Our Story

Fareham Borough Council identified a need to support the development of high growth jobs in the Solent Enterprise Zone. There was a lack of suitable and attractive business premises in the area with a high level commuting to Southampton and Winchester. SME engagement with local educational institutes and large sector leading businesses was low, resulting in a lack of opportunities for students and graduates in the area to engage with innovative businesses and gain employment. Fareham Borough Council identified the former HMS Daedalus site as prime location to develop a state-of-the-art Innovation Centre, and make it a successful hub for small to medium sized businesses.

The Council’s overall vision for the Fareham Innovation Centre was that it would be a place which provides new businesses, predominantly within the advanced manufacturing sector, with a range of flexible office and workshop accommodation in which they can be supported to grow and thrive. An integrated business support service, tailored to the needs of SMEs in these sectors, would be pivotal as well as services to the wider business community to develop a dynamic community in the area.

We are hugely proud of this Innovation Centre within Oxford Innovation and I would personally like to take this opportunity to thank our client, Fareham Borough Council, and the staff here at Fareham Innovation Centre who have worked tirelessly to make this Centre such a huge success. I would also like to add my appreciation to our customers, and despite the challenges some of them have faced, they have come out the other end and have experienced significant achievements.

Stephen Brownlie, Regional Manager (Solent), Oxford Innovation
A MESSAGE FROM LEADER OF FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL, CLLR SEÁN WOODWARD

It is now two years since Fareham Innovation Centre opened its doors to new, start-up and expanding businesses. It’s been two years of dynamic activity in which the Centre has become a hub for forward thinking businesses in the engineering, aerospace, aviation and marine industries. Built by Fareham Borough Council after successfully securing a £5.3M grant from the Homes and Communities Agency, the Innovation Centre now boasts top of the range workshop and office space in an environment where new businesses are supported to prosper and grow. It’s no surprise that, with all this on offer, the Centre reached full occupancy in less than 12 months of opening its doors, and there is now a waiting list of 20 businesses wanting to take up space at the Centre.

Aside from the facilities it offers, location is another key tenet of Fareham Innovation Centre’s success. Strategically placed within Faraday Business Park at Daedalus, it lies within the Solent Enterprise Zone, a key economic site for South Hampshire. By virtue of being within an Enterprise Zone, qualifying businesses based at the Centre receive a 100% business rate discount worth up to £275,000 over a five-year period.

The Centre has close ties with neighbouring CEMAST (Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Advanced Skills Training), where more than 1,100 students are enrolled. While the students benefit from having established business expertise close at hand at the Innovation Centre, companies at the Centre know there is a pool of up and coming technical talent being nurtured on their door step.

A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

Fareham Borough Council appointed Oxford Innovation (OI) to operate the Innovation Centre on its behalf, a partnership which has been key to its success. OI was selected for its expertise in operational management and attracting customers. In addition to this, the company also brings to the table extensive experience in operating state-of-the-art Innovation Centre facilities, currently managing a network of 21 such Centres across the UK, with more than 900 companies benefiting from their business support skills. Thanks to its achievements, the Innovation Centre was awarded the Most Innovative Small Business Friendly, Programme, Campaign or Project at the 2015 Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) awards.

A BOOST FOR THE BOROUGH

The success of the Innovation Centre is also a success story for the Borough at large. It is integral to the Borough Council’s objective to turn a once underused site into a thriving business hub. The Innovation Centre is contributing to an extra 3,500 new jobs expected to be generated onsite by 2026. 250 of these posts have already been created directly by the Centre, either through its construction or its day to day operation. This is providing a vital boost to the regional economy, creating highly skilled local jobs and crucially local people are seeing activity return to the site. Due to the success of the Innovation Centre plans to build a second phase have been advanced. This will more than double its size and building work has now started.
110 PEOPLE
27 BUSINESSES
95% RATED THE CENTRE GOOD OR EXCELLENT
24 OFFICES
15 WORKSHOPS
2,400 M²

100% OCCUPANCY RATE ACHIEVED IN 11 MONTHS
20 BUSINESSES ON WAITING LIST

35 BUSINESSES USE BUSINESS LOUNGE
3 BUSINESSES GRADUATED FROM BUSINESS LOUNGE TO OFFICE SPACE
30% BUSINESSES GRADUATED TO BIGGER SPACE
500% UPLIFT IN BUSINESSES TAKING ON INTERNS IN 17-18

36 CONFERENCES/EVENTS HELD AT CENTRE
400+ DELEGATES ATTENDED CONFERENCES/EVENTS
**Business Support**

- 440 Hours of Business Support
- £27,500 Business Support Value
- 100% Rated Business Support Service as Meeting Expectations

**Awards**

- Fareham Society Design Award: Highly Commended Award
- Federation of Small Businesses Award

**Financial Success**

- 2 Started to Make a Profit Two Years Ahead of Plan
- 32 Broke Even 32 Months Ahead of Plan
- £95K Profit Return to Council of £95k (FY 2016/17)

**Future**

- £7M Expansion Plans
- 3,500 New Jobs to Be Created by 2026
CENTRE ACCOMMODATION

Fareham Innovation Centre provides the ideal environment for start-ups and small businesses looking to survive and grow. The office and workshop spaces have been designed specifically to offer flexibility and affordability to ensure costs are managed effectively to scale up or down requirements as they change.

