



INTRODUCING THE MERSEYSIDE

**INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) SECTOR**



**PROSPECTUS FOR SUSTAINED GROWTH 2004-2007**



# REGIONAL STRENGTH, NATIONAL PROWESS, WORLDWIDE REACH SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL – AND GROWING LARGER



The following pages are a guide to the Merseyside ICT industry's growth and development strategy. I was appointed in February 2004 to put in place the strategic programmes enabling Merseyside's impressive service and supply computer industry sector to achieve its full potential.

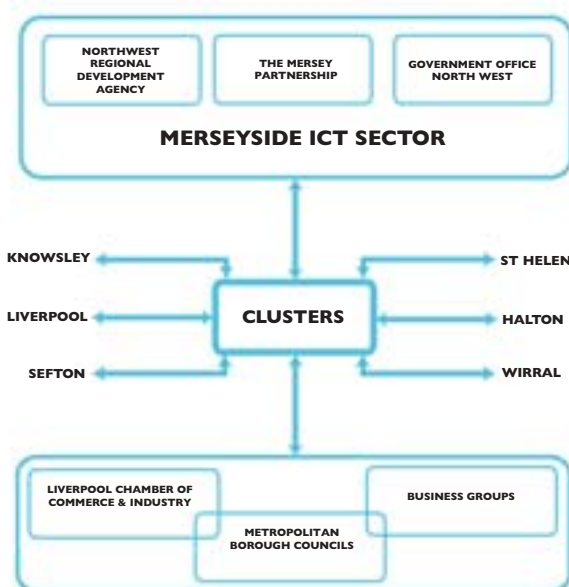
**It was clear immediately that good co-ordination is essential between the many agencies and organisations already committed and involved – private and public sector, academic and European.**

With this in mind, all my proposed programmes share common rules - outsourcing to specialists wherever possible, not re-inventing the wheel, avoiding the overlap of similar programmes by good co-ordination, putting funding straight into the hands of the end-user and - with appropriate guidance – targeting investment to the free-market. More than 50% of Merseyside's 1,000 computer companies employ fewer than five staff.

This makes it vital for small businesses to play their full energetic role in Merseyside's annual generation of nearly £2 billion from ICT. Accordingly, my strategy is a self-sustaining programme intended for businesses keen to help themselves.

The first step is creating clusters that bring together groups of like-minded local businesses, along with local district authorities and Chambers of Commerce.

Knowsley, Liverpool and Sefton are very active. St Helens City Growth High Technology cluster joined in September 2004 with Wirral and Halton expected soon. The second step is developing a series of local and sub-regional events that maintain awareness and reach out to increasing numbers of businesses - plus blue-chip, global names, such as Microsoft and IBM. Tentative target initiatives currently being drafted include:-



The sector and its many links

- Page 12 - The Skills Escalator - Central co-ordination of industry job placement schemes - Ambition:IT, Apprenticeships, Business Bridge, Professional Placements, GIEU (Graduates Into Employment Unit), Knowledge Transfer Partners and the New Technology Initiative
- Page 9 - Collaborative consortia and central members' bid management to win national and international business
- Page 9 - Merseyside Master Class - inspirational leadership training for key entrepreneurs
- Page 9 - Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM Level III) online training for 100 business leaders
- Page 4 - Wireless Southport - Creating a UK beacon platform attracting high-spending professional visitors to Southport's business and leisure attractions
- Page 14 - Graduated Intellect membership for Merseyside businesses to join this nationally-respected ICT trade body
- Page 8 - Applications and general broadband IT management services at affordable prices for ICT SMEs

We are not the master of all trades in the IT world but definitely master of some. It is these specialities I will be promoting on a larger stage. We have a strong message to take to the UK, Europe and beyond.

**Steve Smith**  
ICT Industry Sector Director  
Merseyside ICT



# THE NEW AGE OF TOURISM

AN EXPANDING INDUSTRY MEETING HIGH USER EXPECTATIONS THAT OTHERS WILL FOLLOW

**Tourism is a hub of economic activity – and a competitive arena where discerning purchasers expect a sophisticated experience for their pound, euro or dollar.**



For forward-looking regions, tourism is a proving ground for new levels of ICT-led consumer services that are likely to cascade over into other communication-based industries.

Liverpool and Merseyside are making their mark both as the European Capital of Culture 2008 and with World Heritage Site status. The region is sensitive to what people expect when travelling in the information age – physically and virtually.

As a result, it is developing a specialist lead in the contemporary tourist experience – both when prospective visitors contact Merseyside online, and later when they anticipate easy access on arrival to a local communications community.

ICT entrepreneurial company, New Mind, in partnership with The Mersey Partnership, is providing visitors with a highly interactive website interface before they reach the region, while the Wireless Southport consortium is show-casing how a rich radio communications environment can bring together local business, public services and guests once they arrive.

