

NEWS

Professor speaks at top conference

THE University's Dean of Partnerships, Professor David Barrett, represented the University at a national conference which attracted other leading figures from UK universities.

Professor Barrett spoke at the Community Engagement conference in Manchester, which looked at ways of increasing links between Higher Education institutions and communities.

It also provided an opportunity for senior managers in Higher Education to involve communities in their universities and colleges, through teaching and research.

Professor Barrett is responsible for forging links between the University and partner organisations. He said: "The University of Luton is integral to the community, with a longstanding commitment to access. Widening access depends on good local relations with partner organisations and the wider community."

The conference sought to reinforce the view that community engagement should be an integral part of the life of an institution and should be tailored to the community's social and economic needs.

BBC Online boss's interactivity talk

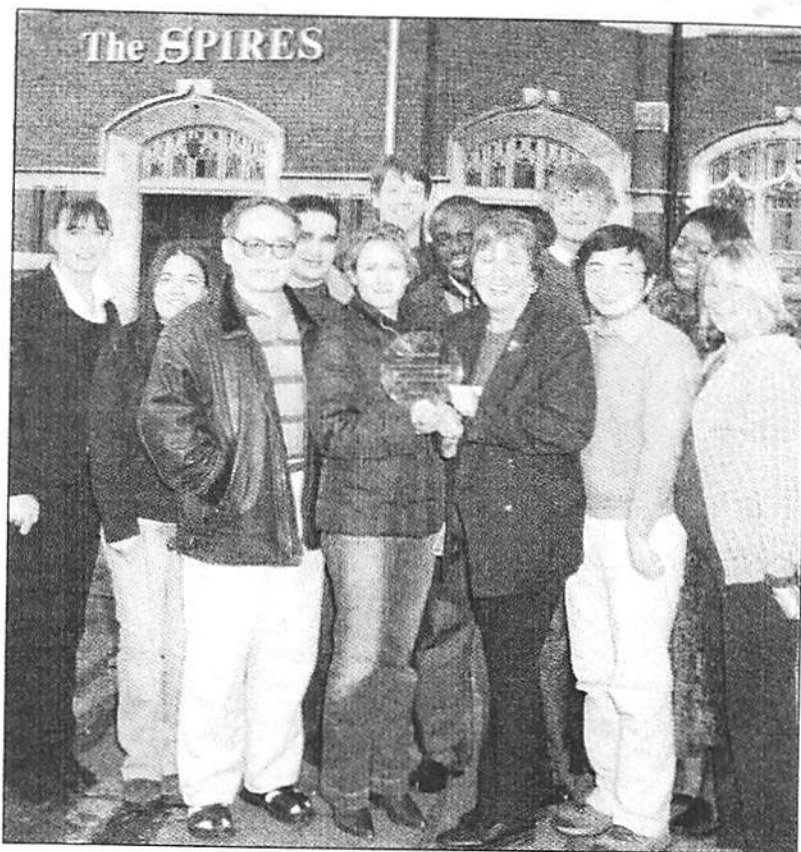
HEAD of BBC Online, Pete Clifton, paid a visit to the University in November to discuss how interactivity has changed the face of BBC news.

Staff and students listened to the former journalist discuss how things may change in relation to jobs and design and the impact of mobile technology.

He also focused on 'citizen' journalism – a term used to describe members of the public who partake in news reports via mobile phones and email.

Mr Clifton also oversees Ceefax, digital text and Interactive television.

The University's School of Media, Art and Design was opened in 2003 by former BBC Director General, Greg Dyke



The Innovation Centre team with their award.

Top award for Centre

CONGRATULATIONS to the University's Luton and Dunstable Innovation Centre, one of the winners of a national business diversity award presented at the University in November.

The Innovation Centre won the award for the category Diversity within a Not for Profit/Community Organisation.

The Centre was one of six winners, alongside the likes of PricewaterhouseCoopers and Cobra Beer, at the University of Luton's Multicultural Awards for Competitiveness and Enterprise 2005.

The six winners showed successfully that they had embraced diversity in their business strategies, with outstanding records in integrating diversity in the workplace.

The Minister for Competitiveness, the Rt Hon. Barry Gardiner MP, made the keynote speech at the pre-awards conference, the Multicultural Conference on Competitiveness and Enterprise.

