Speaker 1: I never thought that I would be doing this professionally when I first started. When I first started it was just a hobby. I was just playing for fun.

Speaker 5: Cloud9's lost two men.

Ben : Value of e-gaming is around about $180 billion and we want to see some of that in London and we want to see some of it here in the park.

Speaker 4: I'm Star Guardian Xayah, hopefully kill the other team.

Speaker 5: You watch football, like Ronaldo and stuff. You're not as good as him but you still enjoy watching them play. It's kind of like this, we're not as good as the people on the stage, but it's still fun to watch.

Speaker 6: Gaming can also provide a lot of the same benefits that traditional stick and ball sports do in terms of providing an avenue for teamwork.

Speaker 3: That's gamers and spectators talking in a recent BBC News report recorded at the League of Legends event, held at the Copper Box Arena. With some of the best teams from across the globe competing to qualify for the upcoming world championships. Thousands of fans descended on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park for the event. And whether it's League of Legends, Call of Duty, Gran Turismo, or FIFA, you can't ignore the impact of eSports.

Ben : Yes, you can come to watch your heroes or heroines playing on stage, but behind that facade and that obvious success is a whole host of other stuff. Imparting knowledge on those individuals and say, this is what it could mean to you.

Speaker 3: This is the podcast from Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and that was Ben Ackroyd. His company compiled a report into how London, and more specifically this particular part of London, could become the home to a world-class eSports cluster, driving job creation, and bringing an industry worth 180 billion to East London. It's a rapidly growing sector, and the park's Here East Campus has been instrumental in promoting it and helping to position Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on the eSports world stage.

Gavin : I'm Gavin Pool. I'm the chief executive of Here East, which is the redevelopment of the former press and broadcast center. And we've turned into a world leading campus for technology and creative industries. So eSports has become incredibly important for Here East, what we do, and also for the tech and sporting community in large. What we've found is over time building out Here East, is that whilst we had a load of games companies coming and taking residence with us, we've also then had academia and institutes coming focused on game design animation. They'd also moved into eSports management, eSports broadcast, and we started to see this convergence between tech and creative and eSports. And as someone mentioned, the Olympic Park having this huge tech campus called Here East on one side and the legacy of sport on the Olympic Park from obviously London 2012, where tech and sport came together, is a natural place for eSports. So it's been a huge growth sector, which we've openly embraced.

Speaker 3: And what exactly are you doing at Here East and on the park to encourage eSports and bringing companies in that are involved in the sector?

Gavin : The park has had eSports activities taking place on here for many, many years, way before we actually got involved in this as well. The Copper Box Arena has a very multi-functional arena, has hosted Call of Duty, League of Legends, they did a very early launch of an EA game around Rally Cross many, many years ago. What has happened, this drift towards okay as the eSports sector has grown, then the opportunities around that have grown as well. So what we first bought in was a digital institute from Staffordshire University, which was one of the early universities in the country to embrace eSports from their own digital game design courses, move into competitive gaming and develop a talent pipeline into the broadcast marketing, the events, how to host competitions, how to do player management, how to construct teams, so on and so forth. So they came in, established a gaming arena as part of their facility, brought in all the courses.

And then we landed some larger clients that came. Electronic Arts came with their eSports division and a company called eSports Engine came along, which was more of the promoter, white label promoter, of eSports competitions. They've been running all of the FIFA pro leagues, obviously moving into EA FC. And they also have done all of the Apex Legends work. And what that means is they're not just based here and they go elsewhere and they host it. I mean they do, they use the copper box with its fiber connections straight into our buildings, but they've also been utilizing our theater space, before they build out their own studio here, to run all of the competitions on campus as well. So you've had all of the world leagues, all of the world footballers, eSport footballers, coming here. The teams have been here playing in a multi league competitions all the way through to the finals. And that's been broadcast live from Here East over many, many, many times.

And then we've got the eSports University, which then set up camp, utilizing some of the office and briefing facilities over the Velodrome. So you've got another university training up the future eSports stars as well. So you look at it as a whole, you go the Olympic Park has really grasped this and has invested heavily in attracting businesses, working with London partners, bringing in overseas businesses to come here as well. And it's built this amazing cluster now, which didn't exist five years ago.

