

eLab News



The Broadband eLaboratory Newsletter - December 2003

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“That was the year that was.....”

The end of the year is always a good time to reflect on what has been achieved during the previous twelve months, and obviously there's plenty to dwell on where the eLaboratory project is concerned. As the year draws to a close, we thought it would be worthwhile taking a look back at the high points since the official launch earlier this year.

As most people are aware, the project was conceived by Instant Search Managing Director Anthony Capstick, who identified that the benefits of broadband connections should be more actively promoted to businesses. He put together a proposal, established partnerships with project sponsors, and the eLaboratory project was born.

The Instant Search office in Whalley was designated as the first eLaboratory site, and after the installation of demonstration equipment, representatives from local business attended the inaugural session in June. A second site, at the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce offices in Accrington, opened at the end of August, and video conferencing links between the two sites are now a feature of the demonstrations presented to attendees.

Since the sessions began, a variety of different business types have been represented at presentations, and the feedback has been extremely positive. Reflecting on the past 12 months, Anthony Capstick is satisfied that the aim of the project - to raise the knowledge of local business people and demonstrate the advantages available to them if they were to utilise broadband - has been achieved. “Some of the conversations that take place during the sessions are very basic in nature but that's all part of



The Chamber offices (above), home of the Accrington eLab, and a view below of equipment in the Whalley eLab.



the project”, he said. “We've found that there's confusion about the differences between broadband and ISDN, and this is one issue that we've often had to clarify. With ISDN there is a charge each time a call is made whereas with broadband it's a fixed fee for unlimited use, and the fact that this has been a regular topic of conversation confirms that there was a need for a project of this nature”.

As the year drew to a close, the project attracted national attention when the government minister for e-commerce, Stephen Timms, came to the Whalley site to attend a series of broadband demonstrations. His visit, and the publicity it attracted, elevated the project from a local to a national level and brought the curtain down on a highly successful first 12 months.

As Frank Sinatra might have said – “It was a very good year”.....

E-commerce minister visits the Whalley eLaboratory



Representatives from local companies were invited to the Whalley office to meet the Minister. Pictured here from left to right are: Hilary Shepherd (Maureen Cookson), Caroline James (Trevor Dawson and Co), Karen Preece (UK Online for Business) and Craig Nicholls (Calder Services).

The minister of State for Energy, e-Commerce and Postal Services visited the Broadband eLaboratory in Whalley early in December to officially declare the project open, and was able to see for himself the facilities and broadband applications that local businesses in the area can utilise to develop their own broadband based solutions.

MP Stephen Timms was given a tour of the Instant Search offices and also took the opportunity to meet and chat with local business people who had previously taken advantage of the free demonstrations and advice sessions available.

Representatives from the organisations involved in the project were also represented, including Mike Damms (Chamber of Commerce), Mike Lawton and Martin Kirk (eLancs.net) and Alan Roff (Lancashire Digital Development Agency). Prior to the Minister's arrival, two demonstrations took place. First, Nigel Evans, Conservative MP for Ribble Valley, conducted a video link with Anthony Capstick from the House of Commons, demonstrating how the MP hoped to engage with constituents when he was unable to attend local surgeries in person. In another link up, Clitheroe town councillor and chairman of Ribble Valley Liberal Democrats, Councillor David Berryman, communicated from an oil rig in the South China Sea off Borneo via an internet telephone call and MSN computer chat link to the Broadband eLaboratory.



E-commerce Minister Stephen Timms MP, pictured here with Instant Search Managing Director Anthony Capstick, during his visit to the Whalley eLaboratory.

During his visit, Mr Timms reaffirmed the government's commitment to broadband connectivity. He stated that although Britain still lagged behind Canada and Japan in the penetration of its broadband network, he was confident that Britain's target of having the most extensive broadband network of any G7 industrialised country by 2005 would be met.

Wanted - businesses to develop broadband solutions

As part of the ongoing development of the Broadband eLaboratory project, we are looking for businesses that we can help to develop their ideas for utilising broadband within their own organisations.

We can accommodate up to four businesses, each on their own individual projects, who would like to explore the potential uses of broadband. The broadband facilities established in the eLaboratory will be made available free of charge to help investigate and develop the concept. The offer extends to any business, large or small, and can be utilised either for one off or ongoing projects. We would be especially interested in hearing

from business representatives who have visited one of the eLaboratory sites so far, although this is by no means a pre-requisite. For further information on this free service, contact us on the bookings and information number 01254 828269.

And finally.....

Everyone here at eLab News would like to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy (and broadband enabled!!!) New Year. Let's hope that 2004 proves to be a successful year for us all.

The Broadband eLaboratory project is managed by Instant Search and supported by the following organisations:

