

Suffolk eyes Life Science Opportunities

In the wake of the Sainsbury Review suggesting a greater regional activity in the UK's life sciences sector, Dr. Carol Rowntree of St Edmundsbury Economic Development Services invited representatives of Suffolk local authorities and interested parties from Suffolk and Cambridge to attend a meeting hosted at Genzyme's Haverhill plant on the 6th February, 2008. The aim was to give an introduction to Life Sciences in the East of England and learn more about a long standing and successful business in this sector.



The attendees were (alphabetical, not in order on photo!):

Dr. Belinda Clarke, ERBI (speaker)
Steve Clarke, Business Link
Emma Cooney, Forest Heath DC
Simon Cousins, VP and General Manager, Genzyme, Haverhill (Host & Speaker)
Dawn Easter, Mid Suffolk DC
Vimmi Hayes, SDA
Neil Henry, Babergh District Council
Andrea Mayley, St Edmundsbury BC
Gail McAndie, SCC
Hendrik Pavel, St John's Innovation Centre
Kirsty Pitwood, St Edmundsbury BC
Jai Raithatha, SCC
Chris Rand, St Edmundsbury BC
Nicola Rogers, EEI
Carol Rowntree, St Edmundsbury BC
Louise Rushworth, GCP
Vijay Sundram, Ipswich BC
Dr. Chris Thomas, Milton Contact Ltd

Dr Belinda Clarke of ERBI gave an impressively jargon free presentation on the UK's high 2nd place ranking in the world in terms of biotech companies, attracting 27% of Pharma investment and accounting for nearly a quarter of the worlds top medical devices. Pharma exports are valued at \$21.3bn and the industry is a major employer. The East of England accounts for a significant proportion of this activity.

Whilst still very Cambridge centric, small companies are at the start of a progression from start-up venture-capital funded R&D in bio-incubators. They generate value products that end with their high profile acquisition by larger players in multimillion pound deals. Recent examples included CAT sold to Astra Zeneca for £702m and Domantis to GSK for £230m.

The recommended shift in regional investment is to support the four pillars of Life Sciences, Access to Finance, International Profile, Skills & Training, and partnering. This is to be achieved through an increased focus on science parks with a major emphasis on capital expenditure.

With the audience now appreciative of the importance of the Sector, Dr Simon Cousins, General Manager of the Genzyme plant at Haverhill, described the successful growth and investment at the site, which overlooks the town of Haverhill nestling in the valley below.

Genzyme has grown as an international company from its first beginnings 27 years ago by specialising in niche pharmaceutical production for high value (if low patient number) medical conditions. These ranged from Hyaluronic acid polymer sheets for bio-surgery, via diagnostics to the treatment of genetics ailments such as Gaucher's Disease.

The Haverhill site was originally involved in chemical reagent manufacturing, until the parent company initiated a transformation into the company's major distribution outlet and developed modern continuous flow manufacturing of Genzyme's first flagship product Cerezyme. With a 25 year history at Haverhill, Genzyme, with its 300 plus staff, has build up good relations with the local community and authorities and benefits from close proximity to Stansted Airport.



The event culminated in a tour where Simon's enthusiasm brought to life the tremendous achievements of reliable and consistent, high quality bulk pharmaceutical production in the absence of dangerous solvents. Modern plant design also ensured energy and resource recycling, relevant in these times of increasing environmental awareness and rising energy costs.

With the impressed delegates having a better basic understanding of the principles underlying the Life Sciences sector, the future challenge must surely be – how to ensure that Suffolk becomes bio-country.

Dr Chris Thomas,

Director, Milton Contact Limited,

Tel: 01223 440024

e-mail: chris@miltoncontact.com

web: www.miltoncontact.com

blogs: <http://miltoncontact.blogspot.com/>, <http://cambsdale.blogspot.com/>,
<http://cambridge-deutsch.blogspot.com/>