

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR THE NORTH WEST

- Date:** 5th May 2009
- Paper:** University response to the current economic climate **number which will be allocated by the Secretariat**
- Introduced by** Professor Tim Wheeler
- Summary:** The paper briefly outlines a number of areas in which universities are taking action in response to the current economic climate.
- Action:** The JEC is asked to note the actions being taken and indicate any areas where further information is required. The JEC is also invited to comment on action that might be taken to remove or reduce the limitations outlined in section 3.

1. Introduction

The North West has fifteen higher education institutions (including the Open University in the North West). Around 250,000 students attend HEIs across the region, with 150,000 students domiciled within the North West, and a further 70,000 UK students and 27,000 overseas students entering the region to study. Over 36,000 staff are employed by North West HEIs and they generated an income of £2.055bn in 2006/07. A recent study for NWDA shows that overall the HEIs in the North West and their graduates contributed around **£3.5bn** in GVA to the regional economy in 2007.¹

The North West's universities are a major "industrial sector" in their own right, for example they:

- contribute significantly to exports through recruiting overseas students
- support the regional attack marketing brands
- grow new businesses through spin outs and incubators
- are one of the largest employers of blue collar as well as white collar staff in the region.

The universities of the North West are all rooted in place. Indeed nearly all of the institutions have the name of their physical location in their institutional name. Their locality to some extent shapes every HE institution in terms of organisational culture, education provision, the physical campus and the nature of partnerships. The HEIs also have a major impact on the communities that surround them in terms of the physical environment, property values and use, transport infrastructure, labour

¹SQW Consulting (2009), 'The economic impact and potential of higher education institutions in the North West: A report to the Northwest Development Agency. Available from: <http://www.nwriu.co.uk/2610.aspx>

patterns and the skill base. Universities generate global knowledge networks of academics, entrepreneurs and financiers that support the movement of capital, knowledge and talent into the cities of the North West.

These relationships cannot be measured in terms of turnover and profit and loss. They are, however, an integral and to date unmeasured component of the regional balance sheet.

2. Current university responses to the downturn

The major challenges for universities in the economic downturn are to:

- Maximise graduate employment
- Maintain and enhance the HE contribution to economic development both in the current economic climate and in preparation for the economic recovery
- Respond to the higher level skills needs of those in work or seeking employment
- As major employers, purchasers and investors in the region, take steps to mitigate the effects of the down turn.

However, the HE sector like other sectors is also under strain from revenue squeezes, rising utility costs and changes in the market (including global competition). Some institutions are reducing headcount.

Examples of steps taken to date are:

- I. Universities looking for means to bring forward capital spending.
- II. A dialogue has commenced between HE Human Resources Departments and the LSC/National Apprenticeships regarding increasing the utilization of apprenticeships within the sector.
- III. The North West Universities Association (NWUA) has agreed with NWDA that £250,000 of the NWDA funding provided for the development of new higher level skills provision will be used to provide a redundancy response fund.
- IV. A dialogue has commenced between university careers services, the LSC and Jobcentre plus regarding joint action to combat graduate employment, particularly in relation to the summer 2009 graduate cohort and advice to graduates who are under threat of redundancy or have been made redundant (see Annex 1). Discussions are also being held with the national ESF Unit regarding the deployment of ESF to support service enhancements.
- V. HEIs in the North West have been enthusiastic in seeking support from the HEFCE ECIF fund set up to provide resources for activity to combat the effects of the economic downturn. However, the fund was hugely oversubscribed and not all North West bids were successful. A list of the successful bids is given at Annex 2.
- VI. NWUA has been successful in securing £160,000 from HEFCE to provide resources to support the engagement of the Higher Education (HE) sector with regional plans to respond to the economic downturn and to provide information on relevant HE activity to individuals, businesses and regional stakeholders. Annex 3 gives details of the actions to be carried out.
- VII. At the request of NWDA, the HE sector is collecting information on its strengths in relation to two key sectors for the future of the region Environmental Technologies and Digital and Creative Industries. The first of these has been completed and can be downloaded from http://www.nwua.ac.uk/docs/pdf/ETS_2009_Feb20.pdf.
- VIII. The HE Sector is looking to maximise the utilisation of ERDF funds from the current North West Operating Programme to support its actions in relation to

economic development, based on the successful cooperation between NWDA and the HE sector in the last programme. Details are provided in Annex 4.

