

Bath's proving to be cradle of ambition for cutting-edge firms

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Bath's burgeoning IT and hi-tech economy is giving the lie to the city being "the graveyard of ambition," according to an expanding firm of patent attorneys.

Circus Mews-based EIP opened its Bath office three years ago – and partner Matt Lawman says he has been astonished by the number of entrepreneurs, investors and cutting-edge firms he has encountered in the city since then.

With the likes of microchip firm Picochip and software businesses IPL and Altran Praxis becoming major players in their sectors, Mr Lawman – whose firm specialises in intellectual property issues relating to computing, telecommunications and optics – believes Bath's reputation as a hi-tech business centre is on the up.

EIP's expansion is being fuelled by the increasing number of cutting-edge firms establishing themselves in Bath, he says.

Its number of support staff has recently doubled and new attorneys are joining the firm.

Mr Lawman believes that Bath is fast establishing itself as a major player in "Silicon Gorge," a region encompassing the area around Bristol, Swindon and Gloucestershire.

The University of Bath's Innovation Centre and its sister organisation Bath Ventures, which is focused on commercialising the results of the Claverton Down university's research, are also pivotal in projecting the city's hi-tech credentials.

Mr Lawman, who is head of EIP's Bath office and been in the patent profession for 18 years, said: "There was a time when people would say that Bath was the graveyard of ambition – that it's a lovely place and people don't want to leave. But I would say the 'graveyard of ambition' description just isn't true anymore.

"It's a place of opportunity and



GROWING OPERATION: The EIP team of Steve Scott, Ben Hoyle, Matt Lawman, Richard Pratt and Jo Pritchard

PICTURE: Lloyd Ellington

there is a huge amount going on. The number of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists wandering around the streets is just incredible.

"It seems like this whole area is a hub of innovation.

"The expansion we are experiencing is definitely related to what's going on in Bath and the region.

"Societies and institutions like the ones at the University of Bath and Silicon South West don't just set themselves up if there is nothing going on.

"The University of Bath is great for doing research that can be exploited commercially and it's starting to take exploitation of intellectual property very seriously."

He added that EIP's gamble of setting up an office outside the capital

had paid off.

"Initially, it seemed a big step for a firm located in London to open a regional office, but it's proved to work really well for EIP.

"One of the key aspects is the local client base. Local clients like to have access to local attorneys who can provide a high-quality service."

The most recent recruit at EIP is attorney Ben Hoyle, who started at the firm on December 1. He specialises in advising clients on the patentability of software and computer-implemented inventions in the UK, Europe and the United States.

Mr Lawman added: "Ben's experience of working with a range of clients from small businesses to large multinationals, as well as his expertise in software, electronics and tele-

communications, will be a great asset to EIP.

"Ben's appointment continues EIP's steady growth in the south west and demonstrates our commitment to our local client base in this area."

Capital move for Anthem

Bath magazine and website publisher Anthem has opened a London office.

The London Road-based firm took the decision to open an office in the capital while negotiating the purchase of *Guitar & Bass* magazine from IPC Media.

Anthem's managing director Jon Bickley was assisted in the purchase of *Guitar & Bass* by Bristol law firm Temple Bright.

Mr Bickley said: "Temple Bright helped shape our offer, including the strategic decision to open a London office. This saw us win through the auction process as well as reducing consequent costs.

"It's an exciting time for Anthem and having a London base is already opening up new opportunities."

Hotel sector still performing well

A report from consultants Deloitte has stated the hotel sector in Bath continues to outperform the national average.

The city's revenue per available room – an acknowledged industry indicator – has grown 11 per cent in the year to September.

The city's room rates and occupancy levels increased in the third quarter by 3.9 per cent and 8.2 per cent respectively.

Denis Woulfe, practice senior partner for Deloitte South West, said: "Once more, hoteliers in Bath have turned in outstanding results year-to-September 2010, building upon the strong growth reported during the first half of the year."

New chef moves in at hotel

A chef with 14 years' experience is now in charge of the kitchens at Combe Grove Manor Hotel.

Darren Lewis has been appointed head chef in time for Christmas, and is ordering 80 kg of Brussels sprouts, 2,000 crackers and 1,000 bottles of wine for the festive season.

He arrives from the City Cafe at the City Inn in Bristol, where he was sous chef for three years.

"I am delighted that I have been appointed as head chef so close to Christmas as it is such an exciting time."

Hotel general manager Debbie Hibbins said: "Darren is a fantastic chef with an extraordinary talent and I am very happy to welcome him into our team."



APPOINTED: Darren Lewis

Uni's looking east


Bath Spa University is exploring the possibility of working with a large university in Malaysia.

Possible links with Multimedia University, a leading private institution near Kuala Lumpur, are being discussed. Both universities have common interests in creative digital media.

Bath Spa recently hosted a visit by the Malaysian university's senior director.

Bath Spa is looking at opportunities to collaborate with its Faculty of Creative Multimedia, which integrates academic study with extensive production work using creative media technology.

It is hoped that the fact-finding visit will lead to opportunities for collaboration on various initiatives.



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