## WIRELESS SOUTHPORT

IN THE WORLDWIDE RACE TO CREATE WIRELESS ENVIRONMENTS, SOUTHPORT TAKES AN EARLY UK LEAD

**Southport and New York have a common goal. Both are pioneering community-wide wireless environments to give visitors, businesses, residents and public sector service users a unique communications experience.**



Wireless Southport's radio footprint

**What marks out Wireless Southport is that it is set to be a national beacon project, managed and developed by the local business community. The famous town will be the UK's first wireless resort to attract professional tourists, plus exhibition and convention promoters with the permanent lure of immediate access to a wealth of practical, helpful and entertaining information.**

But the wider concept is far greater. Project leader, Aidan McGuire – founder and director of Liverpool-based Blue Fountain



Systems - explains, 'We are creating an infrastructure, plus unique middleware systems that tie component applications together to enhance user experience. We know this has worldwide significance as communities inevitably go wireless. In England's Northwest, our vision is to set an international precedent with a 20-mile-long wireless community corridor from Southport to Liverpool.'

The trend is already apparent. High-profile event organisers are increasingly providing temporary local wireless environments that connect visiting delegates and guests. Southport's numerous hotels, amenity centres and conference facilities host a sizeable annual convention population. Sefton ICT cluster decided it was time to make both wireless access – and in-depth local content – a permanent infrastructure feature. IT service company, Metagy Ltd, is also involved. MD, Tim Atty, foresees events such as the 2008 Open Golf Championships in Southport as major opportunities.

'The concept gives visitors a free service and local business and consumers a low-cost fixed rate,' he explains. 'Some 50% of total project costs of £250,000 are likely to be funded through private-sector investment.' The approach has been to invite Sefton-based ICT businesses to form, and financially back, project consortia. Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and the Southport Partnership for the public sector, plus a broad panel of private companies, are also involved. In practice, two consortia are operating. The first is responsible for overseeing the design, implementation and operation of a Wireless Southport infrastructure.

A second, smaller group will drive services based on that platform, with an emphasis on visitor inclusion and very easy access to a broad range of Southport services. New York anticipates its service running early in 2005. Southport may have beaten them to it.

[www.wirelesscoast.org.uk](http://www.wirelesscoast.org.uk)



## A NEW DIGITAL MIND-SET FOR GLOBAL TOURIST AND WORLD ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES

**The secret of a seamless visitor experience is a sophisticated but easily accessed Destination Management System. When The Mersey Partnership (TMP) needed a powerful online portal offering constantly updated attraction, event and accommodation information from a central database, it turned to a company that is creating a revolutionary experience for the UK tourism industry – Merseyside-based New Mind.**

New Mind realised it was time to break the mould and reflect the vibrant diversity of Liverpool in its Northwest setting. Its solution – [www.visitliverpool.com](http://www.visitliverpool.com) launched by



Picture courtesy of The Mersey Partnership

Sir Richard Branson in October 2003 – forms part of the company's MERVIN system (Merseyside Visitor Information Network). MERVIN is proving how the tourist industry can be radically enhanced for residents, visitors and associated businesses across the UK and beyond. Lancashire and Cheshire run the software, which will also be used for a regional hub. What may not be immediately apparent to day-trippers and holidaymakers is that the new system creates a common platform for sharing and showing information that allows greater collaboration and proactive communication. Hotel operators can update their room availability online, while visitors book online. Smart technology tracks and

records site features that attract people most, allowing more cross-promotion of information and products. Because the system is inter-operable with EnglandNet – the government data exchange standard between all tourism systems – data can be passed on to national marketing channels. The development could not come at a better time as the region begins to gear up seriously for Liverpool's status as European Capital of Culture 2008.

[www.newmind.co.uk](http://www.newmind.co.uk)

## THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

[www.visitliverpool.com](http://www.visitliverpool.com) is now recognised as the definitive online guide to the city, according to Pam Wilsher, TMP's head of Tourism Strategy.

'This is indicative of how the world's tourism industries will operate in future to maximise their major financial and employment opportunities while satisfying discerning customers,' she explains. While the site won the prestigious Webuse Magazine Gold Award, its benefits are very practical. In 2003, TMP generated bookings worth £0.9 million with six call centre staff who also saved £15,000 in phone bills by checking and booking hotel rooms online.

During 2004, MERVIN will have generated bookings of more than £1.8 million with only three call centre staff freeing the remaining staff to work on other aspects of promoting the Liverpool city region. More than 30% of TMP's conference bookings are now generated online; the number of online visitors has risen in a year from 6,000 to 42,000.

