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### NEWS RELEASE

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**Calling All Innovators and Entrepreneurs**

**Venturefest Yorkshire 2016 Launch Announced**

Promising to deliver a new experience for Yorkshire based innovators, entrepreneurs and investors, Venturefest Yorkshire 2016 will be officially launched this Wednesday 22 June.

Organised by Make It York and sponsored by the national government agency, Innovate UK, this year’s one day festival will be held at York Racecourse on 16 November 2016. With a clear focus on nurturing business growth across Yorkshire, Venturefest will bring investors, innovators and entrepreneurs together in an engaging, exciting and entertaining environment.

By helping innovators develop their ideas and supporting entrepreneurs in securing investment, Venturefest Yorkshire aims to inspire, entertain and amaze delegates through talks from experts in their field, and with workshops and exhibitions.

On the day there will be five floors of themed exhibition zones, keynote speakers, seminars and workshops, a chance to meet the experts, an Innovation Showcase, ~~a~~ Live Pitchfest Finals where delegates will have the opportunity to pitch their ideas in return for a rich support package, including £5,000 funding. There will be Club and Investors lounges, Yorkie Talkies and a spectacular end of day show.

In anticipation of the festival in November, the Venturefest Roadshow will take place at various locations throughout Yorkshire this summer. Starting in York and then traveling to Sheffield, Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield and Hull to order to inspire, engage and inform businesses; including individuals, new start-ups and established businesses.

The launch event will take place on Wednesday 22 June from 13:00 to 14:30, at the Ron Cooke Hub, at the University of York, Heslington East. There will be information and advice available about Venturefest Yorkshire 2016 and details of ways in which to participate. The event is free of charge, refreshments and a light lunch will also be provided so pre-event registration is necessary. A handful of places are still available for anyone not yet registered.

The launch event will include the announcement of two competitions: Pitchfest and the Innovation Showcase. Pitchfest is an investment competition with a £5,000 cash prize and 12 months of business support to help get plans off the ground. The Innovation Showcase provides supported access to the show for new start-ups (even pre start-ups). Places for this are awarded on merit, they must be applied for and will be selected by a Venturefest panel.

Within the Innovation Showcase there is also a £1,000 prize to be awarded to the ‘best in show’.

Competition winners will be celebrated and showcased at the main Venturefest event in November.

These competitions are suitable for any business or individual in the region looking for support to develop their innovative ideas, or to secure investment in order to grow their idea.

Speaking at the launch event this Wednesday will be, James Newman, chair of Finance Yorkshire and the Advisory Board, Heather Niven, Head of Science City York and Dermot Boylan, Programme Manager, from organisers Make It York.

Heather said, ‘Amazing things can happen at the intersection between science, technology and creativity and we will be stimulating innovation, encouraging entrepreneurialism and helping Yorkshire businesses gain investment  through competitions, activities and exhibitions at ~~this year’s~~ Venturefest Yorkshire. This event will be the greatest gathering of innovation and enterprise in Yorkshire this year so please join us.’

Exhibition and ticket sales for the main event in November will also open on 22 June, with early bird discounts available until the end of August.

To register for the free launch event please visit: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/venturefest-yorkshire-launch-event-york-tickets-25842493594](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/venturefest-yorkshire-launch-event-york-tickets-25842493594)

To find out more about the main event please visit [www.venturefestyorkshire.net](http://www.venturefestyorkshire.net) or email enquiries@venturefestyorkshire.net.

**ENDS**

Press are invited to attend the launch event on Wednesday 22 June from 13:00 to 14:30, at the Ron Cooke Hub, at the University of York, Heslington East.

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**Notes to editors:**

**Background**

**Make It York (York’s Destination Organisation)** – Make It York’s purpose is to develop and promote the city and its surroundings – nationally and internationally - as a vibrant and attractive place to live, visit, study, work and do business.

**Science City York** is a part of Make It York and is the business and innovation brand which supports the city and its surroundings’ creative, science and technology businesses.

Under the Science City brand, the aim is to promote York as a great place to do business, helping to support business growth and innovation and to stimulate greater inward investment.

Make It York will also work with businesses across a range of other sectors, such as financial and professional service and rail and high value manufacturing, to stimulate growth.

**Key business & investment facts:**

The York economy is currently worth £4.75billion (GVA), supporting around 8,105 businesses and 114,000 jobs.

**Venturefest** is a partof KTN (Knowledge Transfer Network) funded by Innovate UK. There is a network of 12 regional events across the UK that bring together innovators (with great ideas looking for funding), investors (looking for great ideas to invest in) and entrepreneurs (putting the ideas and money together to build businesses).

**Venturefest Yorkshire** was created twelve years ago by York Professionals. Venturefest Yorkshire’s aim has been to provide inspiration, support and investment for entrepreneurs and business managers in science, technology, creative and high growth businesses. During that time it has welcomed over 14,000 people through its doors and generated a £5.4 million injection into the regional economy through direct outputs and an estimated £22.5 million of GVA via deals done and investments created. Make It York took over responsibility for Venturefest Yorkshire in January 2016 and have great ambitions to take the event to the next level.

**Innovate UK** are the national sponsors of the Venturefest network. Innovate UK is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. They work with people, companies and partner organisations to find and drive the science and technology innovations that will grow the UK economy. Since 2007 they have invested over £1.5 billion in innovation, matched by a further £1.5 billion in partner and business funding. They have helped more than 5,000 innovative companies in projects estimated to add £7.5 billion to the UK economy and create 35,000 extra new jobs.

**PHOTO :**

To mark the event’s launch, the Venturefest Yorkshire hot air balloon takes to the air in front of the venue, the Knavesmire stand at York racecourse.