

Scottish Innovative Actions Programme Media Lab Final Report April 2007

Introduction

The Highlands and Islands of Scotland is the most peripheral region of the United Kingdom. Mountainous, with a land mass larger than Belgium, more coastline than France, but a population of less than 500,000 it shares many characteristics with the rural regions of the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden and Finland. Historically the Highlands and Islands have been the rural problem region of the UK, characterised by high unemployment, out-migration of population and a reliance on traditional industries, such as Tourism, Farming and Fishing. However, an environment of unique quality forms the backdrop to one of the last unspoilt areas of Europe. The rich culture and heritage of the area provides a base for modern industries and tourism, while traditional industries such as agriculture and fishing continue to support rural communities in the island and remote mainland.

Background

The economic base of the Highlands and Islands is characterised by the continuing importance of primary industries (agriculture, forestry and fishing). The manufacturing sector is diverse and is typified by SMEs and micro-enterprises. New activities in key technology industries such as medical products, IT and pharmaceuticals, contrast with traditional sectors such as oil-related engineering and textiles. The service sector accounts for over two thirds of employment and is characterised by the importance of tourism and public administration.

For over 40 years the development of the region has been led by Europe's oldest Regional Development Agency, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), established in 1965. Over the recent past, the Highlands and Islands have undertaken the transformation from an area characterised as suffering from the 'rural problem' of out-migration, unemployment and low incomes, to one where modern communications and infrastructure offers residents and visitors alike, a much improved quality of life. The region is now enjoying lower unemployment than the rest of the UK, strong population growth, and the attraction of skilled labour, particularly from the Baltic States and Poland. However within the Highlands and Islands a number of structural economic problems remain, including low business productivity, the absence of a University and the exclusion of the Highlands and Islands from the Scottish Innovation System.

The overall strategy for the region is "A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands", published in 2005. At its core is a transformational process of developing the Knowledge Economy of the region, through the linked process of Strengthening communities, Developing skills, Growing businesses and making global connections.

The focus of the strategy is on stimulating a wide range of new and expanded businesses, as well as assisting business starts on a targeted basis, so that the area has a pool of new firms, working in the fields of creative industries, science and technology and knowledge industries, which offer significant opportunities for growth.

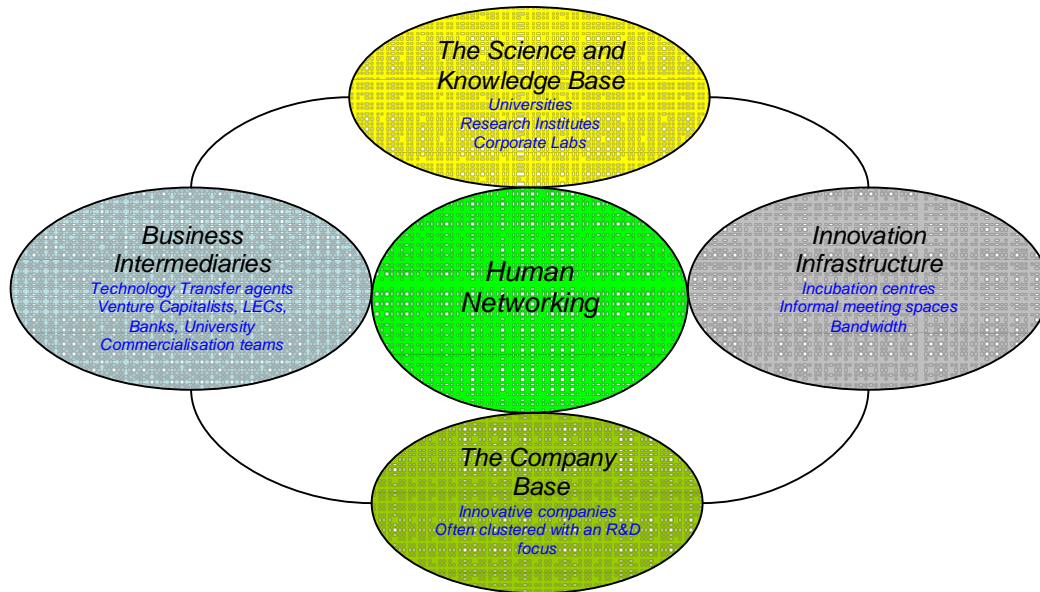
This approach is not unique to the Highlands and Islands, and is being pursued by a wide range of regions and governments throughout the world. Indeed the basic principle of innovation as the motor for economic change allied with a "learning economy" and social and environmental renewal form the heart of the Lisbon Agenda, the EU's overriding strategy document.