[www.visitliverpool.com](http://www.visitliverpool.com)



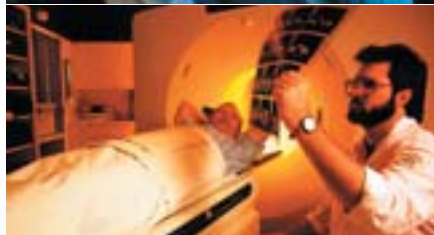


# ADVANCING THE UK HEALTH AGENDA

BRINGING TOGETHER PRIVATE INNOVATION, PUBLIC IMPLEMENTATION AND BLUE-SKY THINKING



Delivering a world-class UK health service pivots not only on specific IT goals but also systems that rely on IT to function efficiently. While the targets are clear, implementation opens up unbridled scope for the innovator.



For its many strengths in an open competition, Merseyside was chosen as a prime location for implementing the NHS's regional IT strategy. It is also the source of imaginative offerings from ICT entrepreneurs who have been quick to identify where change generates niche needs that specialist solutions can satisfy.



As an NHS local service provider, CSC (Computer Science Corporation) has made Knowsley its base for activities. Parity Medical is a Wirral-based company that is rapidly showing how new technology can mean better care. Meanwhile, the International Centre for Digital Content

(ICDC) is giving patients intimate personal support through a new form of medical relationship that has long-term global implications.

Most significantly, Merseyside is developing the critical mass to support a permanent health industry-orientated ICT community.



## MERSEYSIDE IMPRESSES CSC AND WILL PLAY A ROLE IN THE NHS'S NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**CSC, a leading global information technology (IT) services company, has opened offices in Knowsley as part of its ten year Local Service Provider (LSP) contract with the NHS to improve patient care in the Northwest and West Midlands regions. The £1.3 billion contract will lead to the creation of hundreds of new, skilled ICT jobs in Merseyside.**



**'Our task is to totally revolutionise the NHS's information systems throughout the region, from GP surgeries to hospitals and ambulance services. This is part of a national programme to improve the safety and efficiency of patient care. It will mean a fundamental improvement in access to patient information at the point of patient care,' explains Patrick Gormley, CSC Account Executive for Cheshire and Merseyside (pictured above).**

The Northwest and West Midlands geography stretches from Cumbria in the north to Herefordshire in the south – serving 12.2 million people.

'What sealed the decision to locate to Knowsley was the speed with which

The Mersey Partnership, Northwest Regional Development Agency and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council responded with a benefit-packed package,' says Patrick. 'Plus, there is tremendous future skills potential and availability of graduates, which will be very valuable to the NHS's National Programme for IT.'

The scale of this NHS programme is such that CSC formed an alliance with Hedra, a public sector change management specialist; iSOFT, whose application suite forms the core of the alliance's software solution; and SCC, who will provide both infrastructure and desktop management services. An estimated 100 new skilled posts are being created in the first year.

[www.cscalliance.com](http://www.cscalliance.com)

## SPECIALIST CLINICAL INFORMATION ACCESS

A NICHE ICT MARKET



**Recent Department of Health directives require NHS Trusts to gradually put in place an Integrated Care Records System to electronically record and retrieve key data, including patient records, X-ray results, bookings and prescribing information.**

**Wirral-based ICT solution provider Parity ICT was swift to recognise that making information available at the point of care – often the patient’s bedside – can result in immediate medical action.**

In response, it established Parity Medical, a separate division to service this growing mobile market. The Health Services sector now recognises that rapid data access reduces duplication, increases clinician productivity, cuts costs significantly and leads to quicker, more effective treatment.

Parity Medical has gone on to develop a range of bespoke products designed to operate specifically in challenging clinical environments. Its specialised solutions are crafted carefully for a niche ICT market. In addition to the technologies of wireless and touchscreen, it has developed advanced power management software that extends battery run time to 20 hours, compared with



Marketing good ideas to the world

the conventional 4-8 hours, and a battery life to five years instead of the normal 100 days. As a fine example of Merseyside innovation with significant national and international implications, the technical benefits go on to include advanced disease control measures, highly efficient ergonomics and multiple displays.

[www.paritymedical.com](http://www.paritymedical.com)



## MIHEALTH KEEPS VULNERABLE PATIENTS IN TOUCH



**mihealth creates a new interactive link between patients and clinicians. The breakthrough gives patients suffering from chronic medical conditions the power to make informed choices about their treatment and care by enabling their own clinician to provide timely, personalised information about their condition that is accurate, up-to-date, authoritative and always accessible.**

mihealth acts as a single, all-in-one source that brings together and maps medical

information and personal experience to a patient’s own care pathway, explains Jane Wood, mihealth Project Manager at the International Centre for Digital Content (ICDC). ‘The result is an extensive, media rich resource that supports both patients and their significant others,’ she explains.

‘The system includes appointment and treatment diaries, plus important contacts that help patients to retain and recall information. There is also a journal to record a patient’s day-to-day personal wellbeing so clinicians can understand how they really feel.’

