

The Association of **EC Business & Innovation Centres** in Ireland  
Annual Report 2004

CORK BIC

WEST BIC

SHANNON  
INNOVATION

BIC



## Chairmans' Statement

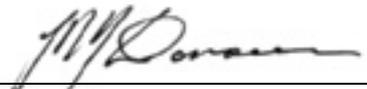
**As Chairman of the BICs in Ireland and on behalf of our Boards we are delighted to present our Annual Review for 2004.**

Our private sector organisations represented by Chambers of Commerce, the multinationals and professional service firms have been deeply involved in EC-BICs since 1988. We see these private-public sector partnerships working side by side with the statutory agencies, universities/colleges and government as the way forward to create world class centres of activity in our regions.

We were delighted to have been invited to give recommendations to the Enterprise Strategy Group and welcome its Final Report. We look forward to working closely with our colleagues in Enterprise Ireland and the many other Agencies charged with its implementation. The Irish EC-BICs will embrace these new strategies endorsed by government and international best practice. We see the future as mobilisation of activity, engaging the private sector to build clusters of firms, and trusted partnership with government and agencies to innovate and deliver profitable growing firms with the ambition to succeed globally.

We must pay tribute to our Boards of Directors and past members who have served their regions and communities on a voluntary and tireless basis. Their guidance and wise counsel has always been a cornerstone of the EC-BICs.

Finally, we must thank our staff and teams led by our Chief Executives who so effectively delivered venture consulting services to our clients with existing and new methodologies that still stand the test of time.



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Gerry Donovan, CORKBIC



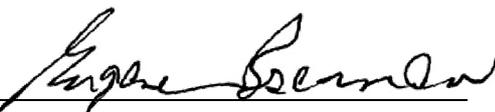
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Hugh Governey, DUBLIN BIC



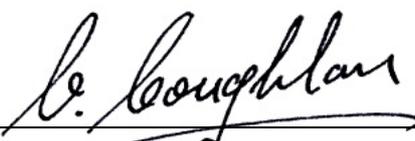
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Richard J Hickey, South East BIC



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Eugene Brennan, INNOVATIONWORKS LIMERICK



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Prof. Chris Coughlan, WESTBIC

## CEOs' Statement

**Welcome to the 2004 activity report for the Association of EC Business & Innovation Centres (BICs) in Ireland. This report outlines the activity and achievements of the BICs in Ireland and illustrates the depth of services offered to value-added enterprises many of whom we include as case studies in this report.**

We acknowledge the support and funding role of Enterprise Ireland with whom we have worked closely for many years and we welcome their new strategic plans.

2004 saw the BICs consolidate their position further as specialist providers in the Government's portfolio of services to entrepreneurs and innovators within Ireland. During the year the Irish BICs\* signed a Memorandum of Understanding with our colleagues in Enterprise Ireland that will see both organisations working closely together to develop high potential start-ups within our respective regions.

In 2004 the five BICs in Ireland met with 1463 project promoters and provided intensive support to 478 entrepreneurs leading to 51 business start-ups. This is consistent with recent years and demonstrates the needs of today's start-ups in terms of timely and responsive inputs with the right "toolkit".

The report also highlights the usefulness of a number of European projects that the BICs are making available to Irish SMEs in conjunction with colleagues in the European BIC Network. These projects are particularly important to the spread of development to the regions enhancing innovative capacity, access to technology and markets etc.

We hope this report provides a brief insight into the work of the BICs in Ireland and look forward to working with our partners throughout the regions in stimulating, developing and nurturing profitable high growth companies.

*\* Excludes Limerick BIC which has a separate agreement with Shannon Development*



**Michael O'Connor** is CEO of CORKBIC, a venture consultancy specialising in high technology based projects primarily in the IT sector. Previous experience was manufacturing and sales start ups with Raychem Corporation, before co-founding Intepro, an Irish IT start-up in 1983. Responsible for strategy and sales and marketing in the European start up and led the US market entry with several rounds of international venture capital before divesting to a Swiss multinational. He graduated in Engineering from Cambridge University and holds an MBA from London Business School/Wharton. He spearheaded the €13m National Software Centre Project and initiated new ways of fast tracking start ups. Director of the Irish BIC's Seed Capital Fund and former Director of Cork Chamber of Commerce.



