

Dear Mr Lambert

I write to note some projects I have been involved with from both a university and RDA perspective with regard to the review questions set out in your letter to BIA members of 4 February. This is for information and as a source of potential input.

## 1. RDA activity

I am currently Head of the Biotechnology Cluster Group, Bionow, in the NWDA.

We have been recognised as 'best practice' for cluster development by DTI in Feb 2001. We contribute in several ways to the business – university interface:

- \* quarterly network evenings with business speakers - aimed at industry but including 'entrepreneurial' and other key academics (80 –90 attendees on average)
- \* General signposting and advice to business/entrepreneurial academics & incubators etc to other sub-regional public agencies and organisations, other companies and professional advisers
- \* championing and coordination of key projects at regional level for regional and national funding - often with a university lead eg Core Technology Facility, NW Genetics Knowledge Park (NOWGEN). We have strong relationships with the research universities and research-active healthcare trusts
- \* direct development of key business service projects eg I am Director of the £30M National Biomanufacturing project. A commercial operator will deliver development and manufacturing services to HEIs, SMEs etc
- \* Strategy documents to North West Science Council reviewing how industry needs to interact with universities and science base development needs for economic benefit ( I can provide a copy of the NW Science Strategy document which covers biotech, chemicals, aerospace, environment and nuclear if helpful)
- \* Bionow also provides sector expertise for major projects with industry on facility development, skills programmes, trade, inward investment etc - the NWDA is very active in this area too.
- \* More information on our activities, incubators and projects mentioned is on our website [www.bionow.co.uk](http://www.bionow.co.uk)

## 2. University-Business Interface

Previously I was co-founder with Professors Ferguson and Hickman and General & Business Manager of Europe's first campus biotech incubator at Manchester, after being a development manager for the University of Manchester 's School of Biological Sciences having come from the Healthcare industry. The Incubator was and is a key interface for university company interaction and has a strong portfolio of succesful stat up biotechs (Manchester Innovation Ltd) . A second biotech incubator has recently opened in Liverpool (MerseyBIO).

From recent discussions and meetings the following issues have arisen in relation to HEIs and business:

- \* key issue with getting good operator/technician level employees - graduates don't want to 'get their hands dirty' and have expectations beyond their immediate capability. Clear gap in supply here
- \* In (research based) biotech companies access to universities is usually pretty good because SMEs have often emerged from universities or a very familiar with them, but with others and in different sectors often very difficvult to get in. In addition, the research universities often not interested in more 'applied ' activities - RAE does still not fully recognise a contribuion to business and exploitation as valuable
- \* Tech transfer in universities has improved enourmously but still issues about experience and professional knowledge of people involved - linkage to university structures and pay scales may deter really good people
- \* Very few academics have commercial background/experience and cultural differences persist along with the drivers
- \* Input to University courses and curriculum often from big corporates as they have time and people to become involved - extremely difficult as ever to harness the view of the 'SME'
- \* Companies often remain ignorant of what is available on their own doorstep and will seek the gold standard research university at a distance when their needs may well be met by local HEI (part of what cluster groups try to overcome).

I am very happy to provide more details on the above if required.

Yours sincerely

Linda Magee

Dr Linda Magee  
Biotechnology Sector Director & Head of Bionow  
Northwest Development Agency  
Renaissance House PO Box 37  
Centre Park, Warrington, WA1 1XB

-----  
E: Linda.Magee@nwda.co.uk  
T: +44 (0) 1925 400 100  
F: +44 (0) 1925 400 400  
-----

For more information on Bionow, please visit our website on  
<http://www.bionow.co.uk>.  
What's happening in England's Northwest?  
<<http://www.englandsnorthwest.com/>>

-----  
The Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) is responsible for  
the sustainable  
economic development and regeneration of England's Northwest  
and has 5 key  
priorities: Business Development, Regeneration, Skills &  
Employment,  
Infrastructure and Image.  
This message may contain privileged or confidential Information. If  
you are  
not the addressee indicated in this message (or responsible for  
delivery of  
the message to such person), you may not copy or deliver this  
message to  
anyone. In such case, you should destroy this message and kindly  
notify the  
sender by reply email. Please advise immediately if you or your  
employer  
does not consent to Internet email for messages of this kind.  
Opinions,  
conclusions and other information in this message that do not  
relate to the  
official business of the Northwest Development Agency shall be  
understood as  
neither given nor endorsed by it.