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

Neville Hunt, Senior Lecturer, Bu

Life has been talking to Neville Hunt, a senior lecturer who has been teaching in the Business School since the early 1990s. He was formerly an advertising director working

7.15am

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Team's 'home win' shows town talent

by John Cole

INNOVATORS behind the growth of more than 60 small businesses won a top award at the UK Multi-cultural Awards for Competitiveness and Enterprise staged by the University of Luton.

Luton & Dunstable Innovation Centre carried off the MACE award for Diversity in a Community Organisation, which was sponsored by the Government Office for the Eastern Region (Go-East).

Set up six years ago, the centre was given the job of nurturing knowledge based enterprises.

Now it supports businesses ranging from high-tech biosensor companies and software designers to environmental and graphic and creative enterprises. All reflect some of the brilliant new talent and diversity within Luton, says centre officer Lynette Warren.

Earlier this year the centre won a Luton & Dunstable Partnership award as one of the most successful local regeneration projects.

It started in a converted chapel in Adelaide Street and has since expanded to Britannia House, the Hat Factory and Marsh Farm.

It offers membership options which allow people to work at home, or to rent part time or full time office space.

The centre is run as a fully sustainable business and Lynette Warren and manager Mike Anstey develop ser-

TIME TO CELEBRATE:
Lynette Warren and Mike Anstey flanked by Paul Witcombe of Go-East and Luton mayor Haji Abid.



vices that help their tenants, and other businesses.

The centre won funding to develop virtual support for disadvantaged groups which allows them to work from home using high tech but low cost internet technology.

The project, called DEVICES, also links regional centres of excellence and community centres in Luton.

Diversity is integral to the centre's success. Sixty per cent of the businesses are run by minority groups, 38 per cent are managed by women, and the mix includes both private enterprises and 14 social enterprises.

A partnership of authorities and groups runs the centre, including the university itself.



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BEST FRIEND'S NAME:

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From Russia with love

The DEVICES project has proved its effectiveness in urban Russia and rural England for one of the Innovation Centre's virtual tenants.

The scheme, providing help, advice and access to the latest communication technologies, has received a decisive 'Da' from Thomas Bailey. His successful web design business Applixa runs on the enhanced DEVICES communications technology. Applixa specialises in web design, e-commerce, databases and programming.

For two years Thomas was based in Moscow and found the advances of the instant messaging service, web cam, microphone and i-key support essential.

"It is really valuable for those companies who can't fit into normal work patterns because of location or mobility," he says. "It supplements face-to-face meetings if they are at a distance to the people they work for or with and is far better than just e-mail or telephone."

Thomas moved to Moscow after meeting his Russian-born wife Natalia on the internet. While living and working in Russia, Thomas saw his business benefit tangibly from the virtual networking of the Innovations Centre.

"The online networking works well. While I was in Moscow, it kept me in touch with things at home and I was able to continue working for my existing clients. I picked up some additional projects through the Innovations Centre and created new business contacts."

Now back in the UK based in rural Derbyshire, Thomas believes the economic potential for the DEVICES project is immense. "It has the potential for not only providing regular business networks for people who can feel isolated because of



◆ Thomas Bailey

their location or work environment or mobility, but it has immense potential for saving valuable resources. Using this technology can stop very many unnecessary journeys."

During their time in Moscow, Thomas and Natalia became the proud parents of a baby boy, Aidan. He was introduced to the world via the web cam.

The Baileys are avidly keeping the new technologies in the family. "There is a big social use for this technology," says Thomas. "My wife uses it to keep up links with her family, as it is the next best thing when you can't meet face-to-face, particularly the instant messaging which is easily accessible for everybody and which needs no extra hardware."

Thomas is now working with the Innovations Centre developing the pack to promote the DEVICES project to help new virtual tenants to benefit as effectively as he has.

"Effectively I've been a guinea pig for the technology and now I'm helping to develop it. I believe it has immense potential and really helps people to keep in touch much better."

The DEVICES project, run by the Luton and Dunstable Innovation Centre, at The Spires, Adelaide Street, is funded by the Department of Trade and Industry's Phoenix Fund and a Building on the Best Award. For more information visit www.innovationcentre.co.uk/projects

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