# Angels@Essex Annual Report 2020-21

A new platform for innovation in Essex

## Introducing Angels@Essex

### Stepping into local need for equity funding

Essex is fertile ground for new ideas and disruptive technology. Through the Knowledge Gateway project, the University of Essex had put in place everything that was needed to create a thriving ecosystem for innovative businesses. The only thing missing was a way to connect these innovators and entrepreneurs with the funding they needed to grow their businesses.

In 2019, the University of Essex was granted University Enterprise Zone status by Research England. As part of that project, an ambitious new crowdfunding initiative was conceived. By creating a virtual community of investors, we would help new businesses to access essential working capital.

A mere seven months later, we launched Angels@Essex, an invitation-only investment platform that links angel investors to entrepreneurs with innovative ideas.

“New ideas will be key to rebuilding our economy and Angels@Essex will nurture those ideas. We aspire to create a more sustainable future, which will create a healthier economy.” John Stenhouse, Business Support Manager, University Enterprise Zone

“Benefiting society through our research is part of the DNA of the University of Essex and we have been working hard to establish an even wider range of connections to business and the public sector over the past few years.” Dr Rob Singh Director of Research and Enterprise at the University of Essex

## Summary of Angels@Essex achievements

11 deals funded on the platform; £4.97m raised; a further 7 pipeline deals worth, £2.81m; 11 new products to market

### Invested on Angels@Essex 2020 - 2021

December: Funded - £0.644m, Committed - £2.33m

January: Funded - £1.31m, Committed– £2.33m

February: Funded - £3.44m, Committed - £2.43m

March: Funded - £3.44m, Committed - £2.43m

April: Funded - £4.97m, Committed - £2.81m

### Milestones

June 2019 - Innovation Centre opens on Knowledge Gateway

20 September 2019 - University of Essex designated University Enterprise Zone

30 October 2019 - UEZ team in place

4 March 2020 - Platform provider Delio commissioned

23 March 2020 - First COVID-19 lockdown

30 April 2020 - First 24 investors recruited

7 May 2020 - Angels@Essex launches

## The Model

### Innovative funding, business support and knowledge exchange

Angels@Essex is about more than just funding. The platform is backed by a sophisticated network of business support and knowledge exchange opportunities. When an entrepreneur connects with this network, there is always an opportunity to receive support. From the programme’s inception, the University Enterprise Zone team at Essex has worked to put this in place.

Running alongside the Angels@Essex platform, there is Space to Grow, a business support and webinar programme for start-ups. Space to Grow helps budding businesses get investment-ready by providing access to webinars and specialist one-to-one support.

### Our investment readiness support

One-on-one support from our Entrepreneurs in Residence -467 sessions.

Space to Grow Investment Readiness Webinars -49 sessions, 986 attendees

Opportunities to pitch for investment from the University Enterprise Zone fund - £133k awarded to seven opportunities

### A new approach to partnership

To supercharge innovation, you need to leverage all the available resources. Part of our vision was to work closely with the organisations already doing amazing work to support local businesses. A great example of this approach is our relationship with Innovate UK EDGE. In this collaboration, the signposting went both ways, which meant that businesses always had access to the right services at the right time in their journey. Angels@Essex referred 27 businesses to Innovate UK EDGE, many of which subsequently signed up for their support. And conversely, Innovate UK EDGE sent 11 businesses our way, and several of them made their way onto the platform looking for investment.

“In our first meeting together with the team, they said: ‘Do you have a pitch deck to show us?’ And I said, ‘What’s a pitch deck?’ Now we’re at the position where we’re receiving investment, which three or four months ago would have seemed impossible.” LimboTech Director Dave Norton, a motion capture innovator who won £45k of funding from the University Enterprise Zone

“We have worked closely with Angels@Essex since their launch. We delivered four well-attended webinars to the Space to Grow programme, generating 25 signed-up clients for our innovation and growth coaching and mentoring support. We also received a good number of direct referrals from the Angels@Essex team. Due to the natural fit between our services, we in turn referred a number of clients to Angels@Essex, such as LimboTech” Graham Coultas, Innovation and Programmes Director, Innovate UK EDGE East of England

### Connecting local businesses with world-leading research

Leveraging the University’s depth of knowledge, reputation for excellence, resources, and partnerships has been key to the success of Angels@Essex. The Angels@Essex team is based in the Innovation Centre on the Knowledge Gateway, a research and technology park at the heart of the University’s beautiful Colchester Campus.

## The Team

### Business Support manager

### John Stenhouse is a lifelong Fellow of the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs with many years’ experience of providing business support. He gained this experience in a professional capacity, as well as acting as a serial entrepreneur and investor himself. John developed the Angels@Essex equity investment platform, linking investors to innovative opportunities.

“Innovative businesses create more economic benefit and are the cornerstone of the UK’s future growth potential.”

### Business Support Co-ordinator

### Josh Clarke has experience starting up his own business and successfully pitching for private investment, as well as working on a range of collaborative projects. He has a strong understanding of the importance of building positive relationships with external stakeholders. His strong understanding of what appeals to investors allows him to bring particular value to this project.