Speaker 3: I'm reading some big numbers about eSports both globally, what it might be worth. What are you saying it could be worth to Quinn Elizabeth Olympic Park in terms of, whether that's revenue or companies coming in or employment opportunities.

Gavin : It's difficult to quantify in revenue until you really understand the scale of the type of events which you're going to come here. I think all of us having our mind's eye aspirationally, we could end up, in say 10 years time, doing a mega event in the London Stadium. And if you look at that, because well, MLB came here in the summer, their net value to London was about 54 million hit over that weekend by hosting such a large event. And these events are global, eSports events are global, so you have a similar type of footprint. In fact, the ticket sales tend to sell faster than any other mainstream sporting event that you'd likely to compare against. So I think the revenue opportunity is quite large, but I think we've yet to really fully quantify what it could be.

In terms of opportunities, in terms of jobs, in terms of talent pipeline. We do a lot of work on that, based ourselves as Here East, and our partner organizations based with us at the universities and also the other stakeholders of the park like LLDC, they're in the park, very much working into local community, making sure that people have an awareness of what this sector is capable of doing. When we host open days here with the universities and we support all of the activity here, the parents going, we were not really sure what this meant. Our son, our daughter has been gaming. They've said they wanted to go study gaming at university. What does that mean? What are the opportunities it presents in later life? What can the sector offer in terms of jobs, job security, income, or is it just a hobby which they just want to go and study?

And it's very easy to take them on the journey to say, no, this is a career. This is a career whether you are a player, whether you're a content creator, whether you're a broadcaster, an event manager, whether you're commercial and you're building stables of teams. When you're looking at the commercial revenue that comes from advertising, there are many, many different opportunities here. And what we're able to do through our insight days and insight programs we run across campus into the communities to highlight that and say, these are very valuable jobs. It's here on the park. We've been brought this sector to East London and actually we should now all capitalize on it and see if this works for young people, and the older generations as well, who want to participate in this sector. It's a fun sector to be in. Hard work, but hard work rewards and it's a lot of fun as well.

Speaker 3: CEO of Here East Gavin Pool.

ESports has garnered immense popularity with viewership for events rivaling that of traditional sports. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is at the forefront of embracing this global phenomenon. We've just heard from Gavin about potential impacts economically from attracting world-class companies and global events. But what about the talent pipeline? Who can benefit from the high quality jobs and opportunities that this new sector is providing? Staffordshire University now has a campus at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park offering degrees in digital centered on gaming and computing. Lee Valley VeloPark is home to the College of eSports, providing facilities for eSports athletes and enthusiasts whilst Teesside University were also keen to extend their offer to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park from their traditional home in northeast England.

Catherine: Hi, my name is Catherine Elliott and I am head of Partnerships and Business Development at Teesside University London. Teesside University, our main campus is in Middlesborough. It's attracts lots of people mainly from the northeast in terms of the home students, but also has a large international student base as well. Very successful university has been around in some form since the 1920s, but is a fairly modern university in terms of its one of the post 92s. But as with a lot of the universities in England, there was a decision made only about 18 months ago actually to come to the capital, to London. Several reasons for doing that. One of them was to bring down some of the really successful courses that Teesside University does. So in things like gaming, animation, visual effects, so to bring those down to a wider audience in London. And although the areas of the northeast of England and East London are, on the face of it, quite different there are similarities as well. And in terms of that sort of widening participation and areas of deprivation and looking at getting some of those students, those very able students, into higher education, there are very definite parallels and that's why the area of East London was chosen as an area for Teesside University to come to in London.

Speaker 3: What does Here East bring to Teesside University then?

Catherine: It's a really exciting place to be. It's been fantastically repurposed into this sort of hub of other universities, technology, innovation, there's big business, there's small business there, there's entrepreneurs and startups. So it's just an amazing place, we feel, for students to come and study and work alongside other students, but alongside businesses as well. So it is just a really great innovative space for students to come.

Speaker 3: And what is your offer in terms of those students that are coming looking maybe to make a career in eSports, for example?

Catherine: I mean we have a great portfolio of gaming courses. So I said we brought our strongest courses down from Middlesborough to London. And amongst those courses are our gaming courses and our animation and visual effects courses. And in terms of the gaming, we offer everything from the very creative games art type courses, all the way through to games design, games development, games programming, as well as the animation and visual effects. So within those courses there are people studying those courses who are interested in eSports and all different aspects of gaming. So we are hoping that those courses kind of offer something for everybody really with an interest in gaming.