**Desmond Fahey**, an engineer by profession and a Master of Business Studies, was appointed Chief Executive of the Dublin Business Innovation Centre in 1990. Former President (1994-1998) of the European Business Network (EBN). 1983-1990 Vice-President of the Irish Government's Industrial Development Authority West Coast organisation. Board member of the European Venture Capital Association and Chairman of the Irish Venture Capital Association. Founding Board member of the three seed capital funds managed by Dublin BIC, the Business Innovation Fund (1992), the Dublin Seed Capital Fund Ltd. (1997) and the Irish BICs Seed Capital Fund Ltd. (1998). Founding Board member of the Dublin Enterprise & Technology Centre Limited, t/a Guinness Enterprise Centre.



**John Dillon** BBS, DMS, FAIA, MBA, Manager, Shannon Development New Enterprise activities which include the InnovationWorks, Limerick and new start-ups in the Shannon Region.



**Patrick Munden** is Director of the South East Business & Innovation Centre Ltd. Waterford. He has 14 years experience in business management and consultancy with Small and Medium sized business. He has worked in the UK in the luxury goods sector and has experience in the telecom sector in Ireland. Patrick graduated from Dublin University (Trinity College) and The College of Marketing & Design in 1989 with a BSc in Management and Diploma in Advanced Marketing Techniques. He was subsequently awarded an MA from Dublin University. He holds an Executive MBA from the University of Michigan in the United States.



**Joe Greaney** is the Director of WESTBIC, the Business Innovation Centre for the BMW Region, since 1988. This is a uniquely distributed service integrated with relevant partners. Joe is a Commerce graduate with considerable experience in the small/medium manufacturing sector. Joe's areas of expertise are in entrepreneurship, education/training and policy design at both micro and strategic levels in areas of economic development. He has served on several Boards and economic development taskforces and has extensive private sector links having served as President of Galway Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1996/97 & 2000/01). He was a founder director of Galway Technology Centre and is a Director of the Irish BICs Seed Capital Fund.

## Boards of Directors

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
<b>CORKBIC</b>		
<b>Gerry Donovan</b>	<b>Chairman, CORKBIC</b>	<b>Cork Chamber of Commerce</b>
John Cashell	Past President	Cork Chamber of Commerce
Michael Delaney	Head of Development	Cork Institute of Technology
Brian McCoy	Managing Director	M/A Com Eurotec
Ger O'Mahoney	Managing Partner	Deloitte
Michael O'Sullivan	Vice President (Strategy)	University College Cork
Brian Quinlan	Regional Director	Enterprise Ireland
<b>DUBLIN BIC</b>		
<b>Hugh Governey</b>	<b>Chairman, Dublin BIC</b>	<b>Group CEO, Coyle Hamilton Willis</b>
Prof. Frank Roche	Chairman	Colin Mclver Associates
Domhnall McCullough	Director	James Crean Plc.
Anthony M. Prendergast	Director Dublin Enterprise & Technology Centre Ltd.	Diageo Ireland
Dr. Owen McBreen	Former Head of Technical Division	Enterprise Ireland
Chris Park	Director	Park & Associates
John O'Dea	Area Director	Enterprise Ireland Dublin/Mid East Region
Clive Brownlee	Director	Diageo Ireland
<b>South East BIC</b>		
<b>Richard J. Hickey</b>	<b>Chairman, South East BIC</b>	<b>SERCHAM</b>
T.A. Richards	Director	PPI Group
Bill O'Gorman	Manager Centre for Entrepreneurship	Waterford Institute of Technology
Sean Kelly	Regional Industrial Organiser	ATGWU
Gerard Enright	CEO	Waterford County Enterprise Board
Colin O'Brien	General Manager	Diageo (Waterford)
Mark Minihan	Managing Director	Steele & Co.
John Lyons	Chairman	Hitol Ltd.
Michael McGuire	Regional Manager	Enterprise Ireland
Sean Mythen	CEO	Wexford County Enterprise Board
Kathryn Kiely	Manager, Industrial & Innovation Services	Waterford Institute of Technology
Frank O'Regan	V.P. Supply Chain Operations	Bausch & Lomb
Matt Glowatz	Managing Director	WEB-IT
<b>WESTBIC</b>		
<b>Prof. Chris Coughlan</b>	<b>Chairman, WESTBIC</b>	<b>Hewlett Packard</b>
Tony Barrett	Director	FÁS
Seamus Bree	Regional Director	Enterprise Ireland
Mairtin O'Conghaile	Regional Manager	Údarás na Gaeltachta
Prof. Jim Ward	Vice President	NUI, Galway
Ms. Katie Sweeney	Director of Campus	GMIT, Castlebar
Ms. Anne Downey	Managing Director	QSet, Galway

