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The Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership (SSEP)

"Driving Swindon Forward"

SSEP Newsletter - May 2008

Here is an update on some of the projects and events that the SSEP is currently delivering.

Business Charter

The Swindon Business Charter will be launched on Thursday 26th June. The Charter is a key document that has been developed by Swindon Borough Council and local employers. It sets out the service standards that local companies can expect from the Council and, in turn, sets out a challenge to businesses to support the community in which they operate. The Charter will be sent to all companies in the Borough, and business leaders are urged to take the opportunity to sign up. Invitations to the launch event will be sent over the next few days. If you would like more information or an invitation, email psnowman@swindon.gov.uk

Start-Up Competition

The SSEP will shortly be inviting entries to the 2008 Swindon New Business Competition. Start-up companies that set up in Swindon during the year to 30th September 2008 are eligible to enter the competition, which offers £3,000 and £2,000 cash prizes as well as a year's free membership to the Swindon Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses. Last year's New Business Competition was won by [SwinCity](#) who used the prize money to support the marketing of their new business. They also benefited from the publicity generated by the competition in the local press.

The competition is led by the SSEP's Enterprise Group, which organises a range of initiatives to stimulate new and existing business growth in the Borough. If you are a new business, or come in contact with new businesses, please watch the SSEP website next month for entry details for the competition or email egomez@swindon.gov.uk

Enterprise Days Event

On Friday 25th April, 49 students from schools across Swindon took part in the Enterprise Group's 'Swindon Youth Enterprise Challenge' at the STEAM Museum. The students worked in teams to develop a successful idea for Swindon's new youth centre, The Platform. Representatives from the business community were on hand to offer advice and each team presented their idea to a 'Dragons' Den' style panel of experts.

Another event, aimed at post-16 students, is planned for late June. If you would like to lend your support and volunteer to be an expert, contact Matt Spencer for more details on 01793 466169 or mjspencer@swindon.gov.uk

To view the press coverage in the Swindon Advertiser, click on this link: [Enterprise Days Event](#)

Innovation Event

On the 27th March 2008, the Enterprise Group ran an Innovation event at the STEAM Museum, which aimed to help local Swindon SMEs identify potential innovations within their organisations and support them to develop those innovations. 14 attendees took part in exercises to find out where they sat on the 'Innovation Ladder'. The Innovation Ladder contains 8 steps with most of the attendees starting between levels 2 and 4 before the exercise and then moving to between levels 3 and 6 following the exercise.

The post-event questionnaire revealed that the vast majority of the attendees felt the event was productive and were interested in attending a similar event in future.

For more information, please contact Peter Beech-Allen on peter.beech-allen@gwebusinesswest.co.uk

Develop and grow your business with a mentor

Many owner-managers would like to have someone objective and experienced to talk to about their business issues and opportunities. In Swindon, this need has been prioritised and you can now gain access to a business mentor of your own, free of charge.

All mentors are volunteers and get a buzz from helping entrepreneurs. They possess a variety of business disciplines, skills and attributes. And if they are unable to help with any issues, they can draw upon a range of business contacts including a wider pool of advisers and consultants to assist you. All act within the strictest confidence.

If you could make use of a mentor in your business please call Juanita McLaren-Brown on 01275 373 373 or email juanita.mclaren-brown@gwebusinesswest.co.uk

Migrant Workers Conference

More than 100 representatives from local companies and organisations attended Swindon's first conference on employing migrant workers on 1st April. Delegates learnt more about the new Government rules on immigration, the sources of advice available, the importance of helping migrant workers to remain safe and well in their new jobs, and the establishment of a new virtual network for employers of migrant workers.

The evening saw the launch of the new Welcome to Swindon leaflet for new migrant workers. Anyone who would like a copy of the this leaflet can call Swindon Borough Council's Community Directorate on 01793 466468.

For further information on the conference, please click on this link: [Employing Migrant Workers Conference](#)

Major Employers' Dinner

On Tuesday 22nd April at Lydiard House, the SSEP ran the first of a series of Major Employers dinners. The aim of the event was to introduce key Directors from Swindon's top employers to Rod Bluh, the Leader of Swindon Borough Council and Gavin Jones, the Borough Council's Chief Executive, and also to have an open forum on the subject of the proposed University. Apart from myself, also in attendance were: Alan Fletcher, who is the new Chair of the SSEP's Major Employers Group; Bill Cotton, Director of Economic and Cultural Development; Phil Young, Swindon Borough Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration; Christina Howell, Swindon Chamber of Commerce; and John Rushworth and Stephen Hagen from the University of the West of England.

Employers included: Arval, Dynamatic, Handelsbanken, Honda, Nationwide, New College, Swindon Advertiser, Swindon Primary Care Trust and Zimmer.