Highlands & Islands Innovation System

Throughout Europe there is now a public policy consensus that knowledge is increasingly vital to competitiveness, and accordingly public sector strategy can often focus on the role of Regional Innovation Systems in the creation and sustainability of innovation and knowledge based economies. Academics believe that the core of a knowledge based economy is an Innovation System, which can be defined as a set of "nodes" in a linked chain of business,

financial, academic, infrastructure and human networks. For a truly functioning system, all nodes must be present, and the linkages between them systematic and interactive.

Whilst there is no generally agreed definition of an innovation system, the following model is a useful one in the context of the Highlands and Islands. This model emphasises the importance of capability both in the science and knowledge base and in the company base. It also emphasises the importance of networking links between the two.



There are a number of other key factors which dealt with holistically, also influence the success of an innovation system.

- The attractiveness and “openness” of the region, both physical and societal.
- The international connectiveness of the region, again both physical and access to other knowledge centres.
- The educational levels, skills and human resources of the region.
- The ambition of the region.

Review of the Scottish Innovation System

As part of the Scottish Innovative Actions Programme a review was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to Cardiff University and the Aston Business School to investigate the Scottish Innovation System (SIS). The reports main findings were that a reasonably coherent SIS exists, although there is a significant disconnect between Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and the indigenous Small and Medium sized Enterprise (SME) base. A number of elements of the SIS are very strong, notably HEI knowledge generation, HEI commercialisation, public sector policy innovation (Intermediary Technology Institutes etc) and to a lesser extent R&D support measures in support of Scottish firms. The report notes the well known weakness of low levels of R&D spend by indigenous Scottish companies, but also highlights a “almost complete mismatch” between the output of the research active HEIs and the absorptive capacity of SMEs, and conversely between the requirements of SMEs and the ability (indeed the willingness) of HEIs to help.

Finally the report is quite clearly reports that “boundaries” of the SIS, sectoral, conceptual and physical only define a relatively small part of the landmass of Scotland. The report states that the Highlands and Islands, and to a lesser extent the Borders, are effectively excluded. However the study also recognised that Highlands and Islands Enterprise were undertaking a

range of activities focused on the creation of a “sub” Regional Innovation System in the Highlands and Islands, which could eventually form an important element in an overall Scottish Innovation System.

As a result of this report HIE recognised that the creation of a fully functioning innovation system was a critical component in the economic and social development of the region. The review of the Highlands and Islands Innovation system highlighted that almost all the components exist, albeit at differing stages of development, sophistication and complexity. Accordingly an innovation system development plan was prepared and approved by the HIE Board, which detailed a programme of activities required to create a functioning innovation system for the Highlands and Islands.

These activities were:-

- The stimulation of a research active company base
- The development of an infrastructure of innovation
- The organisation of a range of business intermediary services
- The vital importance of human networking
- The creation of a science and knowledge base in the Region

The stimulation of a research active company base is perhaps the most significant barrier Highlands and Islands Enterprise faces in creating a fully functioning Innovation system. The well known issues of small company size, dispersed location and economic sector, all mitigate against Highlands and Islands businesses being inter and globally connected, a key factor in business innovation. HIE has developed a series of development tools that address these issues, including financial instruments, management training, graduate placement programmes and crucially the exposure of key company personal to global knowledge centres.

All key elements of infrastructure required to support innovation in the Highlands and Islands exist to some extent. Broadband is universal, incubation/innovation centres exist or are in the planning stage in most parts of the region, and innovative human networking organisations have been established.

With a limited number of exceptions there are no obvious gaps in the level and range of business intermediaries operating in the Highlands and Islands; however the immaturity of the innovation system means that some players, e.g. technology focused venture capitalists and specialist IP lawyers, are not actively present. At the same time, the public sector, including HIE, undertakes many more of the roles that would typically be filled by the private sector elsewhere.

By far the most important dynamic in the Highlands and Islands' aspiration to become a region renowned for innovation is the human element which connects each of the players within the innovation system. In a fully functioning system the different players naturally interact, however, as a result of the immaturity of the developing structure in the Highlands and Islands, compounded by many of the issues highlighted above, this is not currently the case.

The central focus of HIE's plan in this area is the creation of a strong regional, research focussed University. The need for a University in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland has long been recognised, and after 10 years of preparatory work the initial step was taken in April 2001, when the Scottish Government granted UHI Millennium Institute (UHI) Higher Education Institution Status, providing university level courses throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The UHI network is a unique partnership of 15 colleges and research institutions distributed across region, co-ordinated by UHI executive office based in Inverness. Each college and research institution has its own distinctive character and strengths, and is involved in both teaching and research. It is expected that the Scottish Parliament will approve full University status for UHI in 2008.

Evidence is increasing that knowledge spill-over from research has its strongest effect locally, therefore it is vital that measures to promote high levels of research activity within the Highlands and Islands are continued. Accordingly since designation as a HEI in 2001, UHI has actively developed a research base which includes Marine Biotech, Fisheries, Nuclear Decommissioning, Agronomy, Renewable Energy, Lifestyle Disorders, Rural health and Distance Reducing Technologies, and aims to build further a high quality, sustainable research portfolio in key strategic areas.

However despite significant investments from the public sector in creating new research capacity within UHI, experience suggest that it can take from five to seven years from the creation of a research institute to significant economic impact through local knowledge spinout. Accordingly HIE has followed a twin track approach in creating research capacity within UHI, and identifying and working with other external knowledge providers.

HIE supports a number of knowledge transfer programmes which include a well resourced team, based in the University of the Highlands and Islands, which accesses the knowledge base of other Scottish Universities on behalf of local firms (HI-LINKS). HIE also funds a project that allows local companies to access the intellectual assets of the UK Defence Research establishments, through collaborative work with the Defence Diversification Agency. HIE also has a formal joint programme of activity the Research Labs of British Telecommunications (BT) and is establishing similar links with other corporate research labs i.e. Microsoft.

The most significant experience with external knowledge providers is HIE's partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston, USA. MIT is one of the worlds top Science and Technology Research Institutes, and HIE is working with its Research Labs and Academic programmes to identify technologies, projects and commercialisation opportunities that can be transferred from MIT to companies and organisations in the Highlands and Islands.

The MIT Media Lab

The MIT Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston USA, engages in education and research in the digital technologies. It was founded in 1985 by MIT Professor Nicholas Negroponte and former MIT President Jerome Wiesner. The Media Lab focuses on interdisciplinary research, which generally does not involve directly developing core technologies, but rather developing applications of those technologies, or combining those technologies in innovative and non intuitive ways.

Funding for the Media Lab works differently from most academic institutions in that the Media Lab receives a great deal of corporate sponsorship. The Media Lab receives substantial funding from a consortium of commercial partners, who gain access to the intellectual property generated at the lab. Rather than accepting funding on a per-project or per-group basis, the Media Lab asks sponsors to fund general themes of the lab.

There are nearly thirty Research Groups within the Lab, a large number of which focus on topics related to human computer interaction. The Media Lab also does research into integrating more computational intelligence into learning activities. This includes software for learning but also "smart" educational toys such as programmable bricks like the cricket. A number of groups are pursuing hybrid art-engineering projects, in developing new tools, media, health monitoring devices, and instruments for music and other forms of art. Several groups work on traditional artificial intelligence projects.