### LIMERICK BIC

#### Board of Directors

InnovationWorks Limerick falls within the remit of Mr Eugene Brennan, Director, Knowledge Enterprise, Shannon Development. It does not have a separate Board of Directors, and therefore reports indirectly to the main Shannon Development Board, which has a high private sector composition.

## 2004 Outputs Combined Table

THE IRISH BICS – STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS 2004 <sup>1</sup>	
Number of EU-recognised BICs	5
NDP funding	€2.5m
Private contributions <sup>2</sup>	€2.0m
Enquiries received	1,463
Projects advised	478
Business plans developed	91
BIC-assisted start-ups	51
BIC-assisted expansions	62
Female projects assisted	21%
Companies under incubation	174
Incubation space managed	30,000m <sup>2</sup>
Capital expenditure on incubation space managed	€40m
Seed funding under management	€6.5m

<sup>1</sup> Excludes NORIBIC in Derry

<sup>2</sup> Figure based on 2003

### The European Business & Innovation Centre Network (EBN) – A Quality Network of Excellence

Since January 2002, EBN is linked to the European Commission by a contract of trademark licencing with DG Enterprise and DG Regio. This contract grants EBN the licence of the European trademark 'BIC'. EBN has the mission to grant, renew and withdraw these licences on behalf of the European Commission.

EBN has implemented a rigorous certification and quality system enabling the development of a network of excellence through the integration of a quality approach. The five Irish BICs are part of this system and have contributed to the results of the Network which have been recently published by the EBN.



### 2003 Results for 155 BICs – Start-up Creations and Incubation Support

Number of operational contacts with potential entrepreneurs	64,000
Number of projects selected by BICs and feasibility studies undertaken	14,000
Number of Business Plans completed	6,000
Number of start-ups created	3,800
Number of jobs created at start-up phase	10,500
Number of enterprises hosted by BIC incubators	3,200
Number of jobs created by BICs' incubators hosted companies	17,400
Number of attendees to training seminars for potential entrepreneurs	26,000

## Building High Growth Startups

EC-BICs are specialist / multidisciplinary “venture consulting” organisations. They provide a holistic approach with a private sector bias to pre-startup and startup businesses to convert ideas into reality. They act selectively, effectively becoming a partner, and accompany and handhold the entrepreneur through all the stages of the development of his/her business.

BIC clients tend to be high risk, high potential companies and projects with a requirement for hands-on advice over a period of five weeks to five years.



### Dublin BIC: H2HCare Optimising Resources to the Healthcare Sector

H2HCare delivers solutions to Ambulatory Hospitals and Clinics which optimise resources and deliver operational efficiencies – improving services to both patients and staff. The company was founded in 2000 by a management team which brought together experience in commercial enterprise software with experience in the global healthcare sector. The company started out in the Dublin Enterprise & Technology Centre Ltd t/a Guinness Enterprise Centre (managed by Dublin BIC) with two employees, and approached the Dublin BIC team in 2001 for advice on access to finance and business development. H2HCare then joined the Dublin BIC Client Assistance Programme (a programme which assists the accelerated early-stage growth of start-up businesses) and worked closely with the company in developing a robust business plan to present to potential investors. Since then the company has had two successful funding rounds and benefited from Dublin Seed Capital Fund investment (also managed by Dublin BIC) of 202k. H2HCare also benefited from a number of Dublin BIC programmes including attendance at Small Business Support Programme seminars and access to overseas partners through the International Partnership & Technology Transfer Programme. H2HCare graduated from the Guinness Enterprise Centre in 2004 with 16 employees and is now a thriving business based in Dun Laoghaire with a number of key clients based both in Ireland and the UK.