We will be holding these meetings every 3 months, with different employers and discussion points for each meeting. This as an ideal opportunity for large employers to have their say on key issues as well as putting a more public face on key personnel within the Council and the SSEP. It is of course a great forum for promoting the SSEP and our work.

Recruitment and Skills

One of the key areas in which the SSEP can have a real impact is Recruitment and Skills. It is often reported that there is a disconnect between companies' skills requirements and the provision of education and training. To address this, the Employment and Skills Group is launching a programme of employer engagement, to identify exactly what the skills needs of local employers are, and to work with public and private sector partners to meet those needs. The group has good links with schools, colleges, and universities, and can access government funded initiatives that provide free or subsidised staff training. For more information, please contact Peter Snowman on psnowman@swindon.gov.uk

Big Screen Switch-On

The BBC Big Screen was officially launched by BBC Points West presenter Alex Lovell on 2nd May and inSwindon - the Town Centre BID Company - are thrilled to be involved with the management of the screen. They are looking forward to organising events and activities that will enhance the experience of coming to Swindon Town Centre and will provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy the screen and the breadth of content it will show over the coming years.

The screen is just the start of a long term investment plan in the town centre and was paid for by Growth Point funding.

Having the first big screen in the South West is a real coup, according to Mark Ross, Chief Executive of inSwindon; "coming from the North of England I have experienced first hand how great these screens are and the amount of real fun they can add to a town centre." If you would like to use the space for an event, contact the inSwindon team on 01793 464994 or at info@inswindon.com

Marketing

The Swindon Marketing Group is working with experts from nPower and Nationwide to design a new hub website that helps to promote Swindon to potential investors. The aim of the site is to provide inward investors with all the information and contacts they require when considering relocating to, or expanding in, Swindon.

The group is also tasked with producing a 3 year business plan with the aim of developing a sustained, robust and effective marketing programme for Swindon.

Tourism

The Council's Economic Development Team has produced a new visitor guide and website to promote Swindon's tourism offer. Pick up a brochure from the Visitor Information Centre or take a look at the website at www.visitswindon.co.uk. If you would like some copies to support a recruitment campaign, contact the team on 01793 466081.

The Team will also release a conference directory very shortly (keep an eye on www.conferenceswindon.co.uk for details) along with a pocket guide aimed at encouraging both visitors and residents to use Swindon's local facilities and attractions.

The Team also plays an active role in the new Visit Wiltshire Tourism Partnership, which is launching at the Bath and West Show (28th - 30th May) - see www.visitwiltshire.co.uk for more details

Key Facts

I thought I'd share with you some facts about Swindon that you might not already know:

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- Swindon has been named both the UK's safest city for motor theft and the UK's 4th safest city for household theft, according to recent reports published by Endsleigh Insurance Services Limited:
 1. [Endsleigh Insurance Report - Motor Theft](#)
 2. [Endsleigh Report - Household Theft](#)
- Swindon will be the home of a new Royal Mail facility in 2009, leading to 600 new jobs for Swindon's economy. Last September, Royal Mail announced its plans to close centres in Reading and Oxford and move their services to Swindon as part of a £20 million modernisation process. According to Royal Mail, "this project represents a step forward in making changes that will benefit our customers and our business. Some £20 million is being invested and once complete, the new Thames Valley Mail Centre at Swindon will be the largest, state of the art centre in the country." For more information on this news story, take a look at the [BBC News Website](#) and the [Swindon Advertiser Website](#)

New Company Feature – The Technology Strategy Board

The Technology Strategy Board is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). It invests in innovative projects and creates partnerships between business, research and Government to build and maintain the country's global competitiveness. Over the coming three years it is set to invest, together with partners, over £1bn in innovation.

This new organisation recently decided to establish their operations in Swindon. To find out why, visit their case study on the [Make the Connection](#) website.

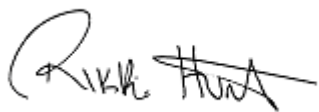
Swindon Summer Festival

The heart of Swindon town centre will come alive on Saturday 14th June with live music, world famous street theatre acts and the spectacular Bash Street Company. Culminating at Faringdon Park in the evening with a site specific spectacular from the UK's leading circus company, NoFit State Circus. A great day of free and totally brilliant entertainment for the whole family in Swindon...miss it, miss out! For more details, see www.swindonsummerfestival.org

Please put this information on your intranet and link to the festival website to really bring this festival to the attention of your colleagues. If you have any queries, contact Nicki Western on 07786020958 or email nwestern@swindon.gov.uk

We are always keen to hear from local businesses. Come and talk to us and see how you can get involved in 'Driving Swindon Forward'.

For the latest news and further information on the SSEP please visit our website www.ssep.org.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rikki Hunt', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rikki Hunt

Chair of Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership

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