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Science park attracts new tenant to its tight knit community

YOU don't have to be a scientist to work at a science park - but it helps.

Manchester Science Park has attracted a new tenant from Leeds thanks to its 90-company strong science and technology community.

Diverse Culture has relocated to Enterprise House at msp to take advantage of the commercial networking opportunities on the park.

The firm creates e-training packages for companies to teach employees how to manage equal opportunities and avoid costly non-compliance with equalities legislation. The company's Respect Diversity Toolkit, developed for Aviva plc won a United Nations Global Diversity Award in 2007.

David Iball, founder of Diverse Culture, said: "Manchester Science Park presented us with a unique opportunity to be part of a tight knit community of companies. Another big pull for us is its business support service which is a real bonus for small companies."

Diverse Culture works with both public and private sector clients including Aviva, Virgin, Leeds Metropolitan University and Connexions.

Science park business development manager Jan Hilton said: "We put a lot of effort into nurturing the community of like-minded businesses here on the park. This has become a well-known unique selling point that sets us apart from other business and science parks in the north of England."

Campus growth accelerating...

■ New investment guarantees growth

■ Major step forward for campus' future

DAVID THAME

A £25m investment will guarantee growth at Daresbury's science campus, say government ministers.

The Minister for Science and Innovation, Ian Pearson, has given his backing to the proposal for a nine-acre development at the Daresbury Science & Innovation Campus.

Around 200,000 sq ft will be built on the site next to the existing Daresbury Innovation Centre and the Cockcroft Institute, which is the national centre for accelerator science.

Property developer St Modwen has been appointed to complete the project which its people say will be a centre for hi-tech businesses and leading-edge science.

The first phase of development is intended to help growing companies. It is called Vanguard House and will provide 35,000 sq ft of office and laboratory space in units of be-

tween 1,000 and 7,000 sq ft.

This building, directly managed by St Modwen, will complement the Innovation Centre and provide a home for companies already on the campus to grow.

Construction of Vanguard House is expected to begin this summer with the building ready for occupation in spring 2009.

Speaking at Daresbury Mr Pearson said: "The Government is committed to Daresbury expanding as an internationally renowned centre of science and innovation. The announcement demonstrates that the future for the site is an exciting one."

George Baxter, director of science and innovation at the NWDA, and a director at Daresbury, said: "This is a crucial next stage in the development of Daresbury SIC.

"The investment of over £50m by the NWDA in the campus has proved to be a great success with over 65 companies in situ and demand necessitating this next stage of development.

"We are delighted that St Modwen has confidence in the campus and see the benefits of investing significant capital to realise the next stage of its growth."

John Leake, general manager at Daresbury, said "Vanguard House will provide a magnet for hi-tech businesses looking to draw on the unique combination of the scientific and business expertise at Daresbury SIC, supported by its extensive national and international network."

It is a major step forward in the wider development of the campus and supports its position to be an internationally recognised community of scientific, innovation and entrepreneurial excellence."

St Modwen's Michelle Taylor said: "This is a very high-profile location.

"The first phase will enable both young and established science and knowledge based businesses to expand, and it will provide a catalyst to the campus's continued development."

She added that there was the opportunity for future developments to be designed to meet specific occupiers' needs and that discussions were already progressing with one significant occupier.

St Modwen is already operating successful innovation centres at Cranfield University, Bedford and Longbridge, Birmingham, with a further centre coming online at Evolution Park, Blackburn.



SKY'S THE LIMIT The tower of the Particle Accelerator at Daresbury Laboratory

New leader appointed to expand science and innovation in the north west

FORMER Unilever boss Roger Platt has been appointed as the new chair of the Northwest Science Council.

Mr Platt will lead the development and implementation of the regional science strategy, work with the Technology Strategy Board to identify opportunities for collaboration and ensure north west priorities are always represented nationally. He will also review significant proposals for science projects or schemes and will advise the North West Development Agency on how to promote science in the region.

Northwest Science is committed to establishing England's north west as an area of world-class scientific achievement.

Steven Broomhead, chief executive of the NWDA, said: "I am delighted that Roger has been appointed to this central role, which will enable England's north west to remain at the hub of innovation and scien-



BACKING Steven Broomhead, chief executive of the NWDA

tific expertise."

The outgoing chair, Jeremy Scudamore has stepped down

after completing the full three-year term as chair of the Science Council.

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The appliance of science...

The north west's science parks are making their mark on the country with six of the best-developed in the UK located around the region, writes **David Thame**

THE north west's science parks are six of the best. So say specialists who claim the region has some of the best-developed scientific infrastructure in the UK.

As well as the Manchester Science Park and the campus at Daresbury, near Runcorn, there are science parks in Cumbria, Liverpool, Runcorn and Lancaster.