As of 2005, the Media Lab is responsible for filing for about 100 patents, the most high profile being the MPEG-4 SA project. Large numbers of Media Lab-developed technologies made it into sponsor products, in particular for toy companies (e.g. Lego Mindstorms developed), Johnson & Johnson diabetes testing kits, as well as some IBM laptops.

There are numerous Media Lab industry spin-offs. These range from elnk, which makes slow, high-resolution, paper-quality displays, First Mile Solutions, which brings communications

infrastructure to rural communities and Ambient Devices, which produces glanceable information displays.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise is the only European Public sector Sponsor of the MIT Media Lab. HIE has been a sponsor since early 2005, and was previously a sponsor of the Media Lab Europe, based in Dublin, Ireland, which closed in January 2005. HIE has adopted a slightly different sponsorship model to most other sponsors. HIE itself does not need access to the IP generated in the Lab, but rather needs to broker it on behalf of its SME base therefore being an associate partner is adequate. HIE does however sponsor research fellows within the Lab, in areas of research that are relevant to its interests.

In establishing the relationship with the MIT Media Lab, HIE established a programme of activity that would deliver in four specific areas:

1. Transfer of new products and processes from the Media Lab to companies and organisations in the Highlands and Islands;
2. Establishment of new spin out companies;
3. Creation of new sectoral collaborative networking groups between Scotland and Boston;
4. Policy impacts of the relationship itself;

At the same time an active dissemination programme was established in the Highlands and Islands, which focussed on a range of activities that exposed research from the Media Lab to companies and firms in Scotland. This has included technology workshops and demonstrators, researcher secondments, research trials, conferences and also SME visits to the Media Lab.

Appendix 1, Table 1 shows the activities and outputs from the collaboration with MIT Media Lab. In the area of research projects these have ranged from the testing of a voice tone recognition algorithm in a Customer Contact Centre, with a view to developing software products that match caller to customer agent by personality types. Conversely an arts organisation in the Western Isles has worked with two researchers from MIT in developing a hardware and software platform as well as content that delivers story telling and interpretation in remote and wild areas. HIE is also actively involved in running a series of research trials of a robotic companion – the Huggable – which is being developed as a medical support device for therapeutic applications and the early prototype development and research trials are involving around 10 Highlands & Islands companies.

Events and conferences have played an important role in exposing the work and experience of MIT to a Highlands and Islands audience. For example the Digital Future conference in May 2006 was an opportunity for businesses, academia and others interested in the development of the Highlands and Islands economy, to attend a major conference which showcased some of the most exciting developments in innovation, science, technology and learning developed through the MIT Media Lab. The conference featured Walter Bender ex-Director of the MIT Media Lab and currently president of One Laptop per Child - a not-for-profit association that is developing and deploying technologies that will revolutionise how the world's children engage in learning. Supporting Walter was David Cavallo, co-head of the MIT Media Lab's Future of Learning research group. David shared his experience in working with communities around the world to design new technologies that will change the way educationalists think about 'learning' and 'school'.

A key focus of HIE activity has been the creation of sectoral groups that mix specialists from MIT with businesses and practitioners from the Highlands and Islands in the areas of Healthcare, Tourism, Renewable Energy and Education. A number of demonstration technologies developed in the Lab have been developed in prototype products in the region, including an ambient communication device and a handheld tourism support service. A number of spin-out companies have been formed, either based on prototypes from the Media Lab, or inspired by work or projects undertaken there. These include companies specialising in:

- Interactive display systems;
- On-line TV and radio channels;
- Tourism technology platforms for interpretation of culture & heritage;
- Smart textiles;