Speaker 3: And in terms of the links, as you mentioned there, with businesses in the same sector at Here East, is it easy to go and knock on the door and say, I've got some good students for a work placement, or there's potential career opportunities here?

Catherine: Absolutely. I mean, our very next door neighbors on the campus is Sports Interactive, the makers of Football Manager, and they're really keen to work with us as we are with them because clearly they're looking for the next best talent. We are looking for work placements and opportunities for our students. So it is a really great opportunity for us, for our students, and for the organizations actually to really all work together.

Speaker 3: In general terms, where is the talent pool, what is the talent pool for people looking for a career in that sector?

Catherine: We are really looking at East London, that's our real focus in terms of our student base. That's who we are wanting to attract. And the talent, I mean I've been out to a few schools and colleges in East London and the talent is absolutely there. It's trying to nurture those people and encourage them to come along to our university to have the opportunity to work with these organizations where they can develop a career in gaming, or in eSports, in whatever area they want to.

Speaker 3: Teesside university's Catherine Elliot.

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is a leading destination for eSports by offering dynamic and cutting edge environments for tournament organizers, athletes and spectators. The feasibility study produced by Arena Consultancy looked at the growth of the games industry and the opportunities at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The report demonstrated how the establishment of the cluster is about much more than that, also involving employment opportunities and community engagement.

Ben : My name is Ben Ackroyd. I'm from Arena Consultancy and we are a specialist agency working across eSports and events. What we looked at was twofold from a commercial perspective, what can be done to bring more eSports attention activities to the park, which was highlighting the need for the businesses within the park not to be siloed commercially. Holistically there's quite a nice proposition to anyone who's looking to run a competition, be there for a week, be there for a day, or likewise, as what happened with both eSports Engine and Electronic Arts, the fact of the matter is that's a great location for business to be based from the point of view of the tech hub and the talent within the area. And then looking at the community aspect of things to say well, being very cynical about it, how's the activities of the park going to benefit me as a 16-year-old kid living in Newham?

Well then we're talking about bringing publishers, obviously we've got EA there now, but bringing others to say, this is what this industry could present to you as an individual. Are you aware that there's a whole host of different career possibilities behind a successful game like EA FIFA? So it was more of a communication piece to say yes, you can come to watch your heroes or heroines playing on stage, but behind that facade, and that obvious success, is a whole host of other stuff and imparting knowledge on those individuals and saying, this is what it could mean to you. So that's something they've taken on board.

Speaker 3: Is that key to the success at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park? Those two pillars, you've got the mass participation events, but then you've got the businesses and the companies bringing the employment opportunities and basing themselves on the park as well.

Ben : We've seen in the last five years a huge growth in the Pearson BTEC in eSports. And likewise, by default, a growth in degree level courses within eSports, be that broadcast, be that technical, be that event management, be that player management. Everything goes in with that. So that's what makes the park unique in the sense of there are promises that have been made that need to be fulfilled and are being fulfilled. And that was the focus of attention for the report to say, how can we then make a cluster of opportunity for different parts of the community?

You've got the guys and girls who are graduating from universities, where do they go once they finish their courses? What do they do? And the idea then was looking at other clusters around the world to say you almost see this throughput of talent coming in because there's opportunities available locally, but then retention of talent post-graduation or post HND or BTEC because there's a whole swathes of different opportunities from an 18-year--old who's got no mush experience to a 21-22 year old who's looking for their first break, hence the popularity in apprenticeships and workplace learning.

Speaker 3: So London and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park are a place to come for well prospective gamers, prospective tournament organizers and companies in the eSports sector.

Ben : There is still more work to be done. The Copper Box is a great venue, competitively priced in terms of its competition against other venues both in London and further away. I still think there might be an opportunity for the different stakeholders in the park to work collectively, and more importantly how is that proposition taken to market, how London is a destination and develop a proposition for the sector.

Speaker 3: Ben Ackroyd from Arena Consultancy who produced a report looking at the potential of eSports. This is the podcast from Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. For more information, visit our website. Sign up to our e-newsletter and follow us on social media.