- IX. The introduction of prompt purchasing arrangements and related measures. Annex 5, provided by the North West Universities Purchasing Consortium, gives details of how that organisation is operating in the current economic climate.

3. Limitations to university responsiveness

A number of limiting factors have been identified in relation to university responses to the economic downturn.

3.1 *Employment issues*

As indicated above some universities are reducing staff numbers. Within this context there are limitations to the extents to which they can address issues such as increased levels of apprenticeships.

3.2 *Advice*

The main function of university careers services is to meet the advice needs of those studying at the university in question. A limited service is offered after graduation and to graduates of other universities (usually further limited).

There is scope for increased interchange between Careers Services and Jobcentre Plus (as indicated in Annex 1), but any enhanced service to graduates will require additional resources. Some ECIF bids, for example the consortium bid led by the University of Cumbria and the bid from Liverpool Hope, address this issue and there may be opportunities for ESF support in this area as indicated above. The NWUA HEFCE funding mentioned above will also allow some enhancement of web-based services.

3.3 *Higher level skills*

Scope for activity in higher level skills is limited by the ELQ (Equivalent Level Qualifications) restrictions and also by the present capping of student numbers.

3.4 *ERDF supported activities*

Currently, most universities are reporting significant delays in the approval of ERDF projects, and, in some instances, negative appraisals in relation to activities of a type supported under the previous ERDF programme. Productive discussions recently have taken place in an attempt to address these issues.

3.5 *ECIF bids*

The HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) was heavily oversubscribed. Consequently, a number of bids from HEIs in the North West were not approved and two bids were only partially approved. Therefore, the allocation of additional resources to the ECIF would enable a greater range of activity to take place.

3.6 *Graduate destination statistics*

An analysis of graduate destination statistics will be provided in May following the completion of the 2008/9 survey. However, the census date for this survey is January 2009. It would be helpful to have a more up to date picture of the position of 2008 graduates and to begin to survey 2009 graduates at the earliest opportunity. However, significant additional resource would be required to undertake this on a rigorous basis.

Outcomes of a meeting between University Careers Services, the LSC and Jobcentre plus held on 25th March 2009

- An overview of Careers Service experience of the trends in the graduate Labour Market was given. Information will continue to be collated.
- It was noted that undergraduates need to be provided with information about all options including starting a businesses and that it is important to make sure all partners are aware about opportunities. The successful NWUA bid to HEFCE will enable the facilitation of information between partners.
- It was noted that from April specific support will be available for people with executive and professional background. It was noted that this support would be provided via a single tender, but delivery might be sub-contracted to other agencies, which could include universities. It was agreed to provide information regarding university careers services to the successful organisation.
- It was noted that in certain cases (e.g. large redundancies) there is Rapid Response Services where funding will be available to signpost company employees to short, sharp and focussed training, delivered while they are still in employment and enabling them to re-train. It was agreed that it was important to link this with the NWUA Higher Level Skills Redundancy Response Fund.
- The importance of universities having close links with Jobcentre Plus was stressed. The success of some HEFCE ECIF bids might enable closer linkages. The NWUA bid to HEFCE will support coordination, linking with Business Link and other relevant partners.
- It was agreed that it would be helpful to circulate details of university careers services to Jobcentre Plus sub-regional managers and vice versa.
- A paper of the individual careers services offer to graduates had been circulated. It was agreed that this paper would be kept up to date.
- Institutions gave an initial view of destination statistics. It was recognised this was a reflection of the state of things as of January 2009, with further changes happening later in the year, so it would be valuable to gather a new set of data in summer. The data already collected will be signed off in May. Hence there will be difficulties in releasing it earlier for the JEC report. Initial trends suggested that more students are going on to post graduate study and there is a decline in those going into employment. However, the picture is complex with variations between institutions. A full analysis will be undertaken in late May.

NW Universities and the Economic Challenge Investment Fund

The Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) was established by HEFCE to develop projects to help individuals and businesses during the downturn. The fund aims to support:

- **individuals** - to enable those who are either unemployed or under the threat of unemployment to access training, development and other support to help them continue in their current employment or find new employment
- **businesses, particularly SMEs and third-sector organisations such as voluntary and charity organisations** - to provide professional knowledge and expertise to help equip them to survive in economic recessionary period.

In the North West, nine universities have been successful in securing funding from the £27.6 million national funding pot. Together, the projects bring nearly £3 million into the region and account for 11% of the total funding available. Projects will deliver short-term support between April 2009 and September 2010. The table below provides a summary of North West projects.