The system delivers information to multiple devices in and out of the hospital environment: hand held computers, desktop and tablet PC, kiosk, plasma screens and future developments for mobile phone and

interactive TV. A pilot study is taking place at The Linda McCartney Centre - The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospital Trust. The results are expected to lead to a much wider-scale study.

[www.mihealth.info](http://www.mihealth.info)





# INITIATIVES FOR A FAR-REACHING STRATEGY

**Merseyside ICT Sector has four clear priorities for the development of a sustainable regional community of ICT companies.**

**Our strategic aims are to: -**

- **Achieve 10% business growth and development in GDP terms**
- **Act as a catalyst for skills and job creation and retention**
- **Provide business support services while encouraging co-operative networking and best practice**
- **Be an influential voice in lobbying and decision-making at a regional and national level**

We also plan to make Merseyside the centre of choice for inward-bound, high-technology investment. The diagram opposite (page 9) shows how these principal areas of focus (A to D) interlock and an eight-point portfolio of recommended proposals for their implementation derived from original ideas generated within the Merseyside ICT cluster network.

## **(A) COMMERCIAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT**

Our aim is to compound and accelerate the sector's current growth rate.

Many companies are already co-operating to support each other in collaborative bids and tenders.

We are also key to an Innovative Forum that is generating pace-setting solutions of international significance.

## **(B) SUSTAINABLE SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT**

Our strategy for maximising skills and employment potential is based on a 'Skills Escalator' that matches personal development with sector demand.

The escalator extends from re-equipping and returning competent people to our industry, to apprenticeship training, graduate and professional placement, closing the business skills gap and the effective transfer of expert knowledge.

## **(C) BUSINESS SUPPORT AND CREATIVE NETWORKING**

Small and medium-sized companies excel at what they do best and welcome support in areas beyond their direct experience.

Meanwhile, for many people, networking, goodwill and constructive co-operation are effective ways of pooling powerful knowledge and competing.

Here, the Sector can close the missing links by providing essential services.

## **(D) AN INFLUENTIAL NATIONAL VOICE**

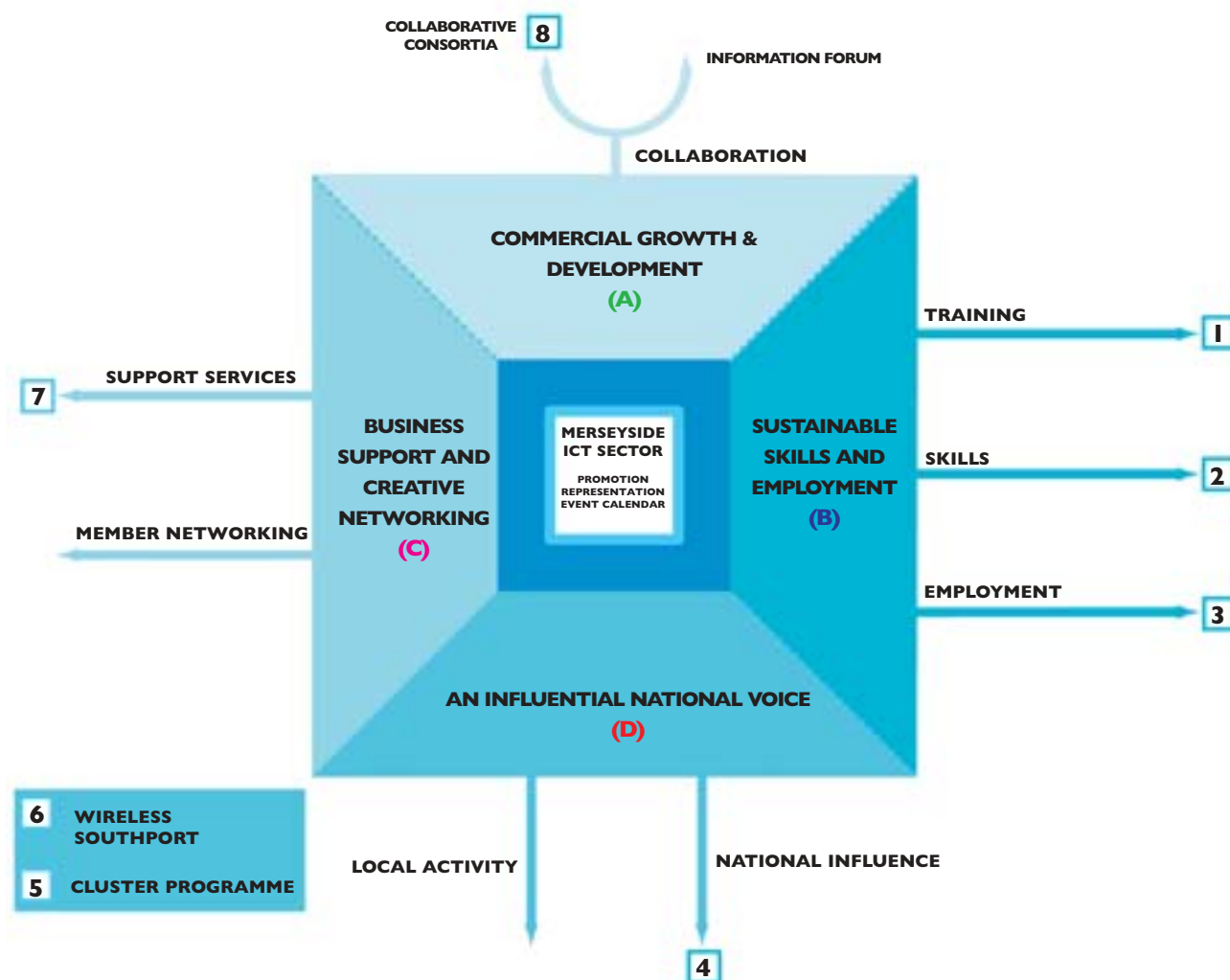
There are many ICT hubs of excellence – Merseyside ICT Sector's specific forte is in providing niche market solutions.