“We have worked with businesses in a range of sectors; one thing they all have in common is their use of innovation to solve real-world problems.”

### Entrepreneur in Residence

### Nitin Patel is a General Management Executive and CEO with operational and commercial skills. He has experience working in a multinational business, having worked with General Motors in various capacities. He is now an independent consultant and lecturer on business transformation, with experience of change and scale-up in global corporations up to £100bn.

### “Through the Angels@Essex programme, I have been able to use my experience in establishing and running manufacturing businesses to help start-ups on their growth and investment journey.”

### Entrepreneur in Residence

William Millar was previously a business growth adviser within the New Anglia Growth Hub, with a special responsibility for innovation and digital support in Suffolk. Now, Will provides personal contact and face-to-face meetings with our clients to understand their growth plans and direct them to support that can help them achieve their aims.

“It has been a great experience working with the Angels@Essex programme, assisting lots of innovative local businesses to find investment.”

## Our partners

### Delio, Platform Provider

### “Delio has been supporting the University of Essex and Research England to develop an equity investment platform to support innovative seed enterprises in the University Enterprise Zone at Essex. We have been working alongside University staff to provide a unique service that embraces all the needs of their project. We’ve been really pleased to be able to assist with the growth plans for the Essex region and to encourage investment in technology of the future. We are looking forward to continuing our partnership with the University of Essex to support and help grow their ecosystem.” Bhumi Ladva, Senior Client Associate, Delio

### South East Local Enterprise Partnership

### “The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is one of 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships, established to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation across East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend, and Thurrock. Our area is the most significant economic gateway in the country. We have directly supported the University of Essex in the development of the Knowledge Gateway with £2m in funding for the building of the Innovation Centre and over £3m previously for Parkside Office Village.” Adam Bryan, Chief Executive Officer, South East Local Enterprise Partnership

### Confederation of British Industry

“Angels@Essex and the Space to Grow programme have demonstrated the need to raise funding for seed and early stage-equity finance. With exceptional ability, the University Enterprise Zone team have successfully brought investors and founders together in just one year to the benefit of the region and especially the local business economy. Having established a focal point for entrepreneurship and access to much-needed equity investment, the University continues to attract significant funding from around the globe.” Richard Tunnicliffe, Director, CBI East of England

## Celebrating success and looking to the future

The Angels@Essex platform is a centre of growth and resilience in turbulent times. Strategically employed funding from the University Enterprise Zone programme and the University of Essex has created huge benefits to the local economy. Local partnerships were key to unlocking innovative potential in the region. Even the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 pandemic only delayed the launch of the Angels@Essex platform by one week. In fact, the necessary shift to online delivery has increased the reach of Angels@Essex and the Investment Readiness programme.

Our relationship with the University of Essex is going from strength to strength. Plans for the future of Angels@Essex include supporting research into angel funding, and the role that social information plays in making investment decisions. The proposed research will enhance the Angels@Essex platform by revealing what motivates investors to support a project, while providing valuable insights to academics.

Further initiatives are in hand with collaborative third-party ventures, including high-tech and female-driven investments, fulfilling our policy of total inclusion. The future is bright for Angels@Essex. The initial two-year programme under University Enterprise Zone funding is reaching its end. Fortunately, our successes to date have attracted interest from local third parties which will allow us to maintain our momentum. The demand for this service is still growing.

### Platform stats April 2021

### Funded £4.97m

### Committed £2.81m

### 34 opportunities

### 93 investors

### Still to come

### £9.38m waiting to be raised

### 178 entrepreneurs assisted

### 1 academic research partnership

### Your involvement!

### UEZ successes

* 22 jobs created
* 467 business interactions
* 25 collaborative R&D projects
* 11 new products

## Success story – Conigital

The idea – A driverless vehicle platform

The entrepreneur - CEO Don Dhaliwal

“One of the biggest benefits is the fact that you’ve got an excellent team that bring knowledge and expertise to the table. There’s a large network behind you, so introductions can be made for those crucial investor talks.” Don Dhaliwal, CEO at Conigital

### The journey

20 August 2020 - Initial contact with John Stenhouse

21 August 2020 - First review to go on platform

25 August 2020 - Second review stage

27 August 2020 - Live on Angels@Essex

2 September 2020 - 1st investor £12.5k

23 September 2020 - Demo UEZ pitch event

27 October 2020 - Live UEZ pitch event £20K

27 October 2020 - Second investor £500k

11 November 2020 - Seedrs funding £1.625m

11 January 2021 - Third investor £25k

19 February 2021 - Fourth investor £250k

19 February 2021 - Future Fund £880k

If you are an investor looking for innovative opportunities...If you are an entrepreneur with an idea that can disrupt the status quo...If your organisation wants to join our network of partners...We want to hear from you please email the [University Enterprise Zone](mailto:uez@essex.ac.uk).