Daresbury has been an important location for science since the 1960s. Over £50m has been invested in the site by the North West Development Agency, including the addition of two new buildings adjacent to the internationally renowned Daresbury Laboratory; these being the Daresbury Innovation Centre and the Cockcroft Institute, which is the national centre for accelerator science.

Daresbury has been an important location for science since the 1960s. Over £50m has been invested by the NWDA.

Businesses linked to Daresbury include Medical Device Innovations, Gencia who specialise in printing technologies, industrial instrumentation maker Norcott Technologies Ltd and the National Skills Academy for Nuclear Industry.

Manchester Science Park has seven buildings. The original Enterprise House includes tenants, AMCC, a US video and

design company with corporate headquarters in California. Skelton House is home to Medeval/ICON and Colgate. Medeval was one of the very first University of Manchester spin-outs and has expanded on the Science Park over 17 years; it now occupies most of this building.

The company undertakes contract research in the early clinical development of new medicines and its facilities include an 80-bed clinical trials unit.

Synergy House plays host to the park's second largest tenant, SAFC Pharma. Now a part of the US Sigma-Aldrich Corporation, the company's fine chemicals manufacturing site on the science park has its origins as a spin-out from Salford University in the early 1980s.

Greenheys provides cost-effective and flexible accommodation for smaller companies whilst Williams House includes tenants NeuTec Pharma, which specialises in the development of genetically recombinant antibodies for the treatment of life-threatening infections such as systemic candidiasis and MRSA. NeuTec Pharma is now owned by Novartis.

On completion at Manchester Technopark, Lovell House,



LEADING THE WAY The north west now has science parks in various locations

was chosen by Michelin as one of their prime UK sites.

The latest additions came in 2005 at One Central Park, Collyhurst, where tenants include

C-X-R.

Based on unique and powerful new concepts in X-ray imaging system design, C-X-R provides high added value prod-

ucts and services for the petroleum and security sectors. They are developing the new Rapsican inspection systems for aircraft luggage, and they have a

close working relationship with The University of Manchester's School of Mathematics and Department of Electronic & Electrical Engineering.

Success is sweet for Manchester-based sugar expert

MANCHESTER Science Park tenant Dr Layla Zakaria Abdel Rahman has won a prestigious award and £25,000 prize from The Arab Thought Foundation for her scientific discovery that saved the world-wide sugar cane industry millions.

Dr Abdel Rahman works for Agri-Biotech, which has been based at the park since 1998.

The discovery of a radical new way of producing sugar cane has been significant, say the Foundation.

Traditional methods of growing sugar cane from cuttings are both costly and wasteful,

and the plant is difficult to grow from seed. For years, scientists funded by the sugar cane industry had been trying, without success, to identify a solution that would increase crop yield before Dr Abdel Rahman succeeded.

Dr Abdel Rahman discovered a new method that allowed the plant to be sown, just like cereal crops, making it more productive and cheaper. The method involves taking cells from the leaves, shoots or roots of the plant and growing them in a liquid culture to produce artificial seeds, which can then

be germinated.

The invention is protected by a patent in Australia, USA, Russia, the UK, France, Germany, China and Indonesia.

Dr Abdel Rahman said: "Winning the award is a great achievement. It is recognition for the hard work and the useful result for the whole of mankind. It has been very useful. I would like to thank msp, and especially Jane Davies as a chief executive with a vision; she has been very supportive."

Dr Abdel Rahman was recently granted a second patent in the USA for an invention of

an effective anti-oxidant that has the potential to help in the field of medicine and the cosmetics and oil industries.

Jane Davies, chief executive of Manchester Science Park, said: "Dr Rahman's story is remarkable and we are pleased to have been able to support her through the research."

"Her startling results are testament to her dedication and extraordinary skills. At msp we aim to nurture and promote this kind of activity by providing an environment that allows people to focus their energy on research."



CANE AND ABLE Dr Layla Zakaria Abdel Rahman

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How to score a Winning Pitch

■ Park home to more diverse business types

■ Companies benefit from growth potential

DAVID THAME

A SCIENCE park address has helped Winning Pitch score.

Training and support company Winning Pitch says that being at Manchester Science Park makes it much easier to reach its goals.

Since its launch 25 years ago, Manchester Science Park (msp) has grown to accommodate 90 businesses and the types of companies here have become increasingly more diverse.

The park is now home to firms that started life in the park's business incubator graduates, university spin-outs, and overseas companies.

Winning Pitch, which recently floated on PLUS market with a valuation of £2.5m, provides training and support to

companies to help grow sales. It has grown rapidly since its launch in 2005.