It is important that the Sector has a regional voice in promoting prosperity. At the same time, an influential national and international say is crucial.

One of our key roles is to act as a persuasive lobbying voice.







## PORTFOLIO OF RECOMMENDED PROPOSALS

### (1) Leadership skills for SMEs

Recognised leadership qualifications will be available to 100 SMEs. Institute of Leadership and Management online courses will lead to valuable AM Inst LM qualifications that are generally recognised to be two levels below a full MBA degree.

### (2) Merseyside Master Class

To accelerate growth amongst high potential businesses, Master Classes will offer leading entrepreneurs an inspirational curriculum linked to the best that the Liverpool Business School, London School of Economics, Harvard Business School and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) can offer.

### (3) Employment engagement and industry placements

The Merseyside Industry Placement Forum meets eight times a year to promote skills development and placement of skilled

personnel with the aim of closing a well-recognised skills gap. Mentoring is seen as a core element.

### (4) Assisted Intellect membership

Intellect Merseyside will become a hub of Intellect Northwest activities, providing a minimum of 12 educational business development modules and seminars annually.

### (5) Local ICT cluster network development

Geographically based on the six districts of Merseyside, clusters will continue to develop into robust area associations with strong memberships that are self-sustaining far into the future.

### (6) Wireless Southport

This Sefton ICT cluster initiative - primarily a private venture led by a local business consortium to capitalise on a unique

commercial opportunity - is an example of the district level synergies we will help to encourage.

### (7) SME business support

Our 10% sustainable growth target for the small business sector will encourage best practice, while addressing financial and training priorities, and includes the development of a Centre of Excellence calculated to attract key blue-chip suppliers.

### (8) SME collaborative consortia

By making it easy for small companies to cooperate with complementary partners, we will help them to compete collectively for larger, tender-based business prospects across the UK and Europe. The programme will include a small team that actively seeks out and manages suitable ICT tender opportunities.





## DEVELOPING WORLD-CLASS DIGITAL CONTENT

**There are two successful routes for developing digital technology – through blue-sky product innovation and by giving industry pragmatic solutions for known problems.**



**The International Centre for Digital Content (ICDC) does both well. As part of Liverpool John Moores University, it reaches out to end-user businesses throughout the region's growth sectors, transferring skills and knowledge to open up modern markets for established SMEs.**



At the same time, its central Liverpool DigitalINC incubation facility, offering entrepreneurs workspace and fast-track business support, is home for 14 start-ups focused on animation, graphic design, games development and mobile applications. All R&D projects have local business partners involved in developing and commercialising new products. ICDC is also a University school, running – in conjunction with industry – a portfolio of under, post-graduate and short-course training to stimulate digital sector employment.

The 'international' part of its name is highly significant – ICDC believes it has a two-way mission to maximise the Northwest's digital content profile in global markets while encouraging world business to relocate, invest and bring knowledge to the region. Its reward is research and commercial partners – including major global names – in China,



Professor Simon Robertshaw, Director, ICDC

India, South Korea, the USA, Canada, France, Germany and Finland. ICDC also has an outstanding research reputation in content solutions for Interactive TV, mobile, wireless, Bluetooth and GPS applications to be launched on world markets.

