

NEWS RELEASE

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Philip Taylor from ‘The Apprentice – 2009’ tells Stevenage Students to “Be Inspired. Be Inspirational”

Philip Taylor delivered this message Official Re-launch of the Business and Technology Centre (**btc**) in Stevenage on Thursday, 19th November. The event was held in Enterprise Week to promote the innovation and enterprise skills of students from Barclay School and North Herts College who co-ordinated the planning, organisation and launch of the event. The comment perfectly summarised the aim of the day, which was to showcase the talent of young people in the region and to demonstrate an effective working collaboration between education and commercial groups. The event was also designed to raise the awareness of the facilities and services that the **btc** has to offer the local community.

The event was the brainchild of Peter Cabon, the Head of Education and Training at Wenta Innovation which is a branch of Wenta, one of the leading Enterprise Agencies in the East of England that manage the **btc**. “Our motto is ‘Inspiring Innovation’” says Peter “and if we are to achieve that aim we need to reach all sectors of society. Building links between schools, colleges, universities, the workplace and beyond through events like this, is the beginnings of that process. The event has been a huge challenge and extremely demanding for everyone involved but the results of today have made all that hard work worthwhile. It has been a huge success and proves the value of collaborative working. The students have been extremely innovative, professional and creative and are an asset to this area”.

Sharon Taylor, the Leader of Stevenage Borough Council agreed. She loved the concept of the event and stated that it is through facilities like the Business and Technology Centre and the services it provides, that by 2020 the town will have evolved to live up to its statement “Stevenage Means Business”.

The **btc** is owned by Stevenage Borough Council and in April 2009 the centre opened a £7M extension to its existing facilities which they jointly funded with EEDA, the Regional Development Agency and the Government Growth Area Fund. This exciting new development is the council’s vision to create quality business space and support in the heart of the town’s business community on Bessemer Drive, off Gunnels Wood Road. The **btc** provides an ‘Enterprise Hub’ for North Hertfordshire, bringing together a range of business support services to help people of all ages with initial business ideas to the start-up stage and beyond.

Matt Glew the ‘Coordinator for the North Herts Strategic Area Partnership’ and a guest speaker at the event said “The facilities at the **btc** are fantastic, but what I find particularly impressive, is that Wenta is providing students with the opportunity to apply classroom theory and learn skills in the real world. The fact that the **btc** has links to the Chamber of Commerce and has so many employers under one roof makes it an ideal environment for students to learn. It also helps the North Herts Strategic Area Partnership achieve its aims of instilling employability skills into the students of today supporting them to grow into talented employees and future employers in the region.”

As Sharon Gaffney the Education and Training Manager at Wenta said “We have to remember these students did these tasks in addition to their studies and had to organise an event in only 3 or 4 sessions. That makes what has been achieved today even more impressive.” Philip Taylor too had nothing but admiration for the students. In his final speech he praised their achievements. “To say impressive is an understatement” he said. “It’s been an absolute pleasure to be invited here today” and “I wish you all the very best in the future”.

It's evident from the event that the futures of the students are very bright and with the support of the **btc**, the future of enterprise and innovation in Stevenage and the surrounding region also looks very bright.

To find out more please contact the **btc** on 0845 078 0700 or visit www.btcstevenage.co.uk.

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Pictured: Owen Quinn – Design Student, Sharon Taylor – Leader of Stevenage Borough Council, Philip Taylor – Guest Speaker and Lee Thompson – Design Student

Notes for Editor

- The **btc** was Re-Launched following a multi million pound development to transform the centre into the primary Innovation and Technology Centre in Hertfordshire, aimed at supporting knowledge based businesses and promoting innovation within the local community.
- The **btc** is the longest serving Enterprise Hub within the region promoting networking, the sharing of knowledge and cross trading. Working to develop innovation and inspire enterprise, the **btc** also works with local schools, colleges, regional agencies, other enterprise hubs and universities to offer educational visits, work experience, mentoring and training. The centre already accommodates a range of established firms which enjoy the benefits of competitive rental packages, prime location, free on-site business support, excellent networking opportunities, professional conference and meeting facilities and free parking.
- Wenta is a not for profit organisation independently funded through the ownership and management of its two business centres in Watford and Potters Bar and management of the **btc** in Stevenage. These business centres comprise workshops and offices with a combined space of over 100,000 square feet, let on monthly licence terms to small businesses. Wenta also attract funding from a number of public sector organisations including Business Link East, Job Centre Plus, local authorities in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire and EEDA.
- In addition to incubation and managed workspace Wenta's service offering includes business advice, guidance, training, graduate and undergraduate work placements and a comprehensive enterprise awareness programme to schools, colleges, and universities.