- **OFFICE SPACE**: Sole occupancy, shared or virtual accommodating between 1-10 people
- **WORKSHOPS**: 15 workshops ranging from 312 - 807 sq.ft
- **MEETING/CONFERENCE ROOM HIRE**: 2 - 40 people

**BUSINESS LOUNGE:**

The Innovation Centre was purposely designed to have space for customers to co-exist, network and support each other. One of these community spaces is ‘The Wardroom’ – a business lounge. The space has proved great for ad-hoc meetings and essential as an overflow for temporary project staff and visiting interns. The Wardroom is also leveraged for networking events to build rapport and peer-to-peer support.

**SUCCESS: THREE LOUNGE MEMBERS HAVE ‘GRADUATED’ FROM THE WARDROOM AND TAKEN OFFICE SPACE ONCE THEIR NEW BUSINESSES ACHIEVED REVENUE AND SUFFICIENT CASH FLOW.**
CENTRE PERFORMANCE

- 100% occupancy rate in less than 12 months
- 20 businesses on the waiting list
- Companies are internally growing, with several discussing expansion plans

BUSINESS SURVIVAL AND GROWTH

National statistics show that less than half of businesses survive the first five years of trading. Oxford Innovation undertook research into business survival rates and found that nearly two fifths of those interviewed felt that they wouldn’t have survived turbulent times if they hadn’t been based within an Innovation Centre.

Many customers based at the Centre have experienced challenging periods of trading but with the support of the Innovation Director, on-site Centre management team, and peer-to-peer support the businesses have survived and are experiencing significant periods of growth.
COMMERCIAL PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF

ESL Group, design and manufacture Internet of Things (IoT) solutions with high ‘banking-grade’ security features. ESL has a legacy of 23 years providing data management tools and project solutions to the investment banking sector.

Russ Cole, Founder and Chairman of ESL Group, brought his core team of three technical experts to Fareham Innovation Centre (FIC) to focus on ESL's new product line, and also develop new IoT devices like real-time monitored medication dispensers for the MedTech and assisted living sectors. Starting a new venture in a crowded but still emerging sector like IoT is a long and sometimes lonely journey.

Russ has received lots of encouragement from other businesses in the Centre, and from the Centre management team. The Centre events have been pertinent and timely – whether it has been on Export Finance which has crystallised his strategy to embrace overseas markets – to knowing about the Oxford Innovation managed Enterprise Europe Network and finding opportunities in Poland. The various introductions and network contacts has often kept Russ and the team going.

The Centre business support team have a good insight to ESL’s offering and also possible manufacturing capacity in Asia, and Russ was encouraged to participate in a Department of International Trade mission to Singapore on its Smart Nation and cyber security agenda. The event became a springboard to ESL meeting all the right players following the lead they had already initiated – such that ESL made manufacturing and distribution agreements and partnerships – and ESL now has an office in Singapore for the South East Asia markets.

Like all emerging technology, it is key to showcase products to targeted and, where possible, captive audiences. The Centre’s Innovation Director, Richard May, whilst helping launch Oxford Innovation’s latest Centre called Future Space on the University of West England campus, identified such an opportunity. He introduced Russ to two leading professors that are building an Assisted Living Laboratory nest to the prestigious Bristol Robotics Laboratory. ESL has entered into an agreement to provide the core IoT hub and backend solution for the new facility. This means that devices being prototyped, tested and developed in the facility will leverage ESL solutions – a great proof of technology and the essential security features.

The on-site Innovation Director has acted as a trusted soundboard for Russ as he architected ESL Group and subsidiary ownership structures, keeping core IP separate from global and regional distribution entities. Russ was encouraged to test his new structure and resulting investment opportunities by pitching for investment at the Venturefest South event in Winchester. It has been a long journey; support and encouragement have played a critical role, and perseverance will be the key to success.

CASE STUDY

440 HOURS

OF ONE-TO-ONE BUSINESS SUPPORT, MENTORING OR COACHING VALUED AT A TOTAL OF £27,500

The Centre boasts more than just the latest technology office solutions but provides professional, expert one-to-one business solution advice to all occupants. The business support provided by the on-site Innovation Director has had significant impact on client businesses within the Centre.
Aged 21, Tom arrived at the Centre in June 2016 with an overriding ambition – to make long-established Blue Gee a UK market leader in repair-and-paint kits for glass fibre yachts, canoes, dinghies, catamarans and kayaks.