### WESTBIC: iBOTZ – Innovation and R&D for Intelligent robotics – FMCG

Due to ongoing demand, WESTBIC provides its services throughout the Midlands region in conjunction with local partners in counties Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. Mirroring WESTBIC's modus operandi in other regions, these partners include the Midland Regional Authority, Enterprise Ireland, Enterprise Boards, LEADER Companies, Athlone Institute of Technology and enterprise-focussed community groups. One such company supported by WESTBIC in the Midlands is iBOTZ (Ireland) Ltd., a new company in the complexity science/robotic sector that produces a range of toys and gadgets. This company delivers a product range that is uniquely designed with innovation in mind. The iBOTZ brand is being developed as a recognised brand name in global education and retail markets, including endorsement by the Open University (UK) which adds further credibility to the company image. Located in Longford town, this high potential enterprise is currently completing its R&D work into a range of higher end robots aimed at the educational and hobby sector. This includes a range of “intelligent” robots, flying craft and other items for which demand has been identified. The research/development and manufacturing base for these products will be located in the new Enterprise Centre in Longford town for distribution to worldwide markets where iBOTZ has established a strong presence. The increasing interest and growth in complexity service continues to provide new opportunities for iBOTZ (Ireland) Ltd., based on the strong innovation and creativity characteristics of the company. In conjunction with Athlone Institute of Technology further research work is planned to maintain the company's position as market leader and innovator in this industry sector.



Pat FitzGerald of FitzGerald Nurseries

## South East BIC: Growing the Growers – Plant Propagation for Export in the South East

FitzGerald Nurseries Ltd. was established in 1990 in Stoneyford Co. Kilkenny by Mr Pat FitzGerald. It is now regarded as one of Ireland's leading plant producers operating out of a three hectare modern propagation unit. The company mass produces young plants of hardy and semi-hardy ornamental shrubs and patio plants. These plants are grown-on and finished by other nurseries destined for the professional landscape and retail garden markets in Ireland, the UK and other parts of the EU. Mr. Pat FitzGerald came to South East BIC with the view that the Irish Horticultural trade, if it is to move forward and compete against competition from both abroad and from competing leisure products, must start to develop the value chain from R&D in the conception of new plants right up to how those and existing lines can be marketed to the end user both in Ireland and abroad. South East BIC worked with Pat to develop a strategic roadmap for the company. The objective of the plan was to present a clear blueprint for, not only the development of FitzGerald Nurseries Ltd., but also to highlight the potential for a cluster of Horticultural operations in and around the South East Region. During 2004 FitzGerald Nurseries Ltd. took over the operations of Plant Biotechnology Ltd., a plant micropropagation company in Enniscorthy Co. Wexford. Mr FitzGerald also developed the company's first range of branded plants and has since entered into strategic alliances with several International plant licensing companies.



## Limerick BIC: Pharmaflow Limited – Spinning off from the Multinational Pharmachem Sector

Working for multinationals often spurs entrepreneurship. New ideas and market opportunities present themselves. Once the spark is ignited the decision is all down to timing. This is how Jim Kernan and Finbarr Cremin set up PharmaFlow in March 2004; they both worked as senior managers for multinational companies in the pharmaceutical/nutraceutical area and saw an opportunity for flexible sub-contracting solutions for the pharmaceutical, nutraceutical and cosmeceutical industries. Having known each other personally for years, it was only a matter of time before their entrepreneurial spirits and managerial expertise would lead them to join forces and set up their own business. They came to InnovationWorks with their idea and were awarded feasibility study grant assistance to explore the opportunity further. Their entry into the marketplace was fasttracked through the winning of a sizeable subcontract opportunity for a US multinational. 3 months after starting their feasibility study, they commenced production in part of the former Aventis pharmaceutical building in Nenagh. In November 2004, Shannon Development approved an equity investment in PharmaFlow. PharmaFlow is a rapidly growing company and now employs 17 people. New business opportunities are always welcomed by PharmaFlow. They have 2 major overseas customers on their books and have a strong pipeline of future clients. Great progress 12 months from concept.