Institution	Project Details	HEFCE Funding
Liverpool Hope University	Direct careers guidance for professionals & graduates faced with redundancy & new graduates who have been unable to secure employment. Short follow-on programmes related to careers guidance, outplacement service to enhance employability skills. Delivery of specifically designed short credit crunch programmes and development of new bite-sized accredited awards.	£300,000
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	Support to help 38 business start-ups, linked to the objectives of the Liverpool Culture Company, in their first 12 months of trading. Following a diagnostic appraisal, each business will develop an idea and plan how to make use of institutional support including coaching and mentoring. Match funding from the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship.	£59,520
Liverpool John Moores University	Supporting unemployed graduates and professionals through a five day course drawing on concepts of career development learning. The proposal will also support new graduate businesses through two half day workshops for new graduate entrepreneurs. Match funding from the university and the LSC.	£385,000
University of Bolton	Will offer a range of graduate apprenticeships in the creative and digital industries, CPD modules for 195 beneficiary companies, CPD, APEL and other short courses to improve the knowledge base and business practice. Match funding will be provided by ERDF and participating employers.	£249,958
University of Central Lancashire	Support for graduate internship activity*	£135,000
University of Chester	Accredited provision for unemployed and underemployed graduates in the Cheshire & Warrington sub-region including a postgraduate course in Business Innovation & Development. Provision offers university-based taught components, one-to-one careers coaching and structured placements. 300 individuals stand to benefit from this initiative. Match funding will be supplied by ERDF, or the institution itself.	£168,322
University of Cumbria	IAG to the unemployed, free or subsidised training to individuals including the unemployed, and graduates working with SMEs. Taster courses provided in STEM related Logistics, Engineering, agriculture and environmental technologies. Match funding from the RDA, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the LSC and the university.	£1,000,000
University of Liverpool	Support for graduate internship activity*	£150,000
University of Manchester	Support for unemployed languages and humanities graduates through summer development programme. Coaching and mentoring for employability and enterprise and master classes to any new graduate of a NW institution, outreach to individuals remote from the labour market and help for SMEs and third sector organisations to capitalise on graduate talent through online resource and networking events. Match funding from Manchester Business School and employer partners.	£500,000
Total NW HEIs		£2,947,800

* Partial funding of the requested amount.

NWUA Actions

The North West Universities Association (NWUA) has identified a linked set of key actions to support the engagement of the Higher Education (HE) sector with regional plans to respond to the economic downturn, to provide information on relevant HE activity to individuals, businesses and regional stakeholders, and to operate a higher level skills response fund to support those at risk of redundancy or who have been made redundant. These key actions, which have been developed in response to regional demand expressed in a number of ways including through the regional Joint Economic Commission, chaired by the regional minister, are:

1. To collect monthly and quarterly data/case studies/information as agreed with HEFCE;
2. To support the potential role of universities as employers by undertaking analysis, facilitating meetings and communications with relevant regional partners;
3. To explore and support potential interventions to counter graduate unemployment;
4. To provide coordinated information on HEI activity relevant to the downturn, particularly in relation to ECIF projects, to regional stakeholders including Business Link and other employer facing organisations;
5. To provide content on the NWUA website and relevant partner websites, tailored to the current economic conditions and providing individuals and organisations with relevant information and signposting regarding HE activities and associated opportunities;
6. To support a joint NWUA/NWDA exercise to consider emergent sector-specific strengths in the region, with a view to positioning the region in an optimal position during the economic recovery;
7. The development of a portfolio of responsive CPD provision to meet the needs of those at risk of redundancy or those recently made redundant through a commissioning model similar to that of the NW HLSP;
8. To support linkages between the activities above and NW entrepreneurship schemes such as the High Growth Start Up Programme, NCGE activity and related programmes;
9. To consider opportunities for supporting the public sector, in particular health and social care, in relation to workforce issues and the economic downturn, working closely with NHSNW, Skills for Health and Skills for Care;
10. To provide support to the NWUA representative on the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) for the North West.

Examples of ERDF Projects

The North West's universities have a strong track record of delivering European projects through the Objective 1 Merseyside Programme (2000-2006), the Objective 2 Knowledge Based Action Plan (2000-2006) and Regional Action Plan (2005-2008). Headline outputs are detailed in the table below.

