THE news headlines are increasingly dominated by the activities of cyber criminals and nation states. Economic loss is an unfortunate consequence of the rather haphazard manner in which the Internet and the digital economy have evolved, and it will be an enduring fact of life for the foreseeable future.

The good news is that, despite the headlines, this isn’t all necessarily bad. Far from it. Cyber insecurity is the price we pay for the overwhelmingly positive economic effects of the Internet and the web.

Cyber insecurity also presents a significant opportunity for those regions and cities possessing the vision and skills required to address it.

The domestic cyber security market is already worth £3.5bn, and is growing at around 10% every year. The Government estimates that cyber security spending unlocks £17bn in terms of economic benefit. And cyber security exports are forecast to be worth a further £4bn by 2020.

So which regions are best placed to benefit? If you were asked to name the UK’s main cyber security clusters, which names would spring to mind?

I’d hazard a guess that your answers would include established names like Cheltenham, Malvern and Tewkesbury. Cambridge and Corsham might feature. London would inevitably dominate, accounting, as it does, for one quarter of the domestic market.

Take a look around the North East, however, and you may be pleasantly surprised by our own cyber security credentials.

Every year the North East’s universities and colleges produce around a thousand graduates and apprentices possessing cyber security and related computer science skills.

This figure is set to increase dramatically as our institutions gear up to address a skills shortage so severe that there are likely to be one and a half million unfilled cyber security jobs globally in 2020.

The North East also has a strong research base. Newcastle University is a GCHQ accredited Academic Centre of Excellence for Cyber Security Research, one of only two in the North of England and Scotland.

Last year, at a showcase co-hosted by Dynamo North East and the Newcastle University Cloud Innovation Centre, there were presentations from our universities covering almost every facet of cyber security research.

The North East, therefore, has a tremendous opportunity: an opportunity to diversify and grow our workforce and to create high skills jobs within the region; an opportunity to support Government transformation and to address regional demand for cyber security goods and services across all of our industries; an opportunity to foster cyber innovation and to encourage the formation of new cyber security businesses; and an opportunity to attract inward investment to the region.

At Dynamo North East we’re working hard with our partners to realise this opportunity and we would like you to join us.

Whatever your sector, and whatever your interest in cyber security, we would like to work with you. Join us at: www.dynamonortheast.co.uk

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