Frank Madden (left) and Liam O'Riordan - Directors

## CORK BIC: Crest Solutions – Verification & auditing solutions to regulatory industries

2D codes ... *"the new standard alternative to barcode for 100% product traceability"*

Product traceability tracks where products are in the manufacturing process. Barcode technology is the industry standard but until now could not be used on most products in manufacturing because of size constraints. The arrival of 2D codes has solved this issue forever! A 2D code can store far more information than a traditional barcode up to 100 times more - at a fraction of the size. 2D codes can be placed directly onto multiple surfaces and marked on a product as small as 2mm and below - allowing products to be tracked throughout the life cycle. 2D code technology is around for over 20 years but the problem has been the ability to read the code directly from the product with high repeatability. Then Cognex, the world's largest industrial vision supplier, applied their patented vision pattern finding technology to 2D codes which can be configured to identify measure, guide, or inspect products based on the information contained in the codes. Cork based, Crest Solutions, Ireland's largest industrial vision supplier and Cognex Partner has implemented systems in over 60 multinationals throughout Ireland and installed systems in Asia, Italy, Germany & US. Crest integrated 2D code technology into their ProTrack software to supply GE Healthcare, Bausch and Lomb, Allergan, Stryker and DeBeers. Crest Solutions' software is made 21-CFR-part 11 compliant with its patented product SecureBASE.

## BICs Focusing the “Route to Market” – Creating Global Footprints

Building revenue with customers and channels is a key requirement for the new-age startup. The BICs work closely with clients to secure traction with channels and customers and use the extensive network of 150+ European BICs where possible.

### CORKBIC: PulseLearning – Market entry to the USA Fortune 500

PulseLearning established by Jim Breen in 1999 has grown to be a leading provider of learning development services and regulatory compliance eLearning solutions for clients worldwide. PulseLearning now includes multinationals such as Pfizer, Computer Associates, NASA, Thomson NETg, APC, Citibank & Yale University as their clients. It has offices in the US, Ireland, Canada & Australia. Jim’s vision was to create a major eLearning global company. With the slowdown in the technology sector in 2002, Pulse focused on the niche sector of compliance eLearning and began to target highly regulated companies within the pharmaceutical sector. This strategy paid off and PulseLearning doubled its turnover in 2002. Outside product innovation, in 2003, PulseLearning redefined its market boundaries, having the US market its epicentre. Within months of setting up a sales presence in New York the company secured NASA, Yale & Citibank as clients. Given that PulseLearning had secured blue-chip clients in the US, their credibility was established and in late 2004 PulseLearning landed one of the largest contracts in the USA secured by an Irish software company. By 2009 PulseLearning plans a market capitalisation of 100 million USD. In 2003, only 6 percent of PulseLearning’s revenues came from the US market; in 2004 it was 93 percent and in 2005 it will be 97 percent. PulseLearning is now being hailed as one of the brightest stars in eLearning and one to watch going forward. In the startup process Irish BIC’s Seed Capital Fund invested €127k seed capital to underpin a €500k finance package.



Jim Breen and Minister Micheal Martin

### Dublin BIC: DemonWare– Creating a Global Footprint for the Games Industry

Dublin Seed Capital Fund investee company DemonWare providers of network software to the electronic entertainment industry was launched in June 2003. Their flagship BitDemon product provides the network interactivity for games to be played over the Internet and was launched at the Developers Conference (San José, California) in March 2004. Today, DemonWare technology is being used by some of the biggest names in the games industry and will be featured in several high profile games released in 2005. The company recently launched their West Coast office and announced a US Sales Director. Today the global computer games industry is a \$27bn market and rivals the film industry in terms of financial return. The budgets for game development are now typically between \$4m-\$10m and best-selling games may generate over \$500m in sales. With this increased industry scale, game developers are rapidly turning to outsourced solutions to help complete projects within the strict deadlines. With online gaming allowing people to play games against each other across the Internet (now a key driver of the games industry), network functionality in games is essential. DemonWare’s BitDemon product can reduce network development time from seven months to a handful of days, allowing developers to focus on other aspects of their game. DemonWare raised a seed round of €600,000 in 2003. Investors include Dublin Seed Capital Fund, Enterprise Ireland, several high net worth individuals and management. The company was founded by Dylan Collins and Sean Blanchfield, who successfully launched the Phorest wireless software company prior to setting up DemonWare.



