

Steering Group Report no. 2 November 2004

Welcome to the second monthly report of the Regional Language Network South West.

Hubs in Place

Three contractors have been appointed. They are the University of the West of England (UWE), Plymouth Business School and a partnership of Philada Rogers and James Piriou for Bournemouth.

Our first joint meeting will be on the 25th when we can share information and ideas. In the meantime contractors are speaking to their local Business Links and UKT&I.

Business Language Champions

Publicity aimed at potential participants in the programme, both businesses and schools, has been produced. Electronic copies will be sent to members separate to this report, or are available for download online: <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/files/RLNSW-STEERING/>

At the time of writing there has been an extremely positive reaction to the launch with a number of high-profile companies expressing interest. FlyBe, the Met Office and South West Tourism have become the first three of the twelve Business Language Champions to register.

The project starts officially in Feb 2005. We are using the

time beforehand to match the businesses and schools together. The project invites businesses with routine contact with other countries and culture and that recognise the benefits of developing and using languages and cultural skills to develop business objectives to share their knowledge and experience. Benefits for the companies will be the PR opportunities during the project and an opportunity to influence and develop the next generation.

Language Trends

This report makes rather depressing reading as fewer than one third of state schools now require students to learn a language up to age 16. The fallout from languages is happening very quickly. In schools where languages have been made optional around 54% of pupils on average are studying a language in Year 11 and 41% in Year 10.

German and French are the languages most affected. Spanish has remained popular and the independent schools sector reports strong growth in that language. <http://www.cilt.org.uk/news/pressrelease/2004/PR04LT0411N.pdf>

For the first time in three years the reintroduction of Russian is being reported. There is interest in a wide range of languages but this has workforce

and training implications especially when many university language departments are facing a reduction in student numbers. A number of departments have closed or their activities and range of languages they offer curtailed.

Languages Work



Three events were held in Bodmin, Exeter and Bristol to launch Languages Work. This timely project aims to encourage students to develop their language skills by demonstrating how languages are important in, and often essential to, a wide range of careers across all sectors and levels. At the events, Languages Work products, including activity handbooks and CDs with ideas on activities to get students thinking about practical applications of foreign languages, and careers guidance leaflets, were distributed to teachers and careers advisors. It was an opportunity to explain the services offered by CILT and the RLN in support of modern language education and careers, and the Exeter event also included a presentation by the MET Office's Jane Varley as guest of RLN SW.

Organised by Comenius South West with the support of the

RLN, the events were well-attended and some excellent feedback was obtained from the teachers and careers advisors who participated.

"Excellent resources to motivate our Year 9 pupils to continue with Languages"

"Good to see how it all links up; Comenius, RLN, businesses"

"The presentation by the MET Office was excellent. Session from RLN was useful and practical"

"As a non-language person, I was never sure why German was taught at school. It is useful to realise the importance of German within the export industry"

BLIS database

This is being revamped, cleaned and modified. In the SW we have been working hard to attract new job vacancies onto the site and more professionals to join. In the last month we had seven new jobs registered.

Due to problems with LearnDirect we are encouraging HE colleges to apply directly to be included in the BLIS Professionals directory as providing language training.

Events

It has been a busy month for the team - as well as the Languages Work events, the RLN have also been at the HERDA SW Conference and took a stand to SWRDA's Beacon for Growth event on November 16th.

Jonathan has represented the RLN at several business-to-business events and networking meetings, ensuring a good presence for us and making new contacts.

I have learnt a lot from attending recent meetings and forums about issues and concerns of South West businesses. One of the most fundamental things I have learnt is about the benefits that collaboration amongst companies can bring in helping to improve business performance. Working and meeting people from many local companies has also brought home to me the many examples of companies that can be held up as success stories and as making a valuable contribution to the South West economy. I believe that championing and raising awareness of these businesses can only help to raise the profile of the region.



Website

The RLN SW website is currently undergoing redevelopment. The new design is cleaner, with an accessible structure making it easier to

navigate and find information. Work is progressing well and the site is due to go live before Christmas

Minutes and Steering Group photographs

All minutes, photographs of members from the September meeting and other relevant files are available on the web at:

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/files/RLNSW-STEERING/>

Future monthly reports

Comments on this report and suggestions for content of future reports would be very welcome from all members. Please send them to Catherine.

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