

CHAMBER matters

GEORGE COWCHER

Chief Executive, Devon Chamber of Commerce

Giving clarity to views of businesses

Since 1998 there have been two key business representative bodies for business people to join and express their views through, Plymouth now Devon Chamber of Commerce, and the Plymouth Area Business Council.

The Chamber which has an ancient foundation was set up in the 19th century to allow the city's commercial leaders to come together and express their views on trade, training and infrastructure - particularly rail investment (it seems nothing changes). The Plymouth Area Business Council was formed to bring the broad spectrum of business people, organisations and other interests into a single body to speak with one voice. This included individuals from the Federation of Small Businesses, Confederation of British Industry, Plymouth Manufacturing Group, Institute of Directors, TUC, Devon and Cornwall Business Council and many more. All were encouraged to attend a quarterly meeting, to be informed of developments in the City and agree common lines on key issues.

This clarity of message was welcomed by key city stakeholders such as the City Council, the armed forces and other providers.

With time, energy and money becoming ever more precious for all people engaged in business, discussions took place during 2017 to better align both the Plymouth Area Business Council and the Chamber of Commerce. The feeling is that the Plymouth Area Business Council provides an excellent platform for discussion and the distillation of business views and this will be even more powerful with the backing and weight of the Chamber of Commerce alongside it.

With the election of Richard Stevens, Heather Ancient and Craig Moore as joint Chairs of Plymouth Area Business Council and Richard Stephens remaining Chair of the Chamber there can be real coordination and this is now occurring.

Membership of the Chamber remains available to all businesses.

Plymouth Area Business Council meetings are open to business leaders who pay for their quarterly lunch. Anyone who is interested in either organisation is asked to contact the Chamber office on 01752 220471 or the Chamber's website on www.devonchamber.co.uk

Medical firm works on 'light bulb' cancer cure

A PLYMOUTH medical company is part of a €3million project striving to find a cure for brain cancer - by putting a "light bulb" in sufferers' heads.

Knight Scientific, based in Wolseley Road, is working on an amazing project which aims to fight tumours by introducing light emitting molecules into the brain. This will create a biological "light bulb" which destroys cancer cells.

It aims to combat the type of cancer which is afflicting politician Baroness Tessa Jowell.

Knight Scientific is a partner in a collaborative EU Horizon 2020 Future Emerging Technology (FET) project called Lumiblast.

It has just completed the first year of a four-and-a-half-year project working with four other research partners from four countries: two from Norway, one from Greece, the other is Spanish.

The project is to carry out research into an innovative, previously untried, approach to treating practically incurable brain tumours such as glioblastoma multiforme (GBM).

It is this type of brain cancer Baroness Tessa Jowell has revealed she has been diagnosed with. Baroness Jowell is trying to get more collaboration worldwide to tackle the disease.

"We hear the word 'innovation' a great deal these days, but this really is new ground," said Dr Jan Knight, boss of Knight Scientific.

She said GBM cancers make up about 15% of brain tumours.

"They are typically inaccessible and highly aggressive with fewer than 3-5% of people surviving longer than five years after diagnosis," she said.

"The problem with treating GBM is that the tumour is not localised or solid, rather it has invisible tentacles that spread throughout the brain, so surgical removal of the tumour along with

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chemotherapy and radiotherapy remains very much a treatment - not a cure.

"There are, however, other brain cancers that do respond well to treatment - but not GBM.

"But there is currently an approach to cancer treatment that is very effective," Dr Knight said. "It is called photo dynamic therapy, or PDT.

"It is used, for example, to treat cancers at the surface of the body such as skin cancers or where it is possible get light to penetrate deep enough.

"The process involves delivering a non-toxic pro-drug, a photosensitizer, into the body where it conveniently accumulates preferentially in tumour cells.

"In the treatment of skin cancers the photosensitizer is usually applied directly in a cream to the affected area and leaving it for a few hours to be absorbed by the cancerous cells.

"Light then is directed onto to the area where it activates the sensitizer in the cancer cells to produce very reactive molecules, derived from oxygen to kill the cells.

"PDT has been clinically evaluated for GBM but with little success because the cancer cells spread beyond the edge of the tumour.

"Also the treatment is highly invasive requiring open cranial surgery as the external light will not penetrate the skull."

But she stressed: "Our approach in this Lumiblast project is to turn PDT inside out.

"We are evaluating a range of light emitting molecules that could be transported to the brain where they are taken up into the cancerous cells.

"Each cell then becomes a light



Baroness Tessa Jowell

bulb which we switch on by chemical means.

"If the amount and nature of the light we generate is sufficient to activate the sensitizer then a very reactive form of oxygen, singlet oxygen, is produced which kills the cancer cell from the inside.

"Lumiblast is expected to work on individual cells so there is the potential of actually curing the GBM even if it means using a number of separate treatments. The principle utilised here could be relevant to cancers of other origins." But Dr Knight added: "It is important to emphasize that we have completed only one year of a four-and-a-half year project and at the end of this project, if we are successful we will commence the clinical stage, estimated to take a further five to six years."

She said the research programme has just received "an excellent report from our recent review meeting in Brussels".

She added: "We were excited. There were 900 applicants of which 11 were funded, one of which was ours."

Launched in 2014, Horizon 2020 is the EU Framework Programme for scientific research with a €80bn budget to encourage the public and private sectors to work together, funding the best innovation to tackle the biggest challenges facing society today.

Knight Scientific, in addition to the Lumiblast project, is an SME partner in the MSCA-RISE Project: Muscle Stress Relief, led by Dr Christina Karatzafery at Plymouth Marjon University.

Chairman of key property firm awarded an MBE

THE chairman of one of Plymouth's key property companies has been honoured by the Queen.

Peter Andrew, chairman of Burrington Estates, has been awarded an MBE in recognition of his outstanding service to the construction industry.

Mr Andrew, who is also deputy chairman of the Home Builders Federation, was recognised for his achievements in the Queen's New Year's Honours list.

During his 40-year career in construction, Mr Andrew has gained experience and an unrivalled understanding of the issues affecting house builders.

He was one of four practitioners who helped draft the National Planning Policy Framework for then Planning Minister Greg Clark.

Mr Andrew started his career as a trainee quantity surveyor at George Wimpey.

He worked on construction and civil engineering projects for a number of companies before being appointed as UK land and planning director, and became a board member, at national housebuilder Taylor Wimpey UK.

Mr Andrew said: "I feel honoured to receive an MBE in recognition of my services to construction.

"At a critical time for house building in the UK, I see my role as helping to create a better environment within which house builders can successfully deliver the homes our country needs.

"The Home Builders Federation and developers like Burrington Estates have an important role to play in shaping our industry for the future."

Burrington Estates is well known in Plymouth for high profile, and high worth, commercial developments including the Burrington Way Business Park, The Herald's former Ship home, and mixed-use schemes at Ocean Crescent

and the forthcoming Stowford Mill, in Ivybridge, where work began in November 2017.

Colin Palmer, managing director of Burrington Estates New Homes, said: "We were all delighted to hear of Peter's MBE.

"It's a fantastic achievement and very well deserved for the wealth of knowledge, experience and commitment he brings to our industry."

Mr Andrew is also a council member on the National House Building Council and advises developers including the Dorchester Group as a non-executive director.