

Regional and European Bulletin

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Erlangen Delegation Visit

Welcome

On Wednesday 19 May 2004, officials from Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Stoke-on-Trent Twinning and International Relations Association welcomed the official Erlangen delegation and a small group of Erlangen citizens to the City. The last official visit took place five years ago in Erlangen.

The visit focussed on:
Renewing friendships;
Establishing a new work programme for the next five years;
Identifying new business opportunities in medical technology, bio-medicine and healthcare;
Strengthening links between the Universities and University hospitals;
Addressing the Youth Exchange Agenda.

Gladstone

Mayor Wolfe officially welcomed all the guests later that afternoon at the Gladstone Pottery Museum and talked to Mayor Gerd Lohwasser and his colleagues, before the group began a tour around the museum led by Phil Rowley from the Friends of Gladstone, who kindly conducted the tour in German. This was very much appreciated.

All the visitors were extremely impressed by the museum, especially the **Flushed with Pride** exhibition. Some delegates returned later in the programme for another visit and an opportunity to shop.

Part of the visit included sampling one of our traditional meals, bacon and cheese oatcakes. A guest speaker provided



Erlangen visitors at Staffordshire University, Beaconside Site

an interesting talk on the origins of the oatcake and its secret recipe. The only German equivalent to the North Staffordshire oatcake is their pancake, a dish eaten frequently.

Formal Evening

The first evening of the visit took the form of a formal dinner, with a top table reserved for the original twinning initiators, the leaders of both Cities and other colleagues.

Welcome speeches were given from both sides to express the commitment and relationship that exists between the two cities as well as paying tribute to fifteen years of twinning, marked by this celebratory visit.

The Erlangen guests were introduced to many of their City counterparts, whom they would be meeting again later in the programme.

This event proved to be an opportunity for networking and exchanging best practice.

The Official