Blue Gee sources epoxy resin and polyester solutions, as well as paint pigments, other chemicals and repair tools, from Europe before repackaging them at the Fareham Innovation Centre where the company is based. But the young entrepreneur required close business mentoring in an industry Tom knew little about, which is the main reason why he chose the Innovation Centre. By Tom’s own admission, the success experienced today wouldn’t have been possible without the support provided by the Centre team and Innovation Director, Richard May.

“I was a one-man band, from a building background, with a Blue Gee legacy customer base of 200 customers. Starting out as a young entrepreneur can be daunting and the business coaching I received from the Centre was invaluable. Richard spent various sessions pulling apart the business plan and starting from the ground up. Richard helped from reviewing and adjusting my business acquisition model including legal agreements, to the business strategy. He was also able to guide me through negotiations with a sole new distributor of Blue Gee’s products, filling in any gaps in my knowledge and experience and ensuring the profit margins worked for both parties whilst delivering pricing competitiveness to our loyal customers.”

With a new energy, Blue Gee is already growing headcount. Tom has employed a part-time employee, due to increased throughput in the warehouse on the back of a sole distribution agreement. A further two part-time staff have been brought in through the Solent Jobs Programme, a cost-free service funded by Southampton and Portsmouth’s City Deal agreement and the European Social Fund.

**PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT**

There is much to be done to steer Blue Gee into 21st Century manufacturing – and the journey has already begun.

“With the strategy agreed, I’m now free to spend a lot more time on re-establishing and developing the Blue Gee brand, product range and manufacturing process improvements rather than trying to sell in to individual chandleries.”

The vital support provided by the team at Fareham has helped Tom expand his network of contacts to include a chemist, university academics, and a boat repair specialist who is the son-in-law of the owner of another business owner in the Centre; a great example of peer-to-peer support. This knowledge cluster will help take Blue Gee to the next level.

Given the pace of change at the business, and thanks to the focus on innovation, there may well be others to add to that impressive list in the future.

**WHY BLUE GEE CHOSE Fareham Innovation Centre**

90% of the decision was down to the business coach support, because I was alone and needed advice, and I didn’t want to have to commit to a long lease on a warehouse with all the costly overheads that come with that. Here, there are professional reception facilities, and meeting rooms, as well as exemption from the burden of business rates. What you have are people like me all growing businesses, from a diverse range of sectors, and giving one another peer-to-peer encouragement. There is very much a community feel. You are not alone.
COLLABORATION AT ITS BEST

3-Sci design and light manufacture wireless sensors that monitor corrosion levels on the internal and external surface of metal pipes. Their technology uniquely measures micrometre levels of metal degradation at high temperatures and explosive atmospheres – so ideal for monitoring pipes used in refineries in the Oil, Gas and Petrochemical sectors.

3-Sci came to Fareham Innovation Centre in the first month or so of being incorporated by a team of established researchers from QinetiQ – a global research agency. The Centre is ideal for them with laboratory grade workshops and office combinations, flexibility to expand, Special Economic Zone status, plus business, innovation and ecosystem support. Equally, 3-Sci is ideal for the Centre acting as a beacon to others that wish to conduct true innovation and secure commercial applications.

3-Sci had the courage to leave the safer environs of a research organisation or university – in the search for not just grants but the ‘new gold’ of commercial applications for new technology. As a commercial enterprise, 3-Sci has put themselves in a position to be focused, mission-critical and motivated.

The business support given to 3-Sci by the expert team at Fareham Innovation Centre has been focused on strategy, identification of likely early revenue streams, dealing in the Middle East, pros and cons of local agents and partners, and brainstorming secondary commercial applications.

The Innovation Director gets to know the customers well enough to act as a Business Ambassador – representing the customer within the local knowledge and international trade ecosystems and making impactful introductions. As an example, 3-Sci have been introduced to the Saudi British Joint Business Chamber which has led to possible opportunities with Saudi Aramco. They are also now aware of new UK business ownership structures in Kuwait and the Gulf Co-operation Countries which may make doing business in the Gulf easier and more profitable.

In September 2016, Fareham Innovation Centre hosted the Public Utilities Board from Singapore – they were keen to benchmark against the success of the Centre. The staff at Fareham Innovation Centre arranged for the University of Portsmouth, one of the Centre’s key knowledge transfer partners, to attend the visit. Bringing all key players together initiated new commercial applications to be uncovered. The savvy connections have resulted in a significant InnovateUK ‘Smart Infrastructure’ grant application, partnering 3-Sci with two utility companies and the University. If the application is successful it will hopefully lead to a game-changing monitoring system which would have massive financial benefits and significant reduction in environmental implications.

