

# 2008

## Annual Report



**atlantic corridor**

*sharing knowledge fostering prosperity*

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## Foreword by John Flanagan, Chairperson of Atlantic Corridor.



As Chairperson of Atlantic Corridor, I am pleased to report that 2008 has been another eventful year.

Our flagship project this year was a very successful conference, the “Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education 2008”. This conference allowed us to share best practice from each of our partner regions in the USA, Canada and Northern Ireland. In each of these regions, a profound crisis is being faced with regards to science education. The role that such education has to play in our ever- more complex economies and societies must be acknowledged. The “Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education 2008” provided many interesting and innovative approaches for further discussion with regards to science education and we look forward to developing the outcomes from this conference in 2009.

2008 also saw Atlantic Corridor undertake much work with its partners in Canada. A successful trade visit to Canada by a number of Midlands Companies and Organisations has resulted in licensing agreements, follow-on sales visits and joint research projects. The Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, His Excellency Patrick G. Binns visited the Midlands in September and met with many of the companies who have developed links with Canada through Atlantic Corridor. This year, we also continued our support for the Ireland-Canada University Foundation, which provides degree and masters-level research opportunities for 2 students from AIT every year through our support. This year, the scholarships were awarded to the School of Business at AIT to research business and educational linkage opportunities between the Irish Midlands and Canada in co-operation with the world-renowned Ryerson University, Toronto.

In 2008, we also continue to work in our organization to add-value through international linkages for a number of local development initiatives such as the growing relationship between Tullamore and the City of Chandler, Arizona, USA. We developed international links for the Midlands Gateway Chamber of Commerce with our partner in Arizona, the City of Mesa and with a number of contacts in Canada including the 2007 Intelligent Community Award-Winner, the City of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada.

These highlights of the work of Atlantic Corridor in 2008 are in no small part due to the continuous efforts of the staff and board of Atlantic Corridor and its international partners. I would like to extend a special thank you to the staff and board of Atlantic Corridor for encouraging and developing so many new initiatives in 2008.

Lastly, I would like to thank our partners, ICCUSA, Atlanta, the City of Mesa, Arizona and ICCCTO, Toronto for their continued dedication to building relations between their region and the Irish Midlands. We share the same aspirations for our respective communities – economic prosperity and educational opportunities through international relationships.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Flanagan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Flanagan,  
Chairperson.



## About Atlantic Corridor;

Transforming Thinking, Building Awareness & Leading Change.

In the last 20 years, Ireland has seen a transformation in business, education and economic fortunes. The country's position, amongst the wealthiest countries in the world, is evidence of a dramatic improvement in business performance and entrepreneurship; increased participation in third level and post graduate education; and significantly higher disposable incomes. Against all these key metrics, the Midlands Region, for a variety of reasons, still has a lot of catching up to do, in comparison to other parts of the country. Assisting in bridging this gap, through international partnerships, between Ireland's success on a national level, and the substantially poorer performance of the Midlands is the purpose of Atlantic Corridor.

Atlantic Corridor is focused on individuals, businesses and the education sector, in the Midlands region. It is a catalyst, facilitating promoting and managing international partnerships and strategic relationships. Atlantic Corridor creates awareness and stimulates interest in international trade and educational co-operation. This is vital as much of Ireland's success is built on the nation's ability to think openly, to operate one of the most open economies in the world; and its capacity to build, and maintain strategic relationships with the major trading nations and global corporations.

## 2008 Highlights

### Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education

The Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education 2008 took place in October of this year with events in Birr and Tullamore. The conference provided a wide range of speakers from each of the Atlantic Corridor partner regions, dealing with a range of issues relating to science education, science and the economy and science and society. Almost 140 people from all over Ireland attended the conference and a comprehensive evaluation undertaken after the conference provided very positive feedback on the conference. A number of follow-on actions from the conference were suggested by delegates and are presently being worked on by Atlantic Corridor. A PDF report containing all conference presentations and the conference evaluation report is available by going to Atlantic Corridor's website.



Leo Enright, Professor Lord Robert Winston & Jackie Gorman, Atlantic Corridor.



### Mesa Biotech Academy, Arizona, USA comes to the Irish Midlands

Xan Simonson is an award-winning educator in biotechnology who runs the Mesa Biotech Academy in Mesa, Arizona, USA. Before speaking at the Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education 2008, she spent over a week before the conference visiting schools all over the Midlands. During these school visits, she took Leaving Certificate Biology Classes for a biotechnology class, where they learnt about and did DNA extraction, using protocols developed by the Mesa Biotech Academy. Not only was this interesting for the students but the teachers at each school that was visited were enthralled to learn about the cutting-edge biology class techniques that are available in Arizona. Plans are now being developed to provide training opportunities for teachers and a more extensive biotech education experience for Midlands students in 2009, through links with the Mesa Biotech Academy.



Xan Simonson of the Mesa Biotech Academy, Mesa, Arizona, USA.

### Canada Trade Visit & Doing Business in Canada Events

Canada is the home to the ninth largest economy in the world and is one of the world's wealthiest nations. Canada in recent years has produced new products and processes that are of high value in today's economy, examples include the addictive Blackberry mobile device, breakthrough research in stem cell technology and new applications of alternative energies. A successful trade visit to Canada by a number of Midlands Companies and Organisations took place in July 2008 and this visit has resulted in a number of licensing agreements, follow-on sales visits and joint research projects. In September, the Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, His Excellency Patrick G. Binns visited the Midlands and met with a number of companies who are developing Canadian links. His visit also featured a "Doing Business in Canada" Breakfast, attended by over 70 companies and over 15 companies participated in a "Doing Business in Canada" Clinic that morning with Enterprise Ireland, Canada facilitated by Atlantic Corridor.



"Doing Business In Canada" Breakfast Briefing with Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, His Excellency, Patrick G. Binns.



## Strategic Priority 1 - Education

Since its inception, Atlantic Corridor has worked to develop international links for education projects in the Midlands and also to emphasize the strong role that education has to play in sustainable socio-economic development. Since 2006, Atlantic Corridor has sponsored a number of research scholarships through the Ireland-Canada University Foundation. This foundation was established in 1993 by the late Dr. Craig Dobbin O.C., and former President of Ireland, the late Dr. Patrick Hillery, to encourage and facilitate scholarship links between Ireland and Canada.



Back Row L-R: S. Maher, A. McDonnell, Professor J. Kelly, S. McMonagle, D. Ruddy, H. Horan  
Front Row L-R: Ambassador Binns, Mrs. E. Dobbin, Dr. M. Hillery, Professor Seamus Smyth.

This year's scholarship recipients both came from the School of Business in AIT and undertook Master's Level Research on developing business and education links between the Irish Midlands and regions in Canada. The research was undertaken in conjunction with Ryerson University, Toronto and has resulted in a number of linkages for projects in AIT's Innovation Centre.



Shaun Maher of AIT being presented with ICUF Scholarship by Jackie Gorman, Atlantic Corridor.



Debbie Ruddy of AIT being presented with ICUF Scholarship by Jackie Gorman, Atlantic Corridor.



Atlantic Corridor has a strong relationship with the Midlands further education provider, Athlone Institute of Technology and has worked closely with AIT's International Office to develop opportunities for international students, student and faculty exchange and other initiatives that will assist with internationalizing education in the Irish Midlands. The first of these initiatives was in 2001, when links were developed for AIT's Chemistry Department with the Hauptmann-Woodward Institute in Upstate New York, which was founded by Nobel Prize Laureate Dr Herbert Hauptmann. Since that time, numerous students and researchers have availed of the links provided by this initiative.

The Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute (HWI) is an independent, not-for-profit, biomedical research facility in Upstate New York. Working under the leadership of Nobel Laureate Herbert Hauptman, HWI scientists use the techniques of molecular biology, biochemistry, and crystallography to analyse the causes and potential cures of many diseases at molecular level. The results of their investigations provide the starting point for better drug design. The link with AIT provides students from the Midlands with access to research opportunities in an internationally important research environment and it provides valuable links for AIT's School of Science. This link between AIT and HWI has been particularly active this year through AIT's new dedicated Research Office.



Herbert A. Hauptman, a mathematician, is interested in the development of mathematical methods to determine the structures of substances of biological importance.

More recently, Atlantic Corridor has assisted AIT in developing links for student and faculty exchanges with Daeman College, Upstate New York, Baldwin Wallace College, Ohio and Mesa Community College, Arizona. Athlone Institute of Technology, as a result of a facilitation process undertaken by Atlantic Corridor continues to host and grow the successful Mesa Community College Study Abroad Programme. This programme offers a range of opportunities for student and faculty exchange, giving AIT an international linkage in a growing region in the United States. Mesa Community College (MCC), with 27,000 students, is the largest college in the Maricopa Community College District (MCCD). Located in metropolitan Phoenix, MCCD is the United States largest community college system. Study Abroad in Ireland is part of the International Education program at Mesa Community College. This program offers students the opportunity to accumulate university transferable credits while being immersed in the rich culture of Ireland. Students study history, anthropology, literature, and religious traditions during their time in Ireland, and also take classes in digital media and photography.



Brian Garvan, Atlantic Corridor and Dr. Barry Vaughan of Mesa Community College's Study Abroad Programme.



## Strategic Priority 2 - Entrepreneurship

For the purposes of our work, entrepreneurs are defined as: "those who create and grow new enterprises and demonstrate characteristics of risk-taking and innovation".

Balanced economic development and a thriving entrepreneurial culture is the Irish Midlands through international linkages is a key objective for Atlantic Corridor. Through strategic alliances and partnerships, Atlantic Corridor works to encourage new enterprises to develop links that will encourage innovation and access to new markets. In 2008, Atlantic Corridor has worked closely with the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre in Athlone. The Midlands Innovation and Research Centre was established by Athlone Institute of Technology as a converging hub for innovation, research and enterprise in the Midlands. The MIRC provides incubation facilities for innovative and knowledge-based enterprise, an enterprise programme for entrepreneurs and start-ups, and makes available the resources and expertise of the Institute to support client companies. The MIRC assists and advises entrepreneurs and client companies - and provides access to its enterprise network - at every stage of a project's development.



The Midlands Innovation & Research Centre, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

During his visit to the Midlands in September, the Canadian Ambassador visited a number of business and education projects in the region. Included in the Ambassador's itinerary was a visit to the MIRC where he met companies such as Solana Tech, who are building research links with Ryerson University's Digital Media Lab through contacts that were enabled by Atlantic Corridor's work with the MIRC.



Dr. Pat Mulhern, AIT & John Mee, Solanotech.

## Strategic Priority 3 - Internationalising the Midlands

The work of Atlantic Corridor seeks to develop international links for business and educational projects in the Midlands. This priority was addressed this year through a number of initiatives such as the Canadian Trade Visit, Doing Business in Canada Events & Clinic and the work of Mesa Biotech Academy in the region. Also of note is the Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education this year, which provided invaluable international links for those who participated in the conference.



John Flanagan, Chairperson of Atlantic Corridor and Irial Finan, Executive Vice President, Coca-Cola Worldwide, Atlanta, Georgia.



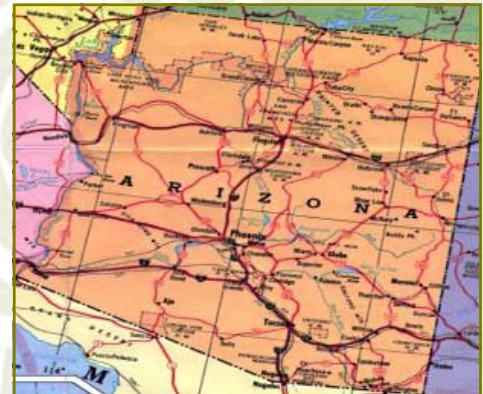
## Strategic Priority 4 – Strategic Alliances, Partnerships & Opportunities

In order to develop its work and impact, Atlantic Corridor has developed a range of alliances and partnerships that will generate opportunities for Atlantic Corridor and its clients.



### Arizona

An Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the City of Mesa in 2007 and activities have been on-going in relation to the development of business and education opportunities for the Midlands. Additional Arizona contacts are being developed through a proposal to develop links for the town of Tullamore with the City of Chandler in Arizona. Working with the office of Economic Development in City of Mesa Atlantic Corridor has facilitated business matching for some companies in the Midlands who were looking for suppliers, manufacturers or agents for their products in that part of the USA.



### Georgia

The MOU between Atlantic Corridor Ireland and the Irish Chamber of Commerce in Atlanta, Georgia (ICCUSA) was signed also in 2007 and follow-up activities are on-going. Atlantic Corridor are working to develop added-value to the region as a result of linkages that could be developed between AIT, Georgia Tech and companies in the Midlands region.

The Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), the applied research arm of the Georgia Institute of Technology has established a research enterprise in Athlone to focus on industry research and development needs and we have worked with them closely this year on "The Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education 2008". Over the next five years, the Irish operation of Georgia Tech plans to build up a portfolio of research programs and collaborations with industry valued in excess of \$24 million. GTRI Ireland will focus on several research areas including digital media and biotechnology. GTRI Ireland's Athlone location leaves it well situated for collaborative research with a broad range of companies and universities throughout the country.

Building on the Midlands links already developed by Atlantic Corridor through the recent partnership with Atlanta, Georgia, Atlantic Corridor will work with Georgia Tech Ireland to develop and promote partnerships for innovation and growth in the region. In 2009, a trade visit to Georgia which will include a fast-growth education event for companies from the Midlands will be focused on Georgia Tech and companies that have emerged from GTRI. Atlantic Corridor has also acted as a facilitator for work being done by Athlone Institute of Technology to establish a presence in the South-East USA through Georgia Tech.



Georgia Tech students Brian Srikanchana and Jonathan Murphy pictured with Taoiseach Brian Cowan TD, during a study visit to Georgia Tech Ireland, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

# Georgia Tech



## Canada

An MOU was signed in 2007 with the Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce in Toronto and a number of contacts in relation to business and education linkages are on-going. Working with Enterprise Ireland and IRAP/NRC [National Research Council of Canada] 25 companies in the Midlands were approached in 2008 with a view to considering business opportunities in Canada. Of that 25, 10 companies agreed to be profiled and of that number 5 agreed to undertake a trade visit to Canada in 2008.

These companies come from various sectors – engineering, crafts and ICT with some interested in technology transfer and joint venture and others looking for export options. An Atlantic Corridor Trade Visit to Canada was undertaken in July and has resulted in a number of licensing agreements, follow-on sales visits and joint research projects. Atlantic Corridor continues to monitor and support a number of companies and projects such as NIS, McDonald International, the MIRC and the Midlands Gateway who are anxious to build Canadian links that will benefit their businesses and organisations.

Atlantic Corridor has also facilitated the development of links between the University of Toronto and the Midlands through its office of Knowledge Transfer Initiatives and its Research Commercialization Office for business linkages, research linkages for the development of the Midlands Gateway [National Spatial Strategy] and linkages for the Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education 2008.



## Strategic Priority 5 – Cross-Border Linkages

Atlantic Corridor works with the North East Partnership in Northern Ireland which is run through Ballymena Borough Council. The North East Partnership was established in 2004 by a grouping of eight Councils in the north east region of Northern Ireland. The aim of the Partnership is to explore and develop a wide range of regional, inter-regional and cross-border development opportunities. The partnership is presently funded by the European Union INTERREG IIIA Ireland/Northern Ireland programme and eight member councils.



A study visit from the North-East Partnership took place in early April 2008 to develop a plan for joint initiatives between the two regions, with particular reference to actions in tourism, rural regeneration, enterprise and other actions. This work is on-going and Atlantic Corridor is presently working to develop links between AIT and the Northern Regional College.

Atlantic Corridor works with the international and cross-border research body, the ILCRD [International Centre for Local & Regional Development] to develop networks and links for planning, spatial strategy and other development issues on an all-island basis.

## Looking Forward to 2009

Next year promises to be another active and interesting year for Atlantic Corridor. A number of initiatives are planned including a Midlands Biotech Bootcamp for students and teachers, which will provide a training course in biotechnology protocols through the Mesa Biotech Academy of Arizona. This initiative will provide the opportunity for students in the Midlands and their teachers to experience and learn from international best practice. A trade visit and fast-growth business workshop will be held in 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia in co-operation with a number of partners and Georgia Tech Research Institute. This initiative will provide Midlands based companies the opportunity to explore opportunities for sales, licensing etc in the South-East of the USA. They will also take part in a bespoke and focused education process, that will provide them with the tools to allow their companies to grow quickly, innovatively and sustainably.

In early 2010, another Atlantic Conference on Promoting Science Education will take place and preparatory work for this large event will take place in 2009. Themes, speakers and further conference details will be officially launched in 2009.



In line with best practice, Atlantic Corridor in 2009 will also be re-visiting its strategic plan to refine and focus its priorities and actions in line with feedback received from its clients and success of activities to date.

