

How being a Cambridge Ambassador benefits our businesses

“Promoting Greater Cambridge on the World stage” was the theme of the event at the Nucleus Centre, Great Chesterford Research Park on Thursday 13 March 2008. The additional message was that we as local companies and organisations would benefit by being proactive in promoting the region when conducting business abroad. The task was simplified with the launch of the Cambridge Ambassador’s toolkit.



More than 128 representatives from business and regional organisations wound their way into the green and gently rolling Cambridgeshire countryside south of the city at an unaccustomed early hour for the 7:30am start of the event. The location was the Great Chesterford Research Park which nestled serenely in grounds patrolled by the resident pheasant.



Delegates were welcomed into the Nucleus Centre with its sunlit Atrium, warming beverages and a welcome buffet breakfast before migrating upstairs for the actual event of the day which was ably chaired by Chris Parkhouse of Deyton Bell.



What is it that makes the Cambridge area so attractive? Sam Weller, Kodak’s European Research Director explained that with the dramatic shift to digital imaging, Kodak had looked for new ways to scout for new technologies that would allow the company to adapt to the future. They wanted to be in a place where a healthy combination of venture capital, research companies and universities intermingled and found Cambridge to be an ideal location. Working with the University, Kodak’s rate of new Intellectual Property generation had trebled since coming to Cambridge!



For Cellzome, originally a spinout from the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Heidelberg, the path had been slightly more tortuous as the company had grown and developed its own products. Richard Hale, CEO identified three key factors for their move to the region. First, the transfer was all the more easy for existing staff as they moved from somewhat less prepossessing premises near London into the beautiful countryside. Second, with the clustering of hi tech and biotech companies came a highly trained workforce wanting to stay and find employment locally as they progressed through their career paths. Third came the easy access to Stansted, allowing reasonable and rapid trips over to Europe and beyond. In addition there was again the good relationship

with the universities and also the ability to share facilities more informally amongst neighbouring companies.



To house new companies and organisations coming to the regions requires new facilities. Developments such as the Greater Chesterford Research Park were part of a series of locations that began with opportunities and facilities for start-ups such as at the St Johns Innovation Centre and Babraham. Martin Sylvester, of the Churchmanor Estates managing the visited Research Park, pointed to the international clients settling in the Park, such as those from Japan as well as the UK. Furthermore, there was a steady stream of visitors wishing to learn how the Cambridge success might be transferred abroad.



Paul McGhee also described the large development of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus beyond the existing hospital site. This would provide room for existing R&D organisations such as the Medical Research Council, Laboratory for Molecular Biology and university (with more Nobel Prize winners than France on the record), who were often integrated with Hospital departments. The existing workforce was expected to grow from the current 9000 to 17000! Fortunately, improved access from the M11 and via the guided bus way would permit the growth and, at long last, there would be dedicated conference and hotel facilities for meetings to take place on comfort.



Cambridge needs to fight to maintain its place as Europe's leading hi-tech and biotech cluster with currently 43000 employed in 1400 companies. The University of Cambridge is still ranked fourth in the world but the competition is hotting up globally, with China, India and Brazil entering the fray as their education systems churn out more highly qualified people. The EEI's new CEO, David Riches, saw Cambridgeshire not only continuing to develop existing clusters in Biotech and ICT; There was a real threat that Cambridge might miss out capitalising the growth of the booming creative sector globally and one should also cast an eye on the future convergence of wireless technologies with biotech. Another regional strength was the renewable energy sector with the East of England currently being the only one expected to reach the renewable energy targets for 2020.



As the director of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, Martin Garratt described how the GCP was playing a coordinating and communicating role with the existing Subregional Strategy utilising Private and Public funding and the new Economic Masterplan ready to take its place. Greater Cambridge in his eyes covered a large area, from Stansted Airport in the South to Wisbech in the North; from St Neots in the West to Bury St Edmunds in the East. The reality was that overseas companies, investors and visitors recognised Cambridge as a name; however, once here they could be shown the benefits of locating within the Greater Cambridge area.

So far, we had been shown the bigger picture of Cambridge's past, present and future. What were the practical elements for a company such as Milton Contact Limited, actively involved in assisting visiting SMEs looking to enter the UK market?



Fortunately, this has been addressed by the GCP, with the appointment of Louise Rushworth as International Relations Manager! Her role is to provide substance to the agreed targets and strategies devised by the Greater Cambridge International Relations Forum, as part of a service agreement with the EEL. Since her appointment Louise has already begun to act as a touchstone for information relating to visits to the region, gradually breaking down potential barriers or fears of existing stakeholders involved with international visitors.



The event at Great Chesterford Research Park therefore culminated with the launch of the Cambridge Ambassador Toolkit – a central resource of practical information, prepared presentations of varying lengths and already available in Chinese, and the Cambridge Calendar. The latter is a listing of useful international events taking place within or emanating from the region. This toolkit is built on the concept that Cambridge businesses and organisations, or at least key individuals within them, are willing and eager to not only promote their own immediate interests but also those of the region. By doing so we ensure that Greater Cambridge maintains its world class ranking and continues to grow, generating new business for our futures.



As an active participant in this and other GCP events and through ongoing contact with Louise regarding our visitors, I recommend companies with existing or planned international activities take the following three actions:

1. Inform Louise Rushworth of impending International visits – she can direct you to local partners and organisations able to help you (lrushworth@stjohns.co.uk)
2. Download the information and resources available on the GCP website at <http://www.gcp.uk.net/int-oseas.php> and use them, including the Greater Cambridge logo.
3. Access the Cambridge Calendar at <http://www.gcp.uk.net/business-support-events.php>



Dr Chris Thomas
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P.S Full set of pictures viewable at
<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/miltoncontact/GPCCambridgeAmbassadorsLaunch>