Impacts on policy within the region have been much wider than was originally envisaged. Reviews of educational technology delivery systems and protocols have been influenced by on-going dialogue with MIT, as has the areas of remote and rural medicine, and entrepreneurship programmes. HIE's policy for '*human networking*' and '*knowledge exchange*' has been greatly influenced and shaped based on the experience of the Media Lab project. The dissemination activities have grown in scales, more companies are interested in access to new knowledge, therefore, HIE has evaluated and re-focussed the efforts and activities of Fusion, the Highlands & Islands networking organisation. The newly shaped Fusion has a remit to undertake the human networking gap in the Highlands & Islands Innovation System, acting as the stimulator; facilitator and helping companies exploit the value of access to knowledge. This is a major step-change for both Fusion and HIE in both the funding and the cultural aspects of this new model and without the success of the Media Lab project, this may have been a longer process to implement.

The most significant policy impact from the Media Lab relationship has been the creation of Distance Lab, a new research and innovation institute based in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. HIE's work with MIT highlighted that there was an interesting "research gap" in northern rural Europe, namely the investigation of the relationship between technology and distance. The Lab's work addresses distance-related issues in several key areas, including learning, health, knowledge, relationships, tourism and culture. Inspired by the MIT Media Lab, Distance Lab will place emphasis on building working prototypes and demonstrations of new technologies and channelling these into new products and services in the global marketplace.

Distance Lab is a distributed research lab, with nodes of activity being set up in several geographical locations in the Highlands and Islands connected together via a broadband network. Operating in this unique context Distance Lab will be a research project in itself, providing researchers with a source of first-hand experience and insight into distance-related issues. Distance Lab will develop experimental learning opportunities and workshops that overlap and complement its research activity. The lab is led by MIT Media Lab alum – Dr Stefan Agamanolis and has been awarded a 5 year funding package of £3 million from Highlands & Islands Enterprise, but will also require to attract additional research and corporate sponsorship funds of which is already underway with Distance Lab having secured a number of contract research and corporate sponsorship deals.

Conclusion

The weaknesses identified in the Scottish Innovation System highlighted that the Highlands and Islands region was excluded from the knowledge generation activities of Scottish universities, and that the linkages between the region, and particularly its company base, and external knowledge providers was poor. HIE has explicitly addressed this problem by creating a new University, which will have significant research capacity. However, whilst this research capacity is being created, external Knowledge resources have been identified and formal exchange and transfer programmes established.

The Scottish Innovative Actions Programme has allowed HIE to test an innovative model in working with an external source of knowledge which HIE has extended to working with other external knowledge providers namely, BT, Microsoft and the Defence Diversification Agency (DDA). The linkages to the MIT Media Lab are perhaps the most interesting and despite the significant differences between the Highlands and Islands and MIT, spatial, societal and educational, a strong relationship has been established with mutual benefits, as well as impressive outputs that meet the economic development needs of the Highlands and Islands.

The largest and most impressive achievement is the creation of Distance Lab which will provide a local facility for Highlands & Islands SMEs to engage on technology based

research, commercialisation and prototyping opportunities. Distance Lab will also act as a regional, national and EU conduit for MIT activity by participating in collaborative research projects; facilitating collaborations between MIT and H&I organisations; providing internship and placement opportunities for MIT students; and prototyping MIT projects for EU organisations.

Culturally in the region, the project has stimulated innovation, creativity and focus for many of the companies who have been involved in the Media Lab project. This must be built upon and scaled up to ensure Highlands & Islands companies have the confidence and capacity to participate in knowledge transfer, business R&D and business growth projects.

From the success of the Media Lab project, HIE has extended its relationship with MIT to also working with MIT's Industrial Liaison Programme which provides access to all departments at MIT. To complement and build on the relationship with the Media Lab, HIE has established links with MIT's Entrepreneurship Center and Technology Licensing Office to help Highlands & Islands companies understand how to exploit the knowledge, technology and people opportunities coming from engagement with knowledge providers such as MIT. The companies have found this to be extremely useful on two fronts:

1. Attendance at MIT's annual week long Entrepreneurship Development Program where they are immersed in the entrepreneurial eco-system in and around the Boston, MA area. They have a specific goal to develop their idea in to a commercial plan and/or achieve a new level of business growth;
2. Meeting with MIT's Technology Licensing Officers to receive one-to-one advice on Intellectual Property challenges. HIE are now considering how to implement the learning of this experience in to its own policy and innovation support activities and how this links with the Scottish Intellectual Asset Centre.

