

Business Leaders' full fibre connection



Business Leaders' input generated one of the liveliest round table discussions yet held around bringing pure fibre connectivity to Milton Keynes.

CityFibre, which wants to connect the city with a 'future-proof' data network, has been hosting meetings with MK Council to gauge the digital needs of city businesses. The latest, held at MK College's Silbury Campus in October allowed MK BLP members to have their say and hear from CityFibre's Marc Lough and Simon Pickering of project partner dbfb, about progress made.

Both agreed that Milton Keynes is playing catch-up with high data speeds and connectivity. According to Marc, a pure fibre network will allow MK to remain competitive regionally and nationally. CityFibre remains committed to 'fibre up' five UK cities by 2021 with 10 under consideration and Milton Keynes is a strong contender for funding. CityFibre has secured investment and MK Council is seeking Government funding, but Marc stressed that city businesses have to come forward and express their concerns that

economic development is being constrained. Simon said that the role of groups like Business Leaders Partnership was crucial in getting that message across.

BLP members shared their views on current data connectivity in Milton Keynes. They included: 'Our whole business is currently based in the cloud, and when it goes down I start trembling!' and 'I had better connectivity on a cruise ship in the Antarctic than in Milton Keynes!'

There was strong support for better connectivity: 'A faster data network will support the local skills agenda, reach those currently without digital access and boost the digital transformation within our businesses' and, from a business that has already signed up to full fibre - 'It is fabulous!'

Members sought reassurance that real progress was being made between CityFibre and MK Council, with the future prosperity of the city at stake. Chair Philip Smith said MK BLP would do what it could and will be surveying members about data connectivity. The event closed with Marc thanking members for attending and adding: "This is the seventh one I have chaired and the first when everyone has said to me, 'what are YOU going to do about it'. And that's great because this is very much a collaborative exercise."

Business Leaders Need YOU!

MK Business Leaders Partnership has great people among its members with ideas and views on business issues.

The MK BLP website and our social media output is inviting members to submit content, blogs, articles or comment pieces for use on the MK BLP website and social media and our newsletter Business Voice. All we ask is submissions are relevant to the business community in Milton Keynes and the aims of MK Business Leaders, though that doesn't mean issues raised can't be national or global ones.

Submissions can be made to: Gina Harper ginaharper14@gmail.com and for more information please contact MK BLP chair Philip Smith phil@phsconsultancy.com

First Milton Keynes – now the world for MK BAA!

MK BAA 2018 will fly the flag for Milton Keynes' businesses around the world says MK Business Leaders' chair Philip Smith.

The fifth annual MK Business Achievement Awards, organised by MK BLP in association with full service marketing agency Interdirect and Evolution event management, will have an international theme for the annual gala evening next March, Philip told guests at the launch event. He said the 2017 awards were the most successful yet with record entries

and attendance. Refinements for 2018 include a further streamlining of the entry process as well as new faces on the judging panel.

The MK BAA 'World Tour' launch event in September was hosted by BSI in Knowlhill. Maureen Sumner-Smith, chief operating officer of BSI Europe. BSI is an MK BAA sponsor. She welcomed guests and representatives of the many leading city organisations who are supporting MK BAA 2018 and spoke about BSI's long association with Milton Keynes.

Guests saw a video showcasing the 2017 awards night and then heard Ben Turner of Simply Race, winner of the Young Business Person Award, and Elizabeth Sheldon of Evidence Talks which won the Innovation & Technology Award, extol the benefits of entering MK BAA and the rewards it has brought them. Each spoke of the positive exposure as well as the prestige and pride for their organisations and staff.

Launch event guests were each given the flag of a different nation on arrival and a fun flag prize draw was held. The giving continued with MK BLP Board member Nick Mann presenting a giant cheque for £8,000 to Ian Revell, chief executive of MK Community Foundation. That sum was raised from the 2017 awards and will go into the MK Business Leaders' named MKCF fund already supporting entrepreneurship across the city.

Ian said the cheque was gratefully received and added: "MK BAA helps us to help others achieve great things!"

MK BLP members are reminded to encourage their clients, contacts and business acquaintances to enter MK BAA 2018. Visit the website www.mkbba.co.uk

Read an article about MK Business Leaders' drive for overseas trade elsewhere in this newsletter.



Meet... Simon Pickering MK BLP member

Managing Director – DBFB

About you:

I've spent the past 11 years in the fast-paced world of communications. A year ago I bought a 50 per cent share and took the role of MD in dbfb, a regionally based managed service provider focused on Milton Keynes and Northampton. MK does not have a managed services provider and over the next 12 months dbfb will be opening an office and building a team with the sole purpose of servicing the MK business community.

Why is being a member of MK Business Leaders important?

MK Leaders has allowed me to understand the MK business community and gives me the opportunity to really get under the skin of what businesses in MK need from a total managed service provider. I also enjoy the social aspect of Business Leaders, and the odd glass of wine!

What do you bring to MK Business Leaders?

A lot of energy and real desire to enable the businesses in MK to grow using technology. I am also very keen to give the talent of today an opportunity to be successful and support the wider MK community.

What challenges face the Milton Keynes business community?

Technology is moving at such a pace and MK currently sits as the third worst connected city in the UK. With MK's ambition and vision of being a Smart City, connectivity is not just a business challenge but also impacts education and healthcare. It should be top of every leaders' agenda.



What makes Milton Keynes special for you?

I was born and raised in Grafton Regis so have seen MK grow from the 1970's to today's Smart City. Having lived in various parts of the UK throughout my career, I now have the opportunity to help MK businesses grow and give something back, something I am really enjoying.

Your tip for success in business and/or life?

