



# Exploiting ideas to foster smart growth

## Birmingham must build on successes of last year

Birmingham is fast becoming the top destination for innovative investment across a variety of sectors.

Institutions and facilities such as Birmingham Science Park Aston, Birmingham Science City, Birmingham City University and University of Birmingham are all working closely together to develop new ideas which will encourage both national and international investment.

The next 12 months will prove vital to the set-up of a number of new collaborations, which will enhance the city's ability to provide a strong support network for both new and existing enterprises.

Through the Making Knowledge Work (MKW) Programme we will be able to exploit ideas and foster smart sustainable growth.

2010 proved to be a highly successful first year for the MKW programme.

With 13 member regions established, Birmingham was labelled the leading region for the promotion of new business start-ups in Europe. 2011 will see us continue to maintain this title through the implementation of a variety of new research programmes.

The UK has a leading position in the global research market second only to the USA, with regions such as the West Midlands having a wealth of resources capable of exploiting these ideas in the rapidly changing innovation sector.

By harnessing our strengths and developing weaknesses through the utilisation of new technologies, Birmingham will continue to adapt and evolve, ensuring we remain at the forefront of innovation and new business start-ups.

Cllr Timothy Huxtable,  
Birmingham City Council Cabinet Member  
(Transportation, Environment & Regeneration)

2010 saw the launch of the highly successful Making Knowledge Work (MKW) project, a scheme which aims to bridge the gaps in the innovation chain and stimulate Europe's creative potential.

Through good practice and high standards in the development of innovative ideas and the effective commercialisation of R&D results, the MKW project has established links with 14 partners across the continent, who exchange experience on how regions can increase the commercialisation of research as well as successful initiatives that can be used as a model by others. Birmingham City Council (BCC) is one of these partners, working alongside Birmingham Science City and Birmingham Science Park Aston.

BCC aims to exploit ideas to foster smart sustainable growth, utilising the large body of inventions, ideas and skills capable of creating high added-value which lie unexploited in universities, businesses, governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Now in its second year, MKW project leaders are asking each region to draw up a concrete action plan, outlining their objectives for the year and how they hope to achieve them. ERRIN, the European Regions Research and Innovation Network will then assist in the facilitation of knowledge exchange, joint actions and project partnerships between its members, the aim of which is to enhance their capacities to take up innovative ideas.

2011 is already proving to be another fruitful year for all those involved in the Making Knowledge Work project. With a multitude of new opportunities on the horizon and a number of new potential



Mark Barrow, strategic director for Development at Birmingham City Council

partners, the scheme continues to go from strength to strength.

Mark Barrow, strategic director for Development at Birmingham City Council said: "2011 is set to be an incredibly

busy year for all those involved in the Making Knowledge Work initiative; the partners are working continuously to bring new and innovative processes to the city which will enhance our way of

conducting business.

"The knowledge transfer currently taking place is vital to Birmingham's continued success as a leading advocate of new technology."

## Improving quality of life and region's prosperity

Birmingham Science City (BSC) is a region-wide partnership of public sector, businesses and the research base, which is facilitating the use of science and technology to improve the quality of life and prosperity of the West Midlands.

BSC shares common goals with Making Knowledge Work which aims 'to exploit ideas and foster smart, sustainable growth by exchanging experience on the process of commercialisation of ideas and R&D results.'

Funded by BSC, via Advantage West Midlands and European Research Development Fund (ERDF), the Science City Research Alliance (SCRA) was formed to ensure the flow and transfer of knowledge and technology for economic benefit.

SCRA is a collaborative venture between the University of Warwick and the University of Birmingham which works with the business community, including local SMEs, to bring research and development activi-

ties to the commercial marketplace. Chelmsley Wood-based firm New World Solar is a prime example of the benefits of bringing business and academia together.

Engineers from the University of Warwick are working with the ambitious company to evaluate solar panels as part of SCRA's Energy Efficiency project. 24 solar panels have been installed on the roof of the School of Engineering and researchers are using state-of-the-art technology to test four different panels' performance to help New World Solar develop the most efficient for the UK market.

The Energy Efficiency project is part of SCRA's wider Energy Futures programme which also includes research into hydrogen fuel cell technology, bio-fuels, waste to energy, electric/hybrid vehicles, thermal technologies and smart electricity grids.

The University of Birmingham is working with Minor, Weir & Willis Ltd, a Birmingham-based supplier, importer and distributor of fresh produce.

Dr Mark Redwood and his team from the School of Biosciences, are taking their discarded fruit waste, which would have ended up in landfill, and converting it into hydrogen fuel which could be used in fuel cells or engines to generate electricity for use in the plant or for export to the grid.

This project would not have been possible without the Energy Futures project.

SCRA is bringing the region's contribution to the development of cleaner, greener energy to an international audience by attending events such as the recent World Future Energy Summit 2011 which was held in Abu Dhabi earlier this month, helping to shape policy for future generations.

The Science City Research Alliance is leading the way in developing energies of the future and helping to put the West Midlands firmly on the global map when it comes to technology and innovation.