

## Innohubs Study Visit Report North Down, 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011

### Study Visit Participants

#### **Nacka, Sweden**

Nina Bozic, Nacka Kommun  
Jan-Eric Jansson, Nacka Kommun

#### **Loures, Portugal**

Carla Cruz, Câmara Municipal de Loures  
Maria José Azevedo, Câmara Municipal de Loures  
Graça Santos, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

#### **North Down, Northern Ireland**

Clare McGill, North Down Borough Council  
Michael Paul, North Down Borough Council



**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Good Practice:** Advantage NI  
**Categories:** Mindset, Training, Operation, Collaboration  
**Target Groups:** People aged 16-30  
<http://www.advantage-ni.com>

Advantage NI is an award-winning project management company, specialising in economic development programmes for young people.

Gerry Ford, Director of Advantage, outlined the nature and scope of the organisation.

For over 25 years, Advantage has designed and delivered enterprise awareness and training programmes on behalf of public, private and voluntary organisations, nationally and internationally.

A current project in Northern Ireland is the *The Big Idea!* This is a workshop designed to explore creative solutions to improve the participants' place of living, business or local community, thereby highlighting opportunities for private enterprise.

Gerry also described some of the overseas projects they have pioneered in hostile environments, for example areas of conflict or regions with a hostile physical environment. All focused on improving the capacity of young people to develop economic activities and included projects in Uganda, Iraq and Greenland.

**Good Practice:** SIGNAL Centre of Business Excellence (owned by North Down Borough Council)  
**Categories:** Training, Operation  
**Target Groups:** Existing businesses that wish to develop and grow  
<http://www.signalni.com>

Opened in 2004, The Signal Centre is a purpose-built business venue in the main commercial area of North Down. It houses Council's economic development department and offers world-class meeting rooms and conference facilities to local businesses and organisations.

Delegates toured the facility and heard about its history and contribution to the Borough's economic wellbeing.

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Good Practice:** Focused Partnerships – La Salle Matrix Thinking  
**Categories:** Mindset, Training, Operation  
**Target Groups:** Existing businesses that wish to increase their capacity for innovation  
<http://www.focusedpartnerships.com>

Focused Partnership is a Northern Irish consultancy that is authorised to use *La Salle Matrix Thinking* methodology in Europe.

In 1999 Roger La Salle set about documenting a simple thinking methodology that underpins successful business building. *Matrix Thinking* was the result and can be applied to creativity, innovation and finding business opportunities.

We experienced a workshop called *Innovate Now*. This give participants insight into a structured system that can be used in all sectors at any stage for anything, be it product (new or old), process, service or opportunity.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the method is the focus on the whole supply chain. We were encouraged to see things through different sets of eyes (suppliers, customers etc). What is a valuable innovation to one part of the process may be viewed negatively by another.

**Good Practice:** Blick Shared Studios – incubator for digital and creative start-up businesses  
**Categories:** Training, Operation, Collaboration  
**Target Groups:** Individuals wishing to launch a creative business  
<http://www.blickstudios.org>

Blick Shared Studios is a social enterprise whose directors are drawn from established creative businesses. Located in a large Victorian house in south Belfast, the incubator offers wrap-around support for new start-ups during the early growth phase.

We toured the building, met some of the entrepreneurs and learnt about the Studio's history and activities.

**Good Practice:** Belfast City Council – creative industries support programme  
**Categories:** All  
**Target Groups:** Creative businesses in Belfast (e.g. film & television, digital media, music, design)  
<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/creativeindustries/index.asp>

Brendan McGoran is the Creative Industries Officer for Belfast City Council. He explained his role in supporting the sector and outlined some recent projects.

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Good Practice:** South Eastern Regional College (SERC) – enriching the curriculum

**Categories:** Mindset, Training

**Target Groups:** Students aged 16+

<http://www.serc-enterprise.ac.uk>

<http://www.serc.ac.uk>

SERC is one of six *Colleges of Further and Higher Education* in Northern Ireland that collectively serve over 200,000 learners every year and attract 1 in 3 school leavers aged 16-17.

Funded by the Department for Employment and Learning – part of the Province’s devolved regional government – the sector is Northern Ireland’s largest skills-training provider.

The team took part in an Enterprise Masterclass, which is one of SERC’s initiatives to promote enterprise – what it describes as “enriching the learner’s experience”.

Two local entrepreneurs shared their experiences in starting a new business and encouraged the students to develop enterprising behaviour. The students were then given a challenge and broke into small teams to work on their solution:

*Take something unique to or special about Northern Ireland and let the world know about it.*

Nina Bozic and Michael Paul from Innohubs joined the judging panel. The winning team had chosen a local alcoholic drink and planned to launch a version in the USA with cowboy-style branding.

**Good Practice:** Fingerprint Learning Ltd – the EntreBraineur research project

**Categories:** Mindset, Training

**Target Groups:** All

<http://www.fingerprintlearning.com>

In 2010 Dr John Kelly of Fingerprint Learning Ltd and Dr Brain Cummins of Stranmillis University College Belfast researched the learning preferences of 55 entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland.

Dr Kelly delivered a presentation about the research. A summary can be downloaded at:

[www.stran.ac.uk/informationabout/research/entrebraineurproject/](http://www.stran.ac.uk/informationabout/research/entrebraineurproject/) and the following quotation provides insight to the report’s conclusions:

“Fostering entrepreneurship must be central *within* curriculum and pedagogy in schools and colleges, rather than relying on one-off projects/competitions/events etc., or entrepreneur presentations.

While it is important for students to be exposed to entrepreneurs, arguably it will do little to create entrepreneurs if schools and colleges continue to favour left-brain dominant students who are, on the basis of this study, unlikely to become entrepreneurs.”