

Life Science Skills Conference



Discovery Park in Sandwich was the centre of attention on 22nd March 2022 as the inaugural Life Science Skills Conference took place on the Internet bringing together speakers from across the UK.

There was a sharp focus on the future skills, needs and challenges in the sector and on how to attract, develop and retain talent.

At a time when the latest unemployment rate for Great Britain shows an annual fall of 32.5% [ONS, 15 March 2022] and employers are scrambling to find skilled staff, there has perhaps never been a better time to publicise the attraction of a career in Life Sciences.

Welcoming all the delegates to the formal opening was Mayer Schreiber CEO of Discovery Park in Sandwich which hosts some of the UK's most innovative life science companies as well as ambitious SMEs keen to embrace fast-track growth on this world-class site so conveniently located in the Dover District, the closest part of the UK to mainland Europe.

Next on our screens was the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, George Freeman MP, who had visited Discovery Park as a junior to David Willetts, the then Minister of State for Universities and Science. George Freeman is now the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation. Referring to the establishment of the first Enterprise Zones in 2012, he thus spoke with some authority in stating: "No park has better demonstrated the potential than Discovery Park".



George Freeman MP

Chamber of Commerce members were well represented with excellent contributions from FujiFilm, Cummins Power Generation, Canterbury Christ Church University and the EKC Group which manages six Further Education colleges in East Kent.

During the Data and Ethics workshop, Ken Sutherland, President of Canon Medical, pointed to the worrying shortage of workers with Life Science skills. Serious salaries are now being offered to new employees. We learned that the demand is such that after generous rises last April, some companies in and around Edinburgh have had to offer further salary increases in October in order to retain existing staff.

Parents and careers advisors should take note that jobs in Life Sciences can now offer school leavers a lucrative future to rival other professions such as accountancy and law.

All in all, this was a thoroughly worthwhile conference that will do much to raise the profile of Life Sciences. Developing a new drug or managing a trial of wearable kidney monitors confer considerable social prestige on all those involved. School leavers, apprentices and graduates in all disciplines will note that a switch to Life Sciences offers huge opportunities in an expanding industry.

The rapid development of Covid-19 vaccines has surely taught us that workers in pharmaceutical companies genuinely are heroes of our time and that Life Sciences can now lead to a career where talent is rewarded and achievement applauded by everyone who wants a healthy future for themselves and their families.

Information

Thanet & East Kent and Dover District Chambers of Commerce provide professional business support to the East Kent coastal business community.

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