



NORFOLK KNOWLEDGE - PRESS RELEASE

A new scheme has been launched in Norfolk that aims to increase and promote innovation throughout the County.

The Norfolk Knowledge Innovation Panel is offering support, mentoring and possible financial assistance that will equip organisations with taking their innovation objectives to the next level.

Norfolk Knowledge is now seeking Norfolk based businesses including start-ups, Community and Voluntary Sector organisations, Public Sector organisations and entrepreneurial individuals to apply for the scheme.

Innovation is not restricted to new products; it also includes new processes in manufacturing, marketing or services. Any areas of innovation can be considered.

The ultimate aim of the project is to raise aspirations and awareness of innovation in the region's management community, and to foster a nationally recognised culture of innovation in the region. The benefits of this for Norfolk should include economic growth, a more efficient public service delivery, and an enhanced quality of life.

Richard Garnett, Chair of the Norfolk Knowledge Innovation Panel commented,

“As a region, Norfolk has a rich heritage of innovation. Through this scheme we aim to promote, nurture and celebrate this innovation. Businesses and organisations can now gain access to a team of very experienced individuals that will be there to assist them and push

their innovation project to the next level. Whether the innovations are in new products, services or systems, we urge organisations to apply now for this help which could also include funding. This will be a great boost for their organisation and for Norfolk as a whole.”

Norfolk Knowledge itself is led by Norwich Business School (UEA) and supported by Norfolk County Council. It allows those retired or otherwise heavily experienced in running businesses, departments or voluntary organisations to share their knowledge with organisations and businesses based in Norfolk.

Norfolk Knowledge aims to recruit a number of potentially innovative organisations through a transparent and competitive procedure on a quarterly basis throughout the year. It will provide the most promising candidates with a package of support - in terms of expertise and finance, across the period and until April 2012. It also aims to provide practical assistance to all applicants.

Norfolk Knowledge Innovation Panel is part of the Vital Rural Area project, funded by the European Regional Development Fund ERDF.

More information and the application form can be found here:

<http://www.norfolkknowledge.co.uk/innovation.aspx>

Norfolk Knowledge on Twitter:

@norfolkknowledge <http://twitter.com/Norfolkknowledge>

Editors Notes

For further press information and image requests, please contact:
Al Fox on 01904 623318 or 07946 785549 or email al@alfox.co.uk

About Norfolk Knowledge

The concept of Norfolk Knowledge was developed by Professor Nikolaos Tzokas, Chair in Marketing at Norwich Business School. Professor Tzokas identified the large numbers of extremely experienced individuals that either come to retire within Norfolk, or who lived their

working lives in Norfolk and chose to remain here when they retired or reduced the hours focused on their careers.

Although some organisations already utilised this experience, nothing focused specifically on very experienced managers, directors or business owners by providing them with opportunities to continue engaging with the Norfolk economy, helping businesses, voluntary organisations and the public sector. The potential benefit to the county meant Norfolk County Council when approached, offered full support for the concept.

MBA students from Norwich Business School carried out ten months of market research into the subject. The students contacted experienced individuals and organisations around the county to find out what experience would be willingly provided and also, what type of help was needed. On the basis of this research and financial support from Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Knowledge was launched in 2009 at an event attended by high level individuals in support of the project and its value to the Norfolk economy.

The Purpose

The main purpose of Norfolk Knowledge is to develop a network to give local businesses and other organisations access to the untapped commercial experience of individuals living within the county.

The core of experienced individuals that make up the membership, review requests for help sent from local organisations across the county, via the administration team, based at the UEA. Norfolk Knowledge also provides a social network for experienced individuals with access to events and resources at the UEA and, with the opportunity to expand both professional and social contacts.

Norfolk Knowledge has the capacity to run a range of business support programmes across the county with focus on areas such as rural SMEs, innovation and young entrepreneurs.

More info at: <http://www.norfolkknowledge.co.uk/about.aspx>

ENDS

Business brains form a panel to offer assistance

By **MATTHEW SPARKES**
Business writer

The lead technologist for Aviva, a management consultant for the Civil Aviation Authority and a lingerie firm operations director are among a new panel launched to foster innovation in business in Norfolk.

The Norfolk Knowledge Innovation Panel launched by the UEA's Norwich Business School will offer support through experienced mentors alongside financial assistance to help innovative companies from across the county.

And now it is on the hunt for local start-ups, community organisations and entrepreneurs to apply and take advantage of the support on offer.

The idea is to foster innovation in Norfolk, and applicants could have product ideas or new processes in manufacturing or marketing.

Mentors taking part in the scheme include Gavin Sargent, previously operations director for Panache Lingerie, Keith Beck, who worked in management consultancy for the Civil Aviation Authority and also founded the People First Technology consultancy and Henry Head, founder of HH Consulting and Norfolk Lavender.

Richard Garnett, chairman of the panel and lead technologist at Aviva from 2003 to 2007, is also acting as a mentor.

"As a region, Norfolk has a rich heritage of innovation," he said. "Through this scheme we aim to promote, nurture and celebrate this innovation."

"Businesses and organisations can now gain access to a team of very experienced individuals that will be there to assist them and push their



Picture: NICK BUTCHER

SOURCE OF INFORMATION: Members of the Norfolk Knowledge Innovation Panel, from left, Keith Beck, Henry Head, Richard Garnett and Gavin Sargent

innovation project to the next level. Whether the innovations are in new products, services or systems, we urge organisations to apply now for this help which could also include funding."

The panel is supported by Norfolk

County Council. It allows retired or experienced business people, whole departments or voluntary organisations to share their knowledge with people or new businesses based in Norfolk.

It is also aiming to recruit more

mentors and will run until April 2012.

■ Norfolk Knowledge is part of the Vital Rural Area project, funded by the European Regional Development Fund. Visit www.norfolkknowledge.co.uk.
■ matthew.sparkes@archant.co.uk