Expansion meant the company progressed from university Incubator Centre to occupy 984 sq ft at the science park's Technology Centre at One Central Park, Collyhurst.

"Being based at One Central Park has enabled us to catapult the business to the next stage of development.

"The supportive environment is a fantastic place for aspiring entrepreneurs to innovate and learn, developing their skills and giving them access to other start-up companies and entrepreneurs on the park," said John Leach, chief executive at Winning Pitch.

Winning Pitch is looking to raise up to £3m in equity early in 2008 to fund its plans for expansion in Britain and Europe.

Earlier this year the firm announced its first acquisition since it floated on the PLUS market last month.

It bought Creative Business Achievements of Sheffield, for £100,000 in cash and shares.

Turnover in the nine months to September 30, 2007 was



ACCOMMODATING Manchester Science Park is home to over 90 companies

£435,000, but currently has a future order book in excess of £1.5m. Winning Pitch took £235,000 in December alone and around £200,000 in March. Its interim results will be announced on May 21.

The Technology Centre is a joint venture between Manchester Science Parks (msp) and UMIC (University of Manchester Incubator Company).

Science park business development manager, Jan Hilton,

said: "OCP is at the heart of east Manchester's regeneration programme.

"OCP has been instrumental in creating new and exciting investment opportunities and has been a catalyst for new busi-

nesses in the area."

Spread across three locations in the city, Manchester Science Park is home to over 90 companies and manages more than 300,000 sq ft of office and lab space.

Firms expecting to fulfil ambitions effectively need to look to the future, says expert

SHERYL MOORE

FOR fledgling firms looking to get their ideas and innovations off the ground, an exit strategy may seem like an age away.

But high-growth firms need to have the end in sight from day one, and in order to fulfil their ambitions, it is imperative they get the right team of advisers around them.

Graham Bond is a partner in the Manchester office of ac-

countants and business advisers Baker Tilly. Graham has worked very closely with a number of local university spin-offs and businesses within incubators, advising embryonic firms and preparing them to float on the Alternative Investment Market.

Graham said: "Growth within start-up companies can be extremely rapid and successful university spin-offs need to have the end transaction in

mind from the very beginning, whether that is flotation, buy-out or a trade sale.

"It is all about planning and obtaining good advice from the start. Without a decent level of planning, fast-growing companies rarely achieve their goals."

Young businesses are often strapped for cash and some believe that advisers are an unnecessary expense, but according to Graham, failure to get the wrong advice can cost these businesses dearly.

He said: "If entrepreneurial firms want to fulfil their aspirations, they need to invest in good advice. While adviser fees may seem like a significant expense at the time and some businesses may believe the money would be better spent on research and development, not investing in the right advice can end up costing companies a small fortune.

"For example, if a business sets up an unapproved share option scheme, it may mean that when the business matures and enters into its transaction phase, the option holders are left with a lot bigger tax bill than if the scheme had been approved.

"Similarly, businesses need to protect their intellectual property which will mean instructing patent lawyers.

"In today's highly competi-

tive world, intellectual property is big business and ideas and innovations are open to copying. Companies with cutting-edge technology can find to their cost that if it is not protected, then it becomes worthless."

Graham says that fledgling firms also need to implement the correct business structures and procedures from the start.

He said: "Start-ups should not cut corners with their advisers even though turnover in the early days is low. Fast growth start-up enterprises have fewer margins for error and need to realign strategies and plans more regularly than other businesses."

Graham also promotes the value of regular audits. In the UK, companies are not obliged to have an external audit unless their turnover ex-

ceeds the recently increased threshold of £6.5m. But Graham said: "Whilst audits are not legally required for start-up companies, getting audited from the beginning demonstrates that a company wants to be taken seriously and it also helps to facilitate the due diligence process."

Good advisers can also assist in developing strategic plans and it is important companies follow a formal growth programme which complements criteria used by the banks, ven-

Without a decent level of planning, fast-growing companies rarely achieve their goals



SOUND ADVICE Graham Bond, partner at Baker Tilly

ture capitalists, business angels and other funders when they assess growth potential and possible investments.

Graham said: "Potential funders need comprehensive business plans and strategies, and the better the plan, the more attractive the business will be to investors."

Of course all this costs money, but there is help out there from a host of government bodies, including the Northwest Development Agency, which can help busi-

nesses meet the expense of adviser fees.

It is also imperative the start-ups choose their advisers carefully and often it can be advisers with specific sector and service line specialisms who can add real value to their business.

Graham said: "We, at Baker Tilly, will work with these businesses from the start and are committed to developing a professional and close-working relationship with fledgling firms in order that they achieve their full potential."

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"Illustration of the Daresbury Framework 30 Year Vision, masterplanned by Taylor Young"

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