[www.icdc.org.uk](http://www.icdc.org.uk)

## ICT AND E-BUSINESS TURN ESTABLISHED SMES INTO ONLINE WINNERS

**e-business blended with ICT is allowing many traditional SMEs to service global customers – leading to swift growth, new markets and sustainable job creation.**

**The catalyst is Liverpool John Moores University's e-business and Technology Management Group (EBTMG) and Professor Ian Barclay. The Group's strong track record with some 500 SMEs is integral to Merseyside's regeneration.**

Its business support work is closely linked to the UK's Small Business Service and the USA's Small Business Administration network, explains Professor Barclay. 'By working through the Merseyside SME Development Centre (MSMEDC), which is ISO9001:2000 accredited, we are able to work with a wide variety of companies,' he

adds. An SME Supply Chain Management (SCM) tool that takes just 30 minutes to assess companies against UK and world SCM best practice standards is one result of the Group's applied research with Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. Its work with businesses is equally impressive. Using an e-business strategy, one traditional manufacturer is now winning in extremely competitive world markets. By adopting a paperless operational system, another engineering firm is finding new business in existing and new service markets. A world-class ICT-based SCM system led to one importing and distribution company growing by 100% in three years. For another, ICT has meant expansion, plus a major

investment in product manufacture. Diversification into very high-value specialist growth areas has been one electronics manufacturer's prize.

[i.barclay@livjm.ac.uk](mailto:i.barclay@livjm.ac.uk)

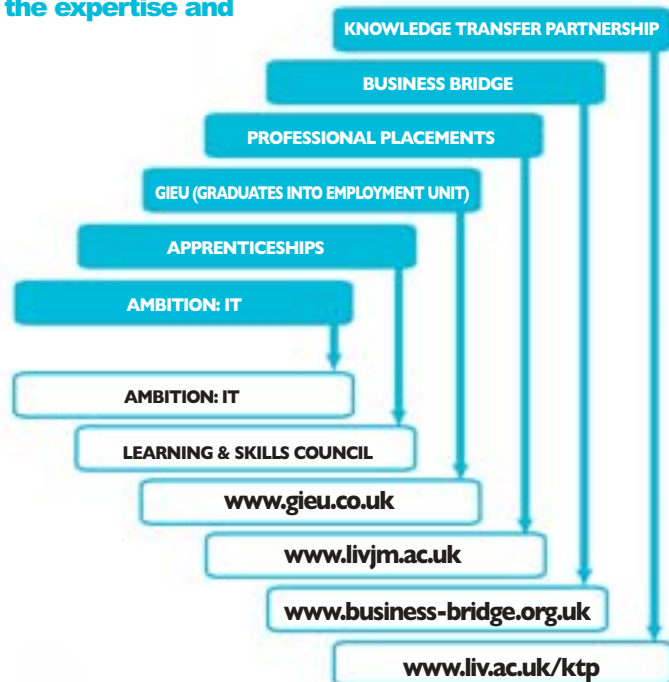


e-business award winners

# INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS AND THE SKILLS ESCALATOR

**We realise that our skills are one of our major assets. For this reason, we place great stock on skills development, job placement and the transfer of expert knowledge based on the expertise and experience of people who are industry leaders.**

Concurrently, continuous personal skills development maximises the contribution that personnel make, means greater job satisfaction and staff retention. Our tool is the Skills Escalator, a concept that enables individuals to return effectively into the skills market through Jobcentre Plus and Ambition:IT. It continues through apprentice training, graduate and professional placements. At the higher end we work with business to resolve any skills gaps and ensure that specialists have good reason to live and work on Merseyside. The depth of the region's skills resources has been fundamental in major corporate decisions to locate to Merseyside.



## AMBITION:IT

Developed by the National Employment Panel and Jobcentre Plus, Ambition:IT is an employer-led government initiative to create IT sector job opportunities for unemployed people.

Its aim is to help employers find the best people for the job and to give unemployed people access to better paid opportunities with long-term prospects. It is backed by leading IT industry employers.

[www.ambitionit.org.uk](http://www.ambitionit.org.uk)  
[info@ambitionit.org.uk](mailto:info@ambitionit.org.uk)

## APPRENTICESHIPS

The Learning & Skills Council Greater Merseyside is responsible for funding and planning post-16 education and training for young people and adults in England. It can advise on ways to develop your business through a range of programmes for your employees, including Apprenticeships.

[www.lsc.gov.uk/merseyside](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/merseyside)  
[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)  
[www.onlinedirectory.org.uk](http://www.onlinedirectory.org.uk)  
[merseysideinfo@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:merseysideinfo@lsc.gov.uk)

## GIEU (GRADUATES INTO EMPLOYMENT UNIT)

GIEU is an independent University of Liverpool business unit, which supports economic regeneration by providing graduate placements to industry.

Companies meeting European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) criteria are eligible. Key qualifying conditions are: - having no more than 250 employees, being Merseyside or Greater Merseyside based and operating in one of an extensive list of ERDF designated growth sectors.

[c.buckman@gieu.co.uk](mailto:c.buckman@gieu.co.uk)  
[www.gieu.co.uk](http://www.gieu.co.uk)

## PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENTS

During their penultimate year students undertake a work placement. This provides them with a platform for the practical implementation of their ICT skills and theory within the business environment. As a result, both the student and placement provider achieve a range of mutual benefits.