The Demonware team

### Limerick BIC: Fraysen Systems – Underpinning Manufacturing & Global Supply Chain Efficiency

Manufacturers are competing in a global market where efficiency determines survival. Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma are the methods by which world class manufacturers succeed. The aim of the Lean approach is to eliminate waste from the manufacturing process. Success brings lower costs, faster time to market, continuous improvement, higher product quality and faster new product introduction. World Class competitors have efficiencies of 85% yet most global manufacturers only achieve an average of 45%. Fraysen empowers companies to analyse where their operations are experiencing inefficiencies. The promoters of Fraysen are Finbar Gallagher Snr and Finbar Junior. Finbar Snr. has worked at senior levels of large multinational companies such as GE. Finbar Junior, had his roots in HP where he worked in the process engineering section of the Inkjet Business. The team has developed a sophisticated software suite which allows users to analyse efficiencies in factory and operational environments. ProcessPlus™ provides the accurate and timely information necessary to reduce costs, and create value by driving efficiencies that go straight to the bottom line. It is the product of 15 years’ research into the presentation of manufacturing process data. The result is information where cause is linked to effect, and data is uniform and easy to understand. Engineering and Operations staff solve problems fast and accurately, achieving insights not possible before. The company is based in Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare. where they employ six people fulfilling clients needs. Clients include Bausch & Lomb in Waterford and Benchmark Systems in Dublin.

## Igniting Entrepreneurship – The role of networks and clusters of firms

EC-BICs develop formal and informal networks to promote and facilitate entrepreneurship. Many of these are industry groups, Chambers of Commerce or centres of learning. EC-BICs work regionally as knowledge carriers facilitating regionally staffed offices to provide the knowledge and enthusiasm to build dynamic start-up teams.

### WESTBIC: Supporting the Third Level Sector

With its long-standing association and partnership with the third level sector in the BMW region, WESTBIC continues to provide support through the management of the Enterprise Platform Programmes. Designed to attract new high potential business ideas, WESTBIC has managed seven such programmes between GMT, NUI, Galway, Sligo IT and Letterkenny IT. Ireland's third level institutions have a vital role to play in sustaining and developing employment in the less populated regions and WESTBIC believe that it is imperative that industry and the education sector work closely together in the coming years to maximise this potential. Alan Duggan a participant on the NUI, Galway 2004 Platform Programme which was co-funded by Enterprise Ireland, established Nephin Games which enables the creation of profitable mobile communities for the world's largest brands. Brand-centred games built on Nephin's community platform encourage player interaction and messaging and support vital growth of the community through find-a-friend and invite-a-friend. Direct and ambient marketing metrics are supported for profiling behaviours, preferences, and demographics. In addition, 360 degree communications allow brand champions to understand and market more effectively to their community. Nephin Games are now located in the Galway Technology Centre.

WestBIC also provide undergraduate and post-graduate curricula and sponsor the WestBIC Innovation Award on every campus in the BMW Region.



*At the presentation of certificates to participants of the NUI, Galway 2004 Technology Enterprise Programme were Bernadette Dooley, Enterprise Programme Manager of Enterprise Ireland, Joe Watson, Industrial Liaison Officer of NUI, Galway, Alan Duggan, Director of Nephin Games and Mary Ryan, Assistant Director of WESTBIC.*