A bit old fashioned I guess, but I do believe in the motto - the harder you work the luckier you are! Always put your staff first. If they enjoy their working environment and have the ability to develop, they will service customers better than your competition and that will drive business growth.

From burger bar to the House of Lords

Dolar Popat's story is a lesson in the power of diversity

Businessman, philanthropist and advocate for community cohesion Lord Dolar Popat challenged MK Business Leaders members and guests when he spoke at a Quarterly Dinner in June.

"When I arrived in the UK in 1971 as a Ugandan Asian with no qualifications, little business experience and challenged by the English language, would you have given me a job? I suspect if we're being honest, the answer would have been no. But, and this is the crucial bit - I did have potential,"

Lord Popat, who worked as a waiter in a Wimpy bar while gaining night school accountancy qualifications, spoke passionately about diversity and the role it can play in business. He said the word diversity produces different reactions. "In the public sector it is championed with initiatives and legislation. In the private sector, particularly where there aren't large HR departments to worry about these things, diversity is a scary, off-putting word like inclusion, accessibility and empowering that seems to mean more paperwork and less time to concentrate on profit," he said.

"The truth is in the middle and without diversity life would be very boring and in business it should be welcomed. People from different backgrounds have different opinions and ideas, and organisations themselves thrive on ideas."

"I'm not here with an intricate knowledge of Government diversity schemes, or to sell how businesses being more inclusive is good for society. I am here as a businessman saying that I think diversity helps make businesses more profitable because however good we are as individuals, there are hundreds of



ideas we have never considered.

"Whether young mothers returning to work, young people without skills but a hunger in their eyes, or someone like me from overseas, each has potential and big ideas waiting to be unlocked."



It's not IF you will be hacked – it's WHEN, business leaders are warned

Cyber security expert Dr Greg Epiphaniou gave members and guests an early morning wakeup call when he revealed the scale of the threat to businesses from cybercrime during a Breakfast Briefing in July.

Greg, senior lecturer in cyber security at the University of Bedfordshire, warned his audience: "It is not a case of if you are going to be hacked – it is when!" He talked about the incredible expanding scale and reach of the cyber realm, and the huge challenge of maintaining security within it.

When the internet was conceived it involved a few computers talking to each other, he said. By 2020 there will be more than 24 billion connected devices and search engines currently index up to 1.2 billion conventionally accessed web addresses. Including the so-called dark web, the number is in excess of 3.12 trillion! Soon billions of smart devices connected in 'the internet of things', including driverless cars, will become a huge 'sensing system', and a target for hackers. Cybercrime costs the UK economy billions of pounds annually and we live in an age when someone on another continent can remotely hack into a network server and damage a factory production line thousands of miles away, he said.

But 80 per cent of cyber-attacks could be prevented through simple measures, like using strong passwords. And Greg wasn't joking when he said it has taken some of us 20 years to progress from using 'Password' as our password to using the equally useless 'Password 123!'

To coincide with the launch of MK BAA 2018, MK BLP chair Philip Smith produced an article for the October issue of Business MK. Here is a shortened version...

Now, more than ever, UK plc and MK plc need to sell their products, services and talents further afield.

When we leave the European Union we should maintain good trading relations with the countries within it and they will remain some of our biggest markets. But we cannot take that for granted. Following the EU Referendum there has been a change in attitudes towards finding and growing new markets beyond Europe and this brings fantastic opportunities for businesses in Milton Keynes.



Well before the EU vote MK Business Leaders Partnership identified countries where existing trade relationships with Milton Keynes could be strengthened and new ones forged. We began conversations with like-minded business interest groups and at the beginning of 2017 we announced a Memorandum of Understanding between MK Business Leaders and the British Business Group of Dubai and the Northern Emirates, opening the door for Milton Keynes companies. There has been significant interest among MK businesses, so far from the engineering, security and education sectors, and we have told businesses who want to trade there that we can put them in touch with people with local knowledge, contacts and experience.

We have also this year hosted a trade delegation from Shenzhen and our guests spoke warmly about reciprocal visits to China. We have also received the generous support of International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox and Iain Stewart MP, and while our trade 'mission' is encouraging new opportunities we are aware some businesses in MK are already doing great things abroad. That has prompted us to give the 2018 Milton Keynes Business Achievement Awards an 'International' theme, showcasing those companies selling the skills, industry and expertise of Milton Keynes around the world.



mkblp.co.uk

For Your Diary

We have enjoyed four Business Leaders Dinners and six Breakfast Briefing events in 2017 with outstanding guest speakers. We are talking to a stellar roster for 2018 so watch your inbox for details. If you have not yet attended a Business Leaders event please come along and see what you are missing. Remember to book places quickly, and if you have to cancel please tell us as soon as possible so we can reallocate your place.

Duncan Phillips

Duncan Phillips of DP Leisure has retired from the Board of MK BLP. Chair Philip Smith said: "On behalf of his Board colleagues and members, can I express our gratitude for Duncan's considerable contribution to the success of MK Business Leaders."



Directors of Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership

Dr Phillip Smith MBE – Chair

Jean Gowin – DBFB

Nicholas Mann – Interdirect

Dr Julie Mills – Milton Keynes College

Jan Flawn – PJ Care

Julia Upton MBE

Martin Banham-Hall – Heald Solicitors

Ruby Parma – PwC

Simon deMaid – Howes Percival

Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership is an independent organisation, funded through member subscriptions, MK BLP works to identify and develop interests, specific to the business community in the City

Registered office: Artemis house, 4 Bramley road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK1 1PT.

Company Number 06682673

Your Contact Details

Please remember to keep us up to date with any changes to your contact details, especially email address alterations. Please call 07411 146 297 or email gina.harper@mkblp.co.uk.

Using our skills and knowledge
for the benefit of the Milton Keynes
business community