Whilst it is important to recognise that many of the impacts of the Media Lab project will not be realised for some time, HIE are undertaking a formal reflective evaluation of the Media Lab project throughout 2007. This will involve a consultative engagement with SMEs and other organisations involved in the project to understand the deeper level of outputs/affects on Highlands & Islands companies. The evaluation will also include a workshop with everyone who has visited the MIT Media Lab and had an involvement in the project to help HIE shape the future direction of the partnership with MIT and the important role of Distance Lab in this relationship.

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April 2007

APPENDIX 1 – Results

TABLE 1

<u>FUNDING ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>TARGET</u>	<u>NO. ACHIEVED</u>
Research Projects	9	9
Events	18	50
Academic Visits	36	23
Research Projects	9	9
<u>FUNDING OUTPUTS</u>	<u>TARGET</u>	<u>NO. ACHIEVED</u>
Products & Processes Developed	9	9
Spin outs	6	6
Collaborative Groups Established	9	9
Policy Impacts	6	8
<u>DISSEMINATION PROGRAMME</u>	<u>TARGET</u>	<u>NO. ACHIEVED</u>
Workshops	25	48
Technology Demonstrations	15	17
R&D Projects & Researcher Secondments	6	9
Specialist Consultancy	4	4
SME Visits	25	27

→ There have been 15 **facilitated company visits** to the Media Lab in Boston and around 20 companies visit MediaLab Europe in Dublin previously. A further 50 companies have been involved in **MIT workshops** held in the H&I. The visits and workshops have also included the following partner organisations:

- § UHI Millennium Institute
- § NHS Highland
- § NHS Western Isles
- § NESS Foundation
- § Highland Hospice
- § Centre for Rural Health
- § Greenspace
- § Proiseact nan Eilean
- § Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
- § Careers Scotland
- § Eden Court
- § Fusion
- § AIM-HI
- § HI-ARTS
- § Shetland Amenity Trust
- § Shetland Tourism Association
- § Centre for Business Process Outsourcing
- § Defence Diversification Agency
- § Sustainable Development Research Centre

→ 4 **research trials** have taken place in the Highlands & Islands with MIT students and a further 2 are in the planning stages. The trials have been in:

1. Voice analysis technology - Vertex & Centre for Business Process Outsourcing;
2. Tourism handheld devices - Jacobite Cruises, Loch Ness Partnership & Proiseact nan Eilean;
3. Health monitoring devices - Lews Castle College, NHS Western Isles & Centre for Rural Health;
4. Robotic technology - Avoch Nursery, Highland Hospice, NHS Western Isles, NHS Highland and 10 Highlands & Islands SMEs.