### South East BIC: Igniting the Lightwave

Lightwave Technologies is comprised of experts in IT, Energy and an internationally recognised expert in artificial intelligence. The promoters have applied advances in computer science in the area of artificial intelligence (AI), neural networks and genetic algorithms towards the goal of saving energy in commercial buildings, industrial complexes, and in reducing carbon tax liabilities in both commercial and industrial applications. The company's first product 'ICE' (Intelligent Control of Energy) has the potential to save between 15%-40% + of all commercial premises energy consumptions. This is achieved by connecting the building's existing building management system (BMS) to an artificial intelligence remote server that uses past history data and artificial intelligence techniques to "learn" the building's thermal and electrical characteristics. Using this information, the company's proprietary software can decide how best to minimise a building's overall energy demand. This type of analysis and optimisation was not possible before now as modelling techniques and analysis time requirements would be extremely expensive and so dwarf possible energy savings. The company launched the 'ICE' product in Autumn 2004. South East BIC has worked with the promoters to develop a business plan for initial company funding. During 2004 the company was successful in raising €300,000 seed capital. South East BIC also introduced the company to potential strategic partners in ASIA and the United States.



*Pictured with the Michigan IMAP consulting team is Nicholas McNulty, Lightwave Technologies (2nd from right).*

## Managing the Innovation Process – Cluster Building

EC BICs have been active in running incubators and incubation programmes for fifteen years. They have perfected the economics and service level agreements to build centres of energy. Many of these projects are PPPs between the public and private sector and within the “know how” resides best practice.

### Limerick BIC: InnovationWorks – Bringing Business to life

InnovationWorks Limerick has over 30 resident clients. A further 20 clients are at various stages of development at InnovationWorks centres in Tralee, Thurles, Birr and Ennis. Shannon Development executives based at InnovationWorks Limerick have developed and offer an integrated package of business development supports, services and facilities to new, high potential firms. **The Venture Development Process** is one element of this package of supports and comprises of modules VentureStart 1 and VentureStart2. **The Venture Team Development Programme** deals with the importance of teamwork in entrepreneurship. Over 300 people attended VentureStart programmes in the past three years while over 100 technology-driven start-up projects were supported through the provision of business accommodation, feasibility grants, investment packages, mentoring support and access to business finance. InnovationWorks partners third level Colleges in the region in initiatives such as AlumniStart, a programme aimed at overseas graduates contemplating starting a business in the Shannon Region. InnovationWorks also works with private sector partners Ernst & Young, developing and delivering their Excellerator Programme to early-stage companies in the region, and with private sector VC funds to encourage more risk capital investment into its start-up portfolio.



### WESTBIC: Border Region

Since 1990, NORIBIC and WESTBIC have been co-operating and carrying out joint ventures on a range of economic development initiatives and programmes, and have now taken their partnership to the next level and extended their service provision to include a permanent cross-border element, the Cross Border Business Innovation Centre (CBBIC). CBBIC is designed to extend current models of regional and trans-national co-operation and to provide future options for the development and delivery of integrated cross-border business support services on regional and European axis. In December 2004, Micheál Martin, T.D. Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment officially launched the Cross Border Business Innovation Centre, at Letterkenny Institute of Technology. In his speech he highlighted, “The development of the Cross Border Business Innovation Centre is an example of how we can harness cross-border co-operation to our mutual benefit. It will facilitate the development of company-to-company cross-border trade, joint ventures, cross-border clusters and joint delivery of innovation focused programmes”. CBBIC is a dynamic, information business hub to facilitate collaboration between companies North and South to take advantage of external markets and is presently working with a cluster of engineering companies from the North and the South exchanging “know-how”, information and resources.



*Philip Vanrie, EBN Managing Director; Micheal Martin, Minister for Trade, Enterprise and Employment; Mary Ryan, WESTBIC and Niall O'Somachain, NORIBIC at the Cross-Border BIC Launch in Letterkenny Institute of Technology*

### South East BIC: Winnovate – Design for Success

South East BIC in association with IT Carlow developed the Winnovate programme, an exciting initiative aimed at helping small and medium sized enterprises realise their full product design potential. In today's highly competitive environment good product design can provide a strong competitive advantage. The Winnovate programme was developed to help companies realise their full product design potential by allowing participants to take advantage of a unique combination of academics, business advisors and industrial designers to help bridge the gap between ambition and action. Funded through EU INTERREG IIIA, this was a collaboration between the National Centre for Product Design and Development Research (PDR) in Cardiff, IT Carlow, Carmarthenshire Enterprises and South East BIC. The programme, which is ongoing, addressed important design issues such as: Product planning; Concept generation and selection; Design development; Prototyping; Marketing for design. Participation in the programme was open to businesses in the South East of Ireland and West Wales and included a diverse range of companies including a boat manufacturer, a medical device R&D company, a waste disposal product manufacturer and an industrial case manufacturer. The programme will continue to be supported by South East BIC throughout 2005.