[www.livjm.ac.uk/blw/placements](http://www.livjm.ac.uk/blw/placements)  
[r.capper@livjm.ac.uk](mailto:r.capper@livjm.ac.uk)

## BUSINESS BRIDGE

Merseyside companies can choose Business Bridge skilled university students when they either lack the time, or do not have the appropriate skills, for a particular task. The scheme is designed to be cost-effective and flexible in length - roles do not have to be specifically ICT-related.

[www.business-bridge.org.uk](http://www.business-bridge.org.uk)  
[business-bridge@livjm.ac.uk](mailto:business-bridge@livjm.ac.uk)

## KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PARTNERSHIP (KTP)

The DTI Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) grant-funded scheme facilitates strategic change in business, is open to large and small enterprises and focuses on enhancing competitiveness. Implementation is through an agreed 1-3 year duration plan in partnership with a knowledge base organisation (university). High-quality graduates are recruited into participating companies to deliver change programmes, while academic staff mentor companies and graduates throughout.

[andy.jones@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:andy.jones@liverpool.ac.uk)  
[www.liv.ac.uk/ktp](http://www.liv.ac.uk/ktp)



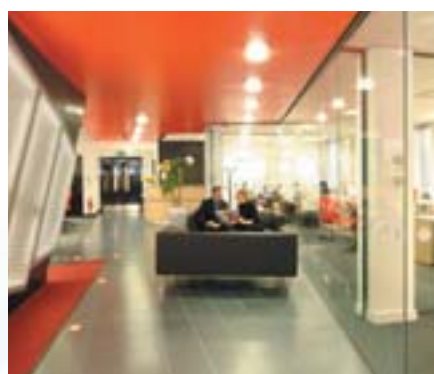
## OPPORTUNITIES MULTIPLY AS EU FUNDING MAKES THE DIGITAL AGE A DAILY REALITY

Merseyside's carefully choreographed transformation to become an 'information society' is leading to new ICT opportunities, both within the Metropolitan area itself and for companies seeking a springboard to world markets.

Objective One programme  
**eu&merseyside**  
 European Funding is Creating New Opportunities

**A single integrated strategy for eBusiness, eLearning, eSkills, ePublic Services, eCommunities and eInfrastructure is being driven forward rapidly by the Merseyside Digital Development Agency (MDDA) as a flagship alliance between key ICT stakeholders, Objective One and the Northwest Development Agency.**

The approach recognises that ICT's pervasive nature demands joined-up strategy development and public investment.



One result is that more than 16,000 Merseysiders have received ICT training funded by Objective One since January 2000, and are becoming confident in the routine daily use of ICT. The local economy will continue to benefit, while business has access to a new, skilled employment base. A crucial knock-on effect will be a broad boost for skills development, from NVQ training to post-graduate studies, according to David Taylor, ICT Policy Manager for Objective One Merseyside. 'To date, the Objective One programme has funded a significant amount of ICT skills training, much of it targeted at hard to reach groups. Having a digitally literate population is one of the critical legacies Objective One will leave behind.'

Current projects underway with Objective One funding include a Digital Academy, an eLearning construction tool and the Mersey Broadband initiative. Others in the pipeline include the Liverpool digital technology hub, an ICT Investment Fund to finance SME enterprise, a Vendor Qualification scheme and an eLearning Innovation Fund. Recent



successes include the promotion of eBusiness best practice with the Business Link organisation. Meanwhile, the Skillworks programme, supported by Objective One and the Learning & Skills Council to cover up to 80% of SME employee training costs, is making a major impact in the local training market – much of it centred on enhancing ICT skills. Objective One has also invested £-millions in the Merseyside Special Investment Fund. Here, much of the uptake is either from expanding ICT companies themselves or investments in technology by businesses that need quality solutions from Merseyside's ICT supplier community.

[www.euandmerseyside.org](http://www.euandmerseyside.org)

## NWDA BACKS OPPORTUNITIES FOR MERSEYSIDE ICT COMPANIES TO WIN ON A WORLD STAGE



The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) is responsible for the sustainable economic regeneration of England's Northwest. With a budget of £1.4 billion over the next three years, key priorities are business development, regeneration, skills and employment, infrastructure and image. The NWDA recognises the importance of ICT as a regional driver for

economic growth and is promoting a significant number of projects across the Northwest to improve business competitiveness. Across Merseyside, the Agency has provided £3.2 million for MerseyBroadband, a scheme designed to ensure the sub-region remains competitive in the global marketplace by creating business opportunities for local companies, as well as specific support for SMEs, teleworking and a community chest fund of more than £0.5 million to promote projects to increase broadband use. Other significant projects include a series of seminars to advise Merseyside SMEs on the use of broadband technology for business and a

project to connect up learning centres, community organisations and SMEs in Speke and Garston using broadband. Greater broadband use will be a boost for SMEs, according to Kevin Morley, NWDA Head of ICT Policy. 'Access to fast and reliable Internet connections is becoming increasingly important and the Agency is working hard to ensure that the Northwest is able to fully grasp the new opportunities presented by the digital revolution,' he explains.