- **Intellectual Property (IP) & Licensing.** HIE has been working with MIT's Technology Licensing Office (TLO) to understand how MIT manages IP and licensing for academic research and spin-outs. There are two specific ways HIE has been learning from MIT:
 1. **Companies** - The TLO have worked with 5 H&I companies as a group and also provided one-to-one advice. The impact of the advice was immediately recognised in that KP Technology (Wick) and Canan (Skye) had considered their most recent patent application to be too expensive and a complicated process for their business. The advice from TLO was that this indeed is not the case and advised each company how best to progress their application and what to spend and do at each stage of the process. The companies learnt how to gain best value from this process and what they could do to in preparation of the intellectual property process at very little cost. These companies felt that this advice was the most valuable lesson learnt from their visit to MIT and have since built the knowledge in to their business planning and patent development process. HIE is considering how to connect this experience with the Scottish Intellectual Assets Centre and its programmes.
 2. **Collaborative projects** – HIE has brokered/facilitated research projects and trials with local companies, UHI and others in the region. The projects/trials typically start with a Memo of Understanding (MOU) to outline what each partner is bringing to the project, project aims and objectives, expected outcomes and options for future development should the project/trial be successful. The technology MIT are bringing to the project is always owned by MIT, but the know-how and additional resources brought in to the project by each partner by way of new/additional IP is always acknowledged. The outputs of the project are then agreed by each partner and any future collaborative development work will have an IP action plan developed to agree the IP ownership and licensing options amongst partners. In theory this should work, however, UK academic institutions have tended to spend a lot of time checking through MOU's and some companies spend a lot of time worrying about "who owns what". Solutions are being considered by HIE with Fusion, HI-LINKS (UHI) and the Intellectual Asset Centre on how best to approach and support these activities and expertise from the TLO may be brought in to assist in this process.

- **The Digital Future Conference** (May 2006) has been the largest event showcasing HIE's work with MIT. It attracted 400 delegates and a further 250 school children from all across the Highlands & Islands. The conference aimed to demonstrate the types of projects HIE and MIT are working on; engage senior stakeholders regionally & nationally on future strategy and ambition and also engage local schools in innovative technology workshops. Two keynote speakers were identified from ML and 8 researchers came across to undertake technology demonstrations and workshops. As a result of the conference collaborative research partnerships were developed between H&I companies and Media Lab researchers and also raised the level of understanding of UHI research activities in the region. Also, 7 Schools have visited MIT and around 10 schools are now running a series of **Innovative Technology Workshops** (ITW) through a combination of solutions:
 1. Highland Council purchasing the technology to deliver ITW from ML;
 2. Teachers who have visited ML delivering ITW in the classroom;
 3. ML and Distance Lab researchers holding a workshop and training teachers on site at schools;
 4. Local companies providing ITW at schools across the H&I;
 5. A new spin-out company being considered to develop an ITW common operating platform across H&I.

- **Fashion and smart textiles** is an area that HIE explored with the Media to understand the opportunities for Highlands & Islands fashion, textile and design companies. Elena Corchero (an ex-Media Lab researcher) was tasked with a sectoral mapping exercise to identify companies, skills, facilities, equipment and education in the sector throughout the Highlands & Islands. As part of this exercise Elena met Kirsteen Stewart a local fashion graduate designer in Orkney. Elena and Kirsteen have been working together and

supporting each other as young business women on design projects, fashion shows, selling products, business planning & basic accounting principles and are responsible for setting up the Highlands & Islands Fashion network (HI-Fashion) supported by HIE. They are interested in bringing innovation and technology in to the sector and are exploring new ways of doing through "Future Trends" and "Smart Textiles" workshops with local fashion companies in the region e.g. Elena has designed a dress with solar energy cells integrated in to the fabric of the dress that could recharge electronic devices such as mobile phones, iPods or even household devices.

Other Activities

- UHI are working with MIT in establishing links with the Entrepreneurship Center in MIT's Sloan School of Management. This was initiated to help SMEs understand how to successfully commercialise research, spin out new companies and grow existing companies. This resulted in:
 1. HIE/UHI launching a joint entrepreneurship challenge and 3 H&I companies (C3 Amulet; the Ice Factor & Environmental Hygiene Products) attending MIT's annual Entrepreneurship Development Programme in January 2007 with other companies from all over the world;
 2. Michael Grandinetti, MIT Entrepreneurship Centre proposing to assist UHI with the development of their new management school and **entrepreneurship education**.
- Laura Nichols, HIE Research Fellow at the Media Lab has become a **judge in the ICT Youth Challenge programme**. The ICT Youth Challenge 2006 winners visited MIT in September 2006 where they visited the Media Lab, spent time with MIT's Technology Licensing Office and pitched their idea to MIT's Entrepreneurs Club alongside other start-up companies at MIT.