly popular has been downloaded 3 million times as I think.

Paul Durrant OBE

And I think what the reason I put that up there was just because I thought, you know, when I looked around until okay, if storm cloud had come to us with that idea, what would we have done about it? You know, one of the interesting things there is that Mumsnet endorsement as well, because I don't think that's given lightly and it's not purely commercially driven. And I think there are those other impacts, which are, which have to do with acceptance by an audience because in the island saver context, it would be totally unreasonable for us to say, Okay, now give us the evidence base that that plastic waste in the UK is going to be reduced by, you know, so many million tonnes or whatever. Because no one's going to be able to, there's no A and B tests, you can you can run to that. But there is something that you can do to say, you know, here's the engagement from our audience around that idea. And they like it and are engaging with it. And because of, because we can show you that, maybe it'll have some impact.

Audience

This was a game that was proposed to you. But in the end, you didn't want to fund it? If you finally one of the other things, Was that correct?

Paul Durrant OBE

No, actually, it was a game that was a game that they developed independently as a piece of contract work, and they just happen to be a funded company in our community. And because of that, they've been very happy to, to share the information with us and with the rest of the community about the experience.

Audience

If they had come to you with it, what would you I mean, obviously, you've got a whole group of people, it's not you discerning, it's a whole bunch of people deciding, can you and can you try and imagine would it have been a yes or a no? At that point, they'd had zero downloads, the game didn't exist

Paul Durrant OBE

I think they would have had to pitch it as a commercial game, that was going to get some traction. And if it had been a paid-for game, obviously, it wouldn't have had that level of downloads. But you know, one would hope that with the fact they've got some track record, they'd be able to demonstrate some evidence of commercial impact. But I think that's probably the only basis we would have funded on as things stand.

Audience

It would have been a tricky, it would have been hard for you to say yes. As they said I was going to be a free download and this than the other.

Paul Durrant OBE

But if they, you know, imagine that they'd said to us, you know, we've taken an early version of the game, and we've socialised it around on Mumsnet. And there's quite a lot of interest in the environmental aspects of it, maybe if they can show that as real evidence and they had really done the market work on it, that could have tipped the balance for it. And that's really why I put it up, to say it isn't always possible to have an A and B, you know, we kind of recognise that it's not a perfect world. But where I wanted to take the discussion was really, any other comments or thinking about this challenge? Because it was one of the things that came out of the discussion purely by chance. I think today, we heard how, you know, the frustration that the panellists felt with their funding applications and that kind of, you know, requirement to do that systemic thing and to show the GVA where, where they just wanted to do the good thing. We want to get as a funder, we want to get into a position where we can do that good thing and have those wider impacts alongside business impact.

Audience (Katie)

So this, again, the topic came up, just over conversation with lunch was actually Cornwall's Council's idea of reevaluating, take a step back away from basically the capitalist society where we need to maximise profit, and try and work out what other ways we can just judge success and different ways that creatives judge success. And especially if we're talking about things like Hey, okay, so we've spent a bunch of money, which is a negative thing, but actually, we have stopped all plastic pollution. That's very a positive thing. So I guess, when it comes to UK games fund, like, it would be great to have discussions on the possibility of, I guess, yeah, like things like this, where we can talk about what whatever measures of success there are. And then, especially if we come to you with partners, I guess that we found individually. So for example, we're working with the NHS and like that they, you know, they're funding us to make a game, but they want to find some extra funding, and it's the NHS, but I wouldn't have come to the UK games fund for that. Because it's like, no serious games type of thing. And so, but obviously, there's an opportunity there.

Paul Durrant OBE

But the fortunate thing there is you've been, you have put your money where your mouth is, in a sense and done that early work with the NHS. That was good in a sense that they did that on trust and on track record. And good that they were able to do that. But but it hasn't been the type of thing that we can really do on on trust. And, I don't see it being something we can do purely on trust. But I think you're right about, you know, one of the things I've said to the AHRC a number of times is, you know, you're sitting there as a Research Council and it would be great to see how you, you had some very modest pots of funding, that people trying to make a difference with digital content, could access so that you could, you know, put some scientific rigour around some efficacy testing, and do it alongside us.

Audience (Matt)

Yeah. So with the UK Games Fund and the tansfuser project, there are three teams that one, Mira media is one of them then there was Race to the Arctic by Episod Studio, they were pretty good. And this is, that's one of the examples of gamers like that game, while it is a game is more than that, it is an educational tool. And I remember when the environmental pathway got announced and I think you should use that as an opening to either some kind of serious game, or the idea of having something that actually is the aim of it is may not may not necessarily be making a lot of money. But again, we can actually change perception and stuff like they're winning loads of awards, because of the way that their game tackles climate change. So I think using that as clear evidence that you know, that if you fund games like that, or experiences like that, that you can get a good result of it. Like, you know, talking about enviromentalism as children, for example. I think, looking at Episod as the prime example. I think that should open up the pathway to more serious games, just purely because the way that is gamified to an extent, which isn't too in your face, but also has a really clear message. And because of the awards, you know that it's working.

Paul Durrant OBE

I think that's, that's important. I'm conscious of time. But I did just want to bring this back a little bit at the end. So, you know, there is a there is still a link between place and purpose, I think sometimes. And I think that may be where some of these challenges around the evidence base can come from a place related aspect of things. And it may be, you know, that, I don't know, to what extent your NHS interaction is local. So it's a kind of a, there's a place based element to it in a sense that its proximity that you wouldn't be dealing with the NHS, you know, in Scottish Health Trust or something like that. And for us, as a funder, I think one of the things that could be interesting is where we look at bringing place and purpose together in a way that there's some kind of driver locally, as well, that, you know, possibly is able to provide the the trust in the organisation for whatever reason, it might be that helps us to think, Okay, well, there's a partnership here which has the potential to deliver impact. So before I wrap up, I don't know if there's anything burning on that place and purpose theme that anyone wants to?

Audience

I'm from outside of the creative sector. I have the good fortune to work with a lot of climate scientists and good users, they very much recognise that they can tell us the science, and they need to engage with human factors expertise to help drive that change. And I'd really employ you guys in the creative sector, you do have a role in that, you are experts in human factors. While that may not be how you,

you often think of yourself, but certainly in the context of this morning's talk. I think the creative sector has a huge role to play in that behaviour change.

Paul Durrant OBE

Great, thanks. That's a really useful comment to end on. I just wanted to thank everybody for joining in and getting stuck in and participating. It's been really good. It's been a pleasure sitting here having this chat. And it's been a pleasure being down here anyway after that fabulous session this morning. Thanks to Charlotte for organising everything. Thanks to you all.