[www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)  
[www.englandsnorthwest.com](http://www.englandsnorthwest.com)  
[www.merseybroadband.com](http://www.merseybroadband.com)



## TRAINING – CORPORATE AS WELL AS PERSONAL FOR PERSONNEL



provide more formal opportunities for knowledge transfer. Additionally, it can act as a resource and centre of excellence to which members can turn for support when charting unfamiliar technical, commercial, legal or professional waters.

The Sector can also offer a useful overview that evades busy businesses working day to day. A typical example is where companies find it easy to divorce sizeable investments in up-to-date software from the need to retrain staff. This scenario means that businesses are not able to enjoy the productivity gains from their investment. If you require special business training focused on your potential, contact the Merseyside ICT Board on 0151 221 3529.

An industry is as good as its people. Whilst we place great emphasis on the constant development of individual skills and retention of skilled employees within the sector, we know it is equally important that people with outstanding technical abilities are also equipped to run good businesses as entrepreneurs.

The cluster concept is for people to share experiences and learn by example through networking. As the cluster's co-ordinating centre, the Sector is also in a position to

A core function of Merseyside ICT Sector is to help small businesses step away from daily pressures to appreciate wider demands made on them as business leaders.



## WORKING WITH INTELLECT - A UK SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP



A key foundation stone in Merseyside ICT Sector development to 2007 and beyond is a unique relationship with Intellect, which represents 1,000 large and small organisations in the UK's information technology, telecommunications and electronics sectors.

particular, it provides a qualitative understanding of the marketplace, resulting from its links with buyers, sellers, policy-makers, opinion-leaders, regulators and analysts.

It is also an organisation that confronts increasingly complex challenges facing the industry – its initiatives include compiling a code, setting best practice standards for suppliers working in the public sector and a guide to effective partnering. Adding value to offset higher costs compared to global ICT competitors – the core essence of a knowledge economy - is another central priority. The key is communication through good partnerships, which is why the Sector has developed a special relationship on behalf of its members with the UK trade body, Intellect.

[www.intellectuk.org](http://www.intellectuk.org)



Intellect's goal – like the Sector's - is to accelerate growth, while representing our industry's agenda to Government and the private sector. It also raises media awareness. Membership includes the UK's most influential, innovative and largest organisations.

The Sector's relationship will centre on bespoke training programmes that give Merseyside ICT companies special access to best practice at a national level, plus preferential early membership for many. Intellect is seen as the national voice of the high-tech industry. It is well regarded as a prime source of knowledge and expertise. In



# KEY ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING MERSEYSIDE ICT

## UNITED WE STAND

Our strength is our members and supporters – their ideas, skills, initiative, adaptability and ambitions.

Members are invited to play an active role in a series of district-level events, seminars and co-operative ventures organised through the year.



## MAKING CONTACT

We would like to discuss how we can help you to make a success of ICT-based projects on Merseyside.

In particular, we would like to show you the special strengths, skills, financial advantages and support that Merseyside offers. However, we appreciate that any decisions you make must be based on reliable information. If you would like more detail, or to talk to us in confidence, please contact: -

**Steve Smith**  
**ICT Industry Sector Director**  
**Merseyside ICT**

**steve.smith@merseysideict.org.uk**  
**t: +44 (0)151 221 3529**  
**f: +44 (0)151 220 5715**

**1 Faraday Road**  
**Wavertree Technology Park**  
**Liverpool L13 IEH**

The Merseyside ICT Sector represents a series of geographically defined district clusters in which ICT companies co-operate rather than compete, join in collaborative ventures, provide a voice in local decision-making and exchange technical and commercial ideas. To talk to the clusters directly, please contact: -

**Knowsley ICT Cluster**  
**Chair - Eric Menzies**  
**BEC Systems Limited**

**Tel 0151 290 1111**  
**eric@becsystems.com**

**Liverpool ICT Cluster**  
**Chair - Johnny Read**  
**Village Software Engineering Ltd**

**Tel 0151 709 7728**  
**read@villagesoftware.co.uk**

**St Helens High Technology Group**  
**Chair - Kevin Cliffe**  
**Lake Technologies Limited**

**Tel 01744 622304**  
**kcliffe@laketechnologies.co.uk**

**Sefton ICT Cluster**  
**Chair - Ed Horwich**  
**Pacificstream.com**

**Tel 08456 444 345**  
**support@pacificstream.com**

**Wirral ICT Cluster**  
**Chair - David Roberts**  
**Amatica Limited**

**Tel 0151 650 6991**  
**david.roberts@amatica.com**

