

press release



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NORTH EAST SCIENCE STRENGTH ON SHOW IN BRUSSELS

EU decision makers will learn how the appliance of science is changing the North East for the better at a prestigious event in Brussels this week (8-11 October).

Regional development agency One NorthEast is leading the 'Science and Innovation in Regional Policy' element of the Brussels Open Days, the biggest annual event on EU regional policy.

Expected to attract over 4,000 international participants from 212 regions, the Open Days include experts in Structural Fund programmes, members of the European Parliament, and private companies and business entrepreneurs.

One NorthEast's focus on developing an innovative knowledge economy is an example of good practice to the rest of Europe. Amongst numerous workshops with North East representation, the agency is introducing sessions delivered by NStar Finance and Newcastle Science City.

Each will demonstrate how innovative new tools for regional development, such as financing for SMEs, are opening up new opportunities for the North East economy.

The whole event features about 150 workshops focusing on the new generation of policy programmes for 2007-13 in all regions of the EU.

Efforts to expand the vital science and technology base of North East England receive significant funding support from Europe. There is a range of EU transnational programmes such as Framework 7 and Interreg from which the region can secure funding if it engages in collaborative work with other EU member states on specific policy issues.

For example, Framework 7 is the EU's research and development programme for scientific excellence, worth €54bn in all.

"It's all about sharing best practice and getting the experts together under one roof to adopt model policy principles," explains One NorthEast assistant chief executive Pat Ritchie. "We can learn much from reciprocal and collaborative projects.

"We're involved with over 30 European regions in projects funded under the EU's Interreg and Framework Programmes. These are worth over €4m to the North East."

Transnational programmes are not just about cash either. They act as testbeds for the European Commission to help shape future policy and decide how structural funds such as ERDF and ESF are spent.

"It cuts both ways," adds Pat. "We demonstrate our excellence in key strategic areas such as science and innovation. We also learn from the experience of other countries and regions and use our best projects to help shape future EU policy with regard to the distribution of structural funds."

European funding has been used to support the North East since 1989 and has brought many millions of pounds worth of investment to the region. Distributed by the European Commission, the funding promotes growth, competitiveness and employment.

In line with the Lisbon Agenda, the EU is emphasising delivery of more 'high tech' or value added activities to increase competitiveness and economic growth, create jobs and drive up productivity.

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Notes to editors

One NorthEast is the regional development agency for North East England.

It is leading sustainable economic growth in the region through a targeted programme of investment of around £280m per year to get 70,000 more people into work and create 22,000 new businesses by 2016.

In the last financial year 2006-07, One NorthEast:

- Created 17,110 new jobs in the region
- Created or attracted 3,432 new businesses
- Helped 15,851 businesses to improve their performance
- Attracted £246.8m worth of investment to regenerate deprived areas, more than half of this investment secured from the private sector
- Regenerated 62.3 hectares of brownfield land
- Helped 70,242 people to develop their skills