

eLab News



The Broadband eLaboratory Newsletter - January 2004

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The Northwest Development Agency - a major player in the eLaboratory project

In this month's issue:

- Bill Gates says broadband is the way ahead for television
- The NWDA and their role in the eLaboratory project
- What to expect when you visit the eLaboratory

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A major partner throughout the life of the eLaboratory project so far has been the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA), the organisation responsible for the sustainable economic regeneration of England's Northwest.

Regionally worth £2.68 million, the North West Broadband Fund was launched by the NWDA in January 2002, with the aim of demonstrating the benefits of broadband and to enhance the uptake of the technology across the region. The eLaboratory project is an integral part of this overall initiative, and North West Broadband Fund Project Manager Mark Sullivan is enthusiastic about the work being carried out at the two eLaboratory project sites.

"We as an organisation realise it is crucially important both to raise awareness, and provide access to, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), to drive up business competitiveness in the Northwest", he said. "The broadband demonstrations taking place in Whalley and Accrington support our aim of providing Northwest business people with the opportunity to look at the benefits that this technology can bring to them and their businesses".



The eLab project is one of 22 North West Broadband Fund projects across the Northwest which, without funding by the NWDA, would not have been possible. As well as financial support, the Agency's commitment to the project is also illustrated in their determination for the project to deliver the innovative elements of the eLaboratory, in addition to ongoing demonstrations.

Mark says: "Our congratulations go to the Project Manager, Anthony Capstick, and his team for fulfilling the "demonstrator" aspect of the eLaboratory. We are now keen to work towards the other project outputs which include the selection of four businesses to develop creative broadband applications. The NWDA is committed to ensuring that England's Northwest is in a position to exploit the potential offered by rapidly changing technological developments, and projects like this, along with the establishment of sub-regional Digital Development Agencies, are vital in helping us to achieve our aims".

As Bill Gates said...

Many of you will be aware that Microsoft has been supportive of the eLaboratory project from the early stages, and provided some of the software which is installed at the two eLab sites. As part of the relationship that has grown as the project has been established, Anthony Capstick, Project Director of the eLabo-

ratory, was invited to attend a Microsoft presentation at the QE2 Conference Centre in Parliament Square in London on the 26th January, and one of the speakers at the event was none other than Bill Gates. During a question and answer session, Anthony took the opportunity to ask him about the future use of broadband in television broadcasts. (contd. over)

As Bill Gates said (contd.)

At the eLab we have experienced a lot of problems with viruses and spam e-mail, and Anthony was keen to hear Gates' opinions regarding the security aspects of using the Internet Protocol to support the transmission of television pictures. Gates confirmed that communication via broadband, and in particular Internet communication via broadband cable or a wireless connection, would eventually be the preferred method

of delivering television pictures. He accepted that there are concerns regarding security issues, but the imminent move of Internet Protocol, from TCP/IP version 4 to version 6 will give greater levels of security in future, and that should pave the way for television transmissions via broadband to become the norm.

We can't promise exclusive quotes from Bill Gates every month, but we'll keep you updated on this topic in future editions of eLab News!

The eLaboratory experience - and what to expect

Over 45 representatives from a variety of different businesses have now visited the eLaboratory since the facilities were set up in June last year. With each visit, we have begun to understand more and more what people want to find out when they visit and this has helped us in developing the format and content of sessions presented. For the benefit of anyone who hasn't yet visited the eLaboratory, we thought it would be a good idea this month to give an idea of what you can expect when you attend a demonstration at one of the sites.

The session is generally split into two distinct parts. We will usually begin with a sit down question and answer session, which is entitled "Everything you ever wanted to know about broadband but were too afraid to ask". This is aimed at establishing the level of understanding of the delegates in each session, and answering any questions they may have in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

The second part of the session is "hands on", giving everyone the chance to see and use the various facilities in the eLaboratory. It may be that some delegates have a specific interest in one area, and we may structure the sessions accordingly. Otherwise we would take the opportunity to demonstrate the uses and applications of all the equipment in the eLaboratory. This includes video conferencing, voice over IP telephones, a webcam, interactive whiteboards connected via a wireless broadband connection, along with an explanation of the wireless technology and how it works.

We have both Apple Macs and PC's attached to servers running Microsoft for Small Business, so that demonstrations on both types of machine can be given. Low budget video conferencing equipment, with facilities for both types of machine, is in place at both the Chamber of Commerce and the Whalley sites, so that people can experience the quality available from a good quality broadband connection on both types of machine, when tests are run connecting the two sites together.



A view inside the Broadband eLaboratory

We also have high specification video conferencing equipment, giving almost broadcast quality images. This is demonstrated via a television and an interactive whiteboard with a big screen projector display. Using this, we've been able to show delegates how it is possible to remotely work on collaborative projects using a Word document. Two people at separate locations can work on the same document at the same time, linked together by the broadband connection.

Hopefully this has given a taste of what you can expect from one of our sessions. Don't forget we are still on the lookout for businesses that we can help to develop their ideas for utilising broadband within their own organisations. We can accommodate up to four individual businesses in the eLaboratory, who could use the facilities free of charge to explore the potential uses of broadband in their organisations. For further information on this free service, or to book a session, contact us on the bookings and information number 01254 828269.

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