JOB CREATION AND SUPPORTING FUTURE TALENT

The employee numbers at Fareham Innovation Centre have remained near the 110 mark since all units were occupied – showing the capacity of the building with the current incumbent businesses. Looking beneath this number, reveals some valuable insights to how the businesses and the Centre continues to positively impact the local employment market. Companies grow and leave and others come in and grow – a positive employment churn.

SUCCESSES:

- **A SINGLE PERSON COMPANY** has recently won a significant order and developed a significant sales forecast such that it has employed three new team members; two of which were long term unemployed or receiving ESA benefits.

- **A SECOND COMPANY** had three employees but has adopted a diversification strategy to plough back positive cash flows and created a new venture which now employs an additional two staff.

- **ANOTHER ONE PERSON BUSINESS** took on three interns on a project basis which led to two additional full-time employees.
INVESTING IN THE TALENT OF TOMORROW

MRO Insyte is an industrial data management consultancy run by Peter Eales. Peter had been working on a contract with the (then) Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Saudi Arabia, and he was moving house to Lee-on-the-Solent area. He was thinking of semi-retirement but was intrigued by the new Fareham Innovation Centre.

Buoyed by the ‘makes you want to work’ space and his discussions with the Centre team, Peter became a Business Lounge member and soon attended a roadshow event. It was not long before the team at Fareham had identified Peter’s passion lies in mentoring and motivating others to succeed. He wanted to make sure his many years’ experience in maintenance and repair operations, and spare part supply chain, was passed on to others and leveraged.

Fareham Innovation Centre appreciate the value that the younger generation can bring to businesses and wanted to engage with local undergraduates. The Centre team coordinated a presentation on Internships from the University of Southampton and helped Peter conceptualise projects for two interns in the Summer of 2016 – one partially funded by Santander. Peter had now taken a desk in the Centre’s shared office allowing him to use the lounge for his interns on a temporary basis during the summer break from the contract with the (now) Ministry of Energy, Industry, and Natural Resources.

Matt and Richard were second year Aeronautical Engineering and first year Computer Science undergraduates respectively.

They surpassed all expectations; finishing the 10-week project scope in just 4 weeks.

They extended their internship to 12 weeks and went beyond scope and building algorithms and then developing a basic user interface; such that Peter was able to present this prototype tool in Seattle to peers from Boeing and then to Shell in the UK. Peter also demonstrated the new tool at the EMEA Power Transmission Distributors Association (EPTDA) event in Berlin. Interest was such that Peter has incorporated a new company, KOIOS Master Data, to further develop and market this game-changing solution.

KOIOS has taken a second desk in the shared office and Peter has hired a developer (leveraging the services of a recruitment business in the Centre), appointed a Non-Executive Director with significant talent in software commercialisation and deployments and is looking for a Business Development Manager. Peter was encouraged to pitch for investment at the Venturefest South event in March, which he wouldn’t have had the courage to do without the backing of the Centre team. He has taken on a third intern but his internship success has inspired six other businesses in the Centre to consider taking on talented interns to add major value this summer.

CASE STUDY

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CASE STUDY

EVENTS

100% OF CUSTOMERS RATED THE CENTRE EVENTS AS ‘VERY USEFUL’ OR ‘USEFUL’

Over 30 workshop and roadshow events have been held in the Centre since it was opened. These provide the businesses with professional insights, awareness of new trends or regulations, and take-away skills on core topics such as financing, business modelling, marketing, intellectual property, sales management, exporting, talent development, grants, and business law. The objective for each presenter is to refresh any latent knowledge but also impart two or three incremental new wisdoms or skills.

The events are provided at no additional cost to the Centre customers and it provides the opportunity to gauge whether additional support is required by the Centre management team.

LOOKING AHEAD

Plans are underway to expand the Innovation Centre to more than double its capacity and introduce new conferencing facilities. The £7m extension is funded by the Council with £2m support from the Solent LEP, and is due to open in March 2018. Coupled with the business expertise and support provided by the team at the Centre and the outstanding results that have been experienced in the first two years of opening the aim is that it will cement Fareham Innovation Centre as the destination of choice for cutting edge new marine, aviation and engineering companies and put Fareham on the map as being central for fostering entrepreneurship and innovation.
THE SUPERB FACILITIES REFLECT THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF LIOS.

LIOS bikes

BEING BASED AT THE CENTRE HAS BOOSTED OUR PRODUCTIVITY, AND CLIENT BASE.

Eldo Web Design

BEING BASED AT THE INNOVATION CENTRE IS SO BENEFICIAL FOR OUR GROWTH. WITH THE SUPPORT THEY OFFER, THE DOORS THEY OPEN AND THE GREAT COMMUNITY OF COMPANIES THAT LIVE HERE, IT’S HARD TO STAGNATE.

Blue Gee Supplies