*Picture shows An Tánaiste Mary Harney TD Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment at the launch of the WINNOVATE project Carlow June 2004.*

## BICs Building Networks

Building successful 'clusters' requires new mindsets from the public and private sector and policy makers. Successful clusters or centres of energy tend to have strongly embedded networks and tiered cross functional relationships based on shared values and trust – these networks are retained and enhanced through job moves, informal collaboration and shared cultural values. A strong creative culture often underpins development and attracts participants.

*Desmond Fahey, Chief Executive of the Dublin Business Innovation Centre and Chairman of the Irish Venture Capital Association with Minister Micheál Martin, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.*

### Dublin BIC: Mobilising Private Investor Networks

The **Dublin Investor Register Service (DIRS)** was formed by the Dublin Business Innovation Centre to stimulate increased direct investment in local industry by providing a channel and contact point for both potential investors and businesses seeking equity funds. It links potential investors with small businesses requiring equity capital in amounts below the threshold of most financial institutions. The major financial institutions can find it uneconomic to meet the needs of small businesses and start-ups because of the small sums involved and their loan security requirements. The DIRS aims to assist both new and early-stage established enterprises in the Dublin area, who have identified a market gap and who require relatively low injections of funds to finance their company's development. Following on from a number of successful investments under the DIRS, Dublin Business Innovation Centre is currently negotiating a combined business angels initiative in conjunction with InterTrade Ireland, supported by Enterprise Ireland and involving private sector players. The aim of this pilot programme is to harness the knowledge and experience of InterTradeIreland, Enterprise Ireland and the BICs in Ireland working together with those seeking funds for start-up enterprises by identifying private sector individuals with cash and company development knowledge, preferably international knowledge. In doing so, the current business angel network of all three organisations will be pooled to address the gap in the market place.

### CORKBIC: it@cork Sustaining Industry Networks Through Collaboration and Alliances

**it@cork** - CorkBIC was a founder member of a network of IT professional firms in the greater Cork region. This has gone from strength to strength with about 150 member firms, member led and financed and approaching self sufficiency. The network or cluster has startup firms with indigenous and IDA supported multinationals, the colleges and professional service firms as members. The integration of the different mindsets with industry champions is the key to its success. CorkBICs role is to underpin, seed finance the network and assist where necessary bringing the organization to a high level of activity and professional footing. The Annual Conference now in its 6th year is regarded as one of the best in Ireland and brings together the Third Level colleges with industry veterans with policy makers and market entrants for one day of intensive debate.



*Minister Micheál Martin, Eoin O'Driscoll and Michael O'Connor*



### ESG: BICs Contributing to Policy Making

The Irish BICs were selected to input to the Tanaiste appointed Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG) led by Eoin O'Driscoll in early 2004. They brought together a group of 70 client entrepreneurs as a focus group to brainstorm client needs for the new breed of start ups and how to unlock the growth potential of these firms. The recommendations were on how to build sales platforms and critical mass, fill the gap in seed capital and networking small firms with larger firms for scale and government contracts.

Advising on defining and building clusters of firms was a second part of this work for the ESG. The BICs have been active at underpinning and mobilising clusters of firms - successful 'clusters' require new mindsets from the public and private sector and policy makers. The structured microeconomic view has given way to new mindsets around energy levels and the orchestration of alliances around shared values, synergies and trust. Less than 10% of all 'clusters' are significantly successful and 50% potentially fail.

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*The European Business and Innovation Centres (BICs) are regionally and locally based organisations involved in identification, selection and specialist support for new and existing enterprises. BICs typically operate as public-private partnerships, combining both Government funding and private cash or kind contributions. In Ireland, Exchequer funds are provided from the Enterprise Ireland Grants to Industry budget allocation under the NDP Productive Sector Operational Programme 2000 -2006. BICs concentrate on supporting new innovative business, which have high growth potential and which can contribute to economic development in their areas.*