	ERDF	No of SME assists	New Jobs	Jobs Safeguarded	Increased Sales	New processes
Objective 1 Merseyside	£57,651,240	2,021	2,643	-	£142,000,000	-
Objective 2						
Knowledge Based Action Plan (KBAP)	£33,548,020	5,937	6,007	8,647	£713,731,537	2,767
Regional Action Plan (RAP)	£18,992,249	1,582	2,272	3,635	£173,260,926	1,441
TOTAL Objective 2	£52,540,269	7,519	8,279	12,282	£886,992,463	4,208
TOTAL	£110,191,509	9,540	10,922	12,282	£1,028,992,463	4,208

The Objective 1 Merseyside Programme funded 42 HE projects with approximately half of the funding allocated to capital projects. The Knowledge Based Action Plan funded seven capital and 64 revenue projects and the Regional Action Plan four capital and 32 revenue projects. A selection of these is detailed in the table below.

HEI	Total Project Cost	ERDF	Project Title	Project Details	Business Assists	Jobs Created
Objective 1 Merseyside Programme						
The University of Liverpool	£5,249,284	£2,086,065	The AIMES (Advanced Internet Methods and Emergent Systems) Centre	Access to network and computing resources. The centre develops advanced computing solutions and provides businesses with cost-effective access to new technologies on a pay-as-you-go basis.	150	-
Liverpool John Moores University	£27,149,390	£3,586,479	Design Academy	Knowledge transfer hub and showcase for design practitioners by allowing the design community access to high quality gallery space, a high profile platform for promoting local product design and services, cutting edge ICT facilities, high quality meeting rooms and technical equipment areas.	-	-
Liverpool John Moores University in partnership with The University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University	£3,486,860	£1,361,728	Business Bridge	Developed links between Merseyside SMEs and HEIs. It provided an ideal model of brokering part-time quality work which satisfied company development and competitive need but also the graduate desire for experience in the workplace.	2200+	-
Knowledge Based Action plan 2000-2006						
Lancaster University	£10,847,984	£2,097,983	InfoLab21	Award winning facility which houses over 300 ICT research, business development and training personnel as well as ICT businesses in tailor made corporate business space. Provides support for business start-ups.	-	382
University of Manchester Incubator Company	£18,000,000	£7,000,000	Core Technology Facility	State of the art biotechnology and high-tech facility providing grow-on space for Biotechnology-based small businesses. Includes mentoring and professional services.	-	517

Lancaster University	£717,923	£358,961	Regional Marketing Network	Marketing expertise and support to North West SMEs.	69	89
Manchester Metropolitan University	£789,481	£337,619	North West Food Centre	Technical support for food companies in the North West.	69	71.5
University of Cumbria	£686,617	£328,977	ICT Solutions for Tourism Businesses	ICT based solutions to tourism SMEs in Cumbria and North Lancashire.	67	117
University of Manchester in partnership with other NW HEIs	£2,861,216	£1,430,607	North West Business Access	Graduate recruitment service dedicated to the SME market.	700	426
University of Central Lancashire	£1,415,281	£537,280	Design and Innovation Unit	Businesses assisted with new advertising and promotional materials, websites, marketing campaigns and product or service enhancement	123	174
Salford University	£1,042,840	£510,991	Virtual Environments Technology Support	Assisted small businesses to exploit the potential of Virtual Environments and other visualisation technologies	176	69
Regional Action Plan 2005-08						
University of Central Lancashire	£7,618,593	£3,275,835	Media Factory	Incubation facility providing new start-up businesses with high quality office accommodation and access to state-of-the-art equipment including photography and recording studios, TV studios and theatres	-	127
University of Cumbria	£581,614	£252,267	Knowledge Transfer Centre	Diagnostic innovation audits for the manufacturing sector throughout Cumbria and North Lancashire	69	36
Manchester Metropolitan University	£1,326,383	£497,367	Centre for Enterprise	Bespoke leadership and management development tools for SMEs.	82	77
Lancaster University	-	-	Computer Aided Design & Engineering (CAS:CADE)	Tailored assistance through the provision of design expertise, product development, product data and lifecycle management, process improvement and engineering analysis.	130	80
University of Bolton	£385,124	£161,751	Product Development Service	Product and process development support through the Design Studio at the University of Bolton	34	29

The current round of ERDF funding (2007-2013) is being allocated through the NW Operational Programme. The following projects have been approved.

