

Silicon Fen

Silicon Fen (sometimes **the Cambridge Cluster**) is the name given to the region around Cambridge, England, which is home to a large cluster of high-tech businesses, especially those related to software, electronics, and biotechnology. Many of these have connections with the University of Cambridge, and the area is now one of the most important technology centres in Europe.

It is called "Silicon Fen" by analogy with Silicon Valley in California, because it lies at the south of Fenland.

Business growth

In 2004, 24% of all UK venture capital (9% of all the EU's) was received by Silicon Fen companies, according to the Cambridge Cluster Report 2004 produced by Library House and Grant Thornton.

The so-called *Cambridge phenomenon*, giving rise to start-up companies in a town previously only having a little light industry in the electrical sector, is usually dated to the founding of the Cambridge Science Park in 1970: this was an initiative of Trinity College, Cambridge and moved away from a traditional low-development policy for Cambridge.

The characteristic of Cambridge is small companies (as few as three people, in some cases) in sectors such as computer-aided design. Over time the number of companies has grown; it has not proved easy to count them, but recent estimates have placed the number anywhere between 1,000 and 3,500 companies. They are spread over an area defined perhaps by the CB postcode or 01223 telephone area code, or more generously in an area bounded by Ely, Newmarket, Saffron Walden, Royston and Huntingdon.

In February 2006, the Judge Business School reported estimates that suggested that at that time, there were around 250 active start-ups directly linked to the University, valued at around US\$6 billion. Only a tiny proportion of these companies have so far grown into multinationals: ARM and Autonomy Corporation are the most obvious examples, and more recently CSR has seen rapid growth due to the uptake of Bluetooth.

Area characteristics

The region has one of the most flexible job markets in the technology sector, and people are often employed by other companies after a start-up fails. Although everyone wants their company to succeed, failures are tolerated, indeed almost expected.

One explanation for the area's success is that after a while such an employment market is self-sustaining, since employees are willing to move to an area that promises a future beyond any one company. Another factor is the high degree of 'networking', enabling people across the region to find partners, jobs, funding, and know-how. Organisations have sprung up to facilitate this process, for example the Cambridge Network.

Another explanation is that Cambridge has the academic pre-eminence of Cambridge University, a high standard of living available in the county, good transport links, and a relatively low incidence of social problems such as crime and hard drug use. Many graduates from the university choose to stay on in the area, giving local companies a rich pool of talent to draw upon. The high-technology industry has little by way of competition, unlike say in Oxfordshire where plenty of other competing industries exist. Because Cambridgeshire was not until recently a high-technology centre, commercial rents were generally lower than in other parts of the UK, giving companies a head-start on those situated in other more expensive regions; this has, however, recently changed and Cambridgeshire now has one of the highest costs of living in the UK outside London.

A downside is that lower-skilled workers may find it hard to find jobs, or to afford living costs.

References

- *The Cambridge Cluster Report 2007*, Library House 2007, Download ^[1]
- *The Cambridge Phenomenon: The Growth of High Technology Industry in a University Town*, Segal Quince & Partners 1985, ISBN 0-9510202-0-X
- *The Cambridge Phenomenon Revisited - a synopsis of the new report by Segal Quince Wicksteed*, Segal Quince & Partners 2000, Download ^[2]
- *The Cambridge Cluster Report 2003*, Library House 2003, Download ^[3]
- *The Cambridge Cluster Report 2004*, Library House in association with Grant Thornton 2004, Download ^[4]
- *The Cambridge Cluster Report 2006*, Library House 2006, Download ^[5]
- *The Cambridge Technopole Report 2006* An overview of the UK's leading high tech cluster, St John's Innovation Centre 2006, [6]
- *The Impact of the University of Cambridge on the UK Economy and Society* A high-level study commissioned by EEDA and the Cambridge Network in 2006, [7]

External links

- Cambridge Corporate Gateway ^[8]
- Cambridge Technopole ^[9]

References

- [1] <http://www.gcp.uk.net/downloads/LHCC07.pdf>
- [2] http://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/pooled/articles/BF_NEWSART/view.asp?Q=BF_NEWSART_4516
- [3] http://www.libraryhouse.net/www/publications/download.php?dl_id=8
- [4] http://www.libraryhouse.net/www/publications/download.php?dl_id=9
- [5] http://www.libraryhouse.net/www/publications/download.php?dl_id=20
- [6] <http://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/links/article/default.aspx?objid=31488>
- [7] <http://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/links/article/default.aspx?objid=31489>
- [8] <http://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/>
- [9] <http://www.cambridgetechnopole.org.uk/>

Article Sources and Contributors

Silicon Fen *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=430322238> *Contributors:* AlanRClarke, Alexandru Stanoi, Blakkandekka, Bwithh, CarolGray, Charles Matthews, Cnyborg, Hawkestone, Heron, Hinnerk, Hockwell, JLaTondre, JNSQ, Jengod, Jluismarin, Jpbowen, Keith Edkins, Mereda, Mervyn, Mindmatrix, Morgancolmer, Morwen, Mpwatson, MrOllie, OOODDD, PSUdesigner, Paddu, Pegaiyai, Phewkin, Postdlf, Punanimal, RJFJR, Rangoon11, Rbj2001, Ronz, Samtilston, Schmiteye, SimonTrew, Smithy2204, Squids and Chips, TSP, Tabletop, Thwm100, Timwi, Whitepaw, Wikifun95, Wolhound, Yendor1958, 40 anonymous edits

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>
