



## Luton inspires invention and innovation

The Innovation Centre in Luton knows a thing or two about invention and innovation - and its tenants are leading the way.

That's why they have inspired the centre, with its headquarters at The Spires, in Adelaide Street, to run the Luton Inspires campaign, to show off their talents.

This is the fourth section of the campaign - Luton Inspires New Inventions and Innovation and includes tenants Light Emotions Ltd and EcoStyle Ltd.

In the first three parts of the campaign, some of the tenants involved in Arts and Media and Social Enterprises, and New Products and Design were highlighted.

The centre, under the auspices of the University of Luton, aims to stimulate the local economy by nurturing the town's future business leaders.

IC tenants, numbering over 50 now, are based at the Spires, plus three other venues - Britannia House, the Coulter Building and the latest venue, the Hat Factory in Bute Street.

### ECOSTYLE

With the country's fossil fuel reserves running low, prompting the need to find alternative renewable energy sources, two graduates from the University of Luton have set up an inventive Luton company which is showing local children how it's done - with wind power.

'EcoStyle Ltd' designs and manufactures easy and fun-to-use renewable energy kits for schools,



science centres and museums, to demonstrate the principles of alternative green sources of energy.

EcoStyle, a tenant of the Luton and Dunstable Innovation Centre, which nurtures new companies and start-up ventures, was set up by two former University of Luton students. Simon Hall gained his degree in Product Design and it was while he was on the course with fellow student, Tonia Liarmakopoulou, that the idea blossomed.

Simon explained: 'As part of one of the modules of the course, we had to set up our own design consultancy. We contacted the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in Milton Keynes and asked if there was any product they needed to develop. They had put together a wind turbine kit for schools - but it was quite crude and fell apart easily! We decided to redevelop it.'

The course module turned into EcoStyle and now the company has designed three different kits for the NEF, one to demonstrate wind power and two that show how solar power can heat water or generate electricity.

EcoStyle is made up of Simon (Director), Tonia (Director and Company Secretary), Kevin Cook (Technical Director), Emma Powell (Creative Development Manager), Leon Walton (Management Accountant) and Muriel Wilson (Production Co-ordinator). They are 'virtual' tenants of the Innovation Centre, using the office and reception facilities at The Spires in Adelaide Street, when they need them.

'We develop our products in conjunction with the National Energy Foundation,' said Simon. 'It's taken quite a few years to get here - we started in 2000. We're manufacturing in earnest now - with all three, wind turbine, solar water heaters and photovoltaic kits, ready for sale.'

'We hope that from our launch in Luton, the word will spread to schools and science parks in the East of England. The kits are easy and fun to use, and involve interactive experimentation. They can be used for all ages, from five to 16, but are particularly good for Years Six and Seven in primary schools.'

'It's a very topical subject as people are beginning to realise the importance of renewable energy. People are genuinely interested. We had a trial with 100 kits that were sent out free of charge. They were funded by the National Energy Foundation through European Social Funding and went out to various schools in the area to use. We had some really positive feedback which led to our launch.'

The National Energy Foundation is an educational charity based in Milton Keynes and one of its aims is to encourage sustainable and green sources of energy by using promotion, information and advice. The National Energy Foundation's range of renewable energy kits is designed and manufactured by EcoStyle, a company committed to developing sustainable innovative products.

For more information about EcoStyle Ltd, contact 07957451502 or e-mail [info@ecostyle.co.uk](mailto:info@ecostyle.co.uk).

To contact the National Energy Foundation freephone orderline telephone 0800 138 0889 or e-mail [renewables@greenenergy.org.uk](mailto:renewables@greenenergy.org.uk).

#### SEEING THE LIGHT

DOMINIQUE Pecquet and Christophe Mermaz can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel - probably using one of their own tap-and-glow safety sticks.

Their business, 'Light Emotions' is finally taking off after almost four years of hard work, achieving the right niche in the market, thanks to the University of Luton's Innovation Centre.

Now they can celebrate with the best champagne from one of their customers, using the 'glow in the dark' glasses that they also design, make and sell across the world.

The two French engineers started the business in November 2000 after meeting each other at a company in France. They chose the Innovation Centre in Luton to start a company because of the UK's flexible employment laws which encourage innovation.

Dominique came up with the idea of a glass lighting up when liquid was poured into it and after working on it together, the pair got their first patent.

Christophe explained: We started from scratch, designing and making the products ourselves but we lost a lot of money over the first two years - all the money we put in. It was a nightmare - it's very hard when you have to do everything.

'So we had a rethink and modified our business ideas, and things started to work in the right direction. We didn't lose any more money and we doubled our turnover.

'Now we have some big customers - the champagne makers like Mumm and Moet and Chandon, as well as supplying companies such as Selfridges and M&S. We are moving ahead and we are more confident.'

Light Emotions now do business with Spain, France, Switzerland, the USA and the UK and they have more plans for international growth.

'The Innovation Centre has provided good accommodation - we have both an office and a production facility. They provide help and advice, and have good contacts with people.

'We are looking forward to success next year as we increase our business in Europe - and in two years we plan to move to China. But we will maintain an office here. We think we have huge potential, the best is to come.'

The glasses can be used for many different occasions - private and public events, Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, concert, festivals, new product launches, advertising campaigns

and drinks promotions.

The second patent was gained for the glow sticks which light up when you tap them and can be used for entertainment purposes or in safety circumstances such as boating, building, in the army, police, ambulance, or in the automotive industry.

Light Emotions Ltd are at Suite 4, Britannia House, Legrave Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU3 1RJ. Call 01582 482464 or e-mail: [info@lightemotions.com](mailto:info@lightemotions.com).

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