HEI	Project Title	ERDF	Project Details	Expected Outputs
University of Liverpool (& University of Manchester)	Knowledge Exchange in Laser Engineering (KE-LAS)	£882,000	Facilitation of knowledge exchange between laser materials research facilities at the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester's North West Laser Engineering Consortium (NWLEC), and SMEs.	60 Businesses assisted 20 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base Results: 20 Businesses improving their performance 10 Jobs created
University of Salford (& University of Liverpool; University of Central Lancashire; Urban Vision and the Building Research Establishment (BRE))	North West Construction Knowledge Hub	£3,000,000	This consortium project aims to embed sustainable consumption and production throughout all activity, from design to demolition, within construction SMEs to enable greater efficiencies in meeting new standards as they arise.	245 Businesses assisted 245 Businesses assisted to reduce industrial and commercial waste 30 Applications of low carbon technologies Results: 300 Jobs created 300 Jobs safeguarded 1.5mt Reduction in annual CO ₂ emissions from Programme interventions (tonnes pa)
Lancaster University Management School (& Liverpool University and University of Manchester)	IDEAS (Innovation, Design, Entrepreneurship and Science)	£384,914	Knowledge Exchange to SMEs on innovation best practice. Connecting the network of Daresbury Science Innovation Campus (DSIC) SMEs into the wider Business School networks of knowledge. Learning from the DSIC mix of business and science to develop new methods for Knowledge Exchange.	70 Businesses improving their performance 20 Jobs created +/- safeguarded
University of Liverpool	The Virtual Engineering	£2,501,743	Establishment of a Virtual Engineering Centre (VEC) that will	23 Businesses assisted 13 Businesses within the region

	Centre		provide the UK engineering value chain with VE capabilities for optimising costs-effective design, manufacturing and operational options. Builds on a strong public-private sector partnership that brings together the University of Liverpool, STFC Daresbury, the NWAA.	engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 2 New Business start-ups Results: 25 Jobs created
University of Lancaster	The NW Eco-Innovation Programme (ECONATE)	£1,743,000	Work with SMEs providing intensive assistance, mentoring and embedding an eco-innovative approach into mainstream activity.	360 Businesses assisted 13 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 2 New Business star-ups Results: 107 Jobs created 373 Jobs Safeguarded 240 New Environ. Products 160 Business improving performance
NCGE	H E Business Champions	£700,000	10 HE Champions of enterprise to encourage faculties and departments to promote entrepreneurship through their courses and to link this activity to the HEIF initiative.	Results 220 Jobs created – 3,070 Adults undertaking work based training
Total		£9,211,657		758 Businesses assisted; 46 new collaborations with the UK knowledge-Base; 682 New Jobs Created

The current allocation of £9.2 million to HE-led projects is just 18% (8% if Objective 1 is included) of the allocation in the previous round. The following HE projects are currently experiencing delays in the appraisal process.

HEI	Project Title	ERDF (Requested)	Project Details	Expected Outputs
University of Central Lancashire & University of Cumbria Lancaster University University of Chester University of Salford University of Bolton	UNITE (Rest of the Region element)	£4,029,921 (match funding provided by HEIs)	Academic support and the placement of a graduate to facilitate knowledge exchange with the aim of increasing competitiveness, innovation and productivity. Free access to a highly skilled employee who will deliver a specified piece of work/project for SME at no cost to the business. The project will also address regional challenges put forward in the RES and SRAPs by increasing graduate employability and promoting the retention of highly skilled graduates within the region. The enthusiastic knowledge based support offered will raise business competitiveness, meet business needs and improve the perception of graduates by business.	1,000 Businesses assisted to improve performance 100 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 180 Jobs created 150 Jobs safeguarded £15m Annual increase in GVA as a result of the Programme (£m)
University of Liverpool & Liverpool Hope University Liverpool Chamber of Commerce	UNITE (Merseyside element)	£2,500,000 (£6m match funding provided by Public & Private Partners)		Under review
University of Bolton	Innovation & Product Development Service (IPDS)	£1,627,000 (match provided by University Bolton)	This project will focus on those SMEs in the manufacturing and service sectors and will contribute to improving productivity and employment by stimulating, innovation and entrepreneurship to bring about new products and processes and more efficient ways of working. It will complement existing support activity within the North West (e.g. the Manufacturing Advisory Service) by focussing on innovation and knowledge transfer based on University and other research. Additionally it will promote the use of advanced software tools and techniques used in product design and the streamlining of business processes.	150 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 140 Jobs created & Safeguarded

University of Manchester (&University of Liverpool)	Translation and Exploitation of HES Cell Technologies	£2,783,000	The project will take advantage of the existing strong Manchester and NW Stem Cell Networks established by the applicants with funding from NWDA and industry. This project will develop and roll-out STEM cell technology to local industry and aid in developing spin-out companies.	Under Review
University of Manchester	UK Centre for Tissue Regeneration	£1,836,000 (match provided by University of Manchester,	The overall theme of the project is the translation and transfer of knowledge to business of innovative multidisciplinary tissue regeneration research which is near to clinical application. The UKCTR supports first class science which is of great relevance to NW business and bio-health and engages in interdisciplinary research with numerous benefits to be gained by combining complementary areas of knowledge. The UKCTR will bridge the current gap between academic excellence and commercial application of tissue regeneration technologies enabling developments in regenerative medicine to be brought to clinic and market.	Under Review
University of Manchester	Centre of Excellence for Biopharmaceuticals (COEBP)	£1,890,000 (match provided by University of Manchester £2.453m)	The aim of this proposal is to harness the expertise within the University of Manchester to develop a Biopharmaceutical Centre of Excellence (CoE) in the North West. The CoE will focus on addressing key challenges facing companies producing and developing current and next generation biopharmaceuticals – smarter therapeutic proteins and peptides using a predictive approach based on so-called “systems biology”. This is particularly acute for SMEs who do not have access to the resources of large pharma. A major element of this project is the establishment of a unique robotics facility which will increase efficiency in the biopharmaceutical development process by permitting production/ analysis of large numbers of samples under multiple conditions and the characterisation of product quality	Under Review
Lancaster University	INFOLAB21 Scientific & Technology Exploitation Programme (ISTEP) & INFOLAB21 Strategic Innovation Support (ISIS)	£2,727,000 (match funding provided by Lancaster £2.727m)	ISTEP will through InfoLab21’s unique ICT resource bank, with its diversified up to state of the art capabilities, provide high quality, value for money solutions. The project address two Action Areas and recognises the dual roles that the Digital & Creative Industries and ICT have to play both as a RES Priority Sector and also as an underpinning technology to support the strategic pillars identified in the NWDA’s Northwest Science Strategy (07-10). Inherent in the project, is the provision to deliver a cohesive package of support to enable companies as defined in the Investment Framework, as the “regionally significant sectors” along with their relative supply chains together with high growth companies, to help gain that ever more important competitive edge.	350 Businesses assisted to improve performance 825 Jobs created & safeguarded
University of Central Lancashire	Development of Innovative Small Wind Turbine Technologies	£906,767 (match provided by UCLan £526k and Private sector £22k)	This project will provide SMEs, including manufacturers, suppliers, service providers, and wind farms (and all end-users of wind turbines) in wind energy sector in the Northwest, with innovative small wind turbine technologies which will significantly improve the performance of small wind turbine systems. It will also raise awareness and interest from politicians, industry and the public in developing a world-class high-tech industry sector and wind farms supported by the science and R&D base in the region. UCLan is the only university in the Northwest with an established R&D group covering all the aspects of small wind turbine technologies which is recognised regionally, nationally and internationally	52 Businesses assisted to improve performance 7 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 88 Jobs created 35 Jobs safeguarded

University of Central Lancashire	Digital Media Innovation Hub	£1,500,000 (match funding provided by UCLan £1.46m and Private sector £40k)	The Designlab project aims to assist Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) to promote and market their products or services on-line through a range of innovative digital technologies delivered over the web. This will involve knowledge transfer and the application of the UCLan knowledge-base in both technical and creative areas through collaborative research and development. It will promote successful business-HEI interaction and knowledge transfer although the activity will be bespoke to each company and across sectors; it will build on the skills, research expertise and resource base of UCLan in Digital and Creative areas and subject specific disciplines.	90 Businesses assisted to improve performance 30 New Products or services 7 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 140 Jobs created 56 Jobs safeguarded £5.5m Increased GVA
University of Central Lancashire	Digital Connections	£1,164,664 (match provided by UCLan £1.397m and Private sector £60k)	The project will facilitate new collaborative business networks by connecting with Digital Industries businesses across the programme area, to improve their business performance through bespoke and targeted intensive support, greater collaboration and knowledge exchange. This will be supported with the development of virtual and real trading platform and advancement of 'virtual business' organisations where added-value will be generated for regional clustering. The project enable the engagement of digital media forums / alliances, other sector based organisations, incubation and innovation centres within the programme area as 'partners' to enable the formulation of a 'mutual association' of joint networking and activate real and virtual supply chain development.	300 Businesses assisted to improve performance 70 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 80 Jobs created 120 Jobs safeguarded
Liverpool John Moores University	HE Enterprise Zone	£1,000,000 (HEFCE match £1m)	The creation of a specialised graduate incubator for companies up to 2 years old, close (but not linked) to university facilities and supported by professional business support team (funding for capital refurb / equipment costs). The project will also provide a dedicated hub for student and graduate enterprise activity providing access to start-up services and aftercare programme to bridge the gap between student enterprise activity and business grow-on support. It will also provide a bespoke programme that spans professional business advice and technical support (e.g. IP, Design, prototyping, etc) and a managed peer support network	50 Businesses assisted to improve their performance 60 People assisted to start a business 120 People assisted with their skills development 30 Businesses with improved performance 40 New businesses created 90 Jobs created
Lancaster University	Support for Sustainable Design & Rapid Manufacturing (SusDRam)	£915,000 Match provide by Lancaster University £815k and Private £100k)	Introduce the concepts of design and Rapid Manufacturing to the Region's manufacturing base by establishing a dedicated RM facility, accessible as a technology demonstrator, learning resource and operational design and manufacturing facility. Stimulate the take-up of design and RM, ensuring future business prosperity and stimulating regional leadership in the use of design.	75 Businesses assisted to improve performance 75 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 150 Jobs created & safeguarded
University of Cumbria Delivery Partners: Business Link NW, Mysercough College and Reaseheath College	Collaborate	£850,000 (match funding provided by University/HEI F = £850k)	Collaborate will promote HEI and rural SME engagement across the region with a key focus on the implementation of improvements based upon productivity, profitability, change management and improved utilisation of existing ICT technologies leading to improved access to supply chains. This HEI specific programme will create collaborative action learning networks to assist businesses and Universities to work more closely together, develop ideas and increase knowledge/skill sharing capacity resulting in business growth.	130 Businesses assisted to improve their performance 100 Businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the knowledge base 30 Jobs created 40 Jobs Safeguarded

In summary, as at 9th April 2009, 26 HE projects are experiencing delays at 'concept' stage and three at D&A stage with a combined potential ERDF value of £69,405,315.

Actions by the North West Universities Purchasing Consortium (NWUPC)

NWUPC has, on behalf of its member HEIs, put in place on-line credit checks for all the Consortium suppliers with an alert system that will give warning of any rapid fall in the credit worthiness of firms - a sign they may be in financial difficulties.

Where NWUPC suppliers do go into administration and/or receivership the Consortium deals with the re-assignment of contracts if appropriate, issues notices to its members and provides direction to alternative suppliers and any other advice required. The Managing Director of NWUPC Ltd has extensive experience of these circumstances and knowledge of the legalities of these situations.

NWUPC ensures that any suppliers on its arrangements have been through the EU tendering process, have been subject to robust financial and other checks and that, should the occasion arise, there are alternative suppliers in critical supply areas.

NWUPC also work with suppliers to encourage HEIs to pay promptly, to use only recommended suppliers so that they obtain reasonable volumes of business. This work includes joint marketing via website, publications both hard and electronic and supplier exhibitions and conferences. Contract management is carried out on a quarterly basis that seeks to address not only HEIs' problems with suppliers but also any problems they may be having with our members. Management information on expenditure by each HEI on NWUPC contracts is collected quarterly from the suppliers with any unexplained dramatic changes investigated.

Market intelligence is gathered from trade publications, the extensive network of technical staff in HEIs that work with NWUPC and the wider public sector. Any developments / incidents that may impact on procurement and the sector supply chain are disseminated to HEI Heads of Purchasing.

NWUPC works in a collaborative manner not only with and between HEIs in the sector but also with critical and important suppliers. A long term view is taken to ensure that we do not encourage potential monopolies of supply by over concentrating our dependence on a small number of large corporations for short term gain. It is in the long term interests of HE to have a vibrant, diverse, innovative and healthy supply chain.

Information supplied by Paul Tomany, Managing Director, NWUPC, 24/03/09