

Potential entrepreneurs join innovative AIT programme

Two would-be entrepreneurs from Longford have, along with eight other people from around the Midlands, just commenced the development of their businesses in the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre Athlone Institute of Technology - as participants on the Midlands & West Enterprise Programme. The MIRC, a hub for new enterprise in the Midlands, has incubated and supported twenty four start-ups since 2003 and is now driving the next generation of innovative start-ups in the Midlands.

The MWEPE is a one-year programme, run jointly with Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, which provides participants with the business skills, networks, facilities and supports necessary to navigate the business start-up process. All of the MWEPE start-ups are knowledge-based with growth and export potential - products being developed include pharmaceutical gels, life sciences software, a biodegradable plastic, telecoms software and a high-yielding

thermal solar panel.

There have been many success stories associated with the MWEPE. BioClin Research Laboratories, a provider of contract research services to the pharmaceutical industry, co-founded by Mary Burke, a participant on the MWEPE in 2003, was the overall winner of the Ulster Bank / Irish Independent Business Achievers Award in 2005. According to Mary Burke, MD, BioClin Research Laboratories, "the MWEPE greatly assisted BioClin in its early days by providing structured

training and support in the key commercial elements of setting up and running a successful business."

According to Dr Pat Mulhern, Head of Development at AIT, "we are delighted with the calibre of projects on this year's MWEPE. All of the participants have significant industry experience and a mixture of commercial and technical competencies. These projects have the potential to make a significant future contribution to the economy of the Midlands."



Pictured at the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre are the MIRC and GMIT-based participants on the Midlands & West Enterprise Programme, along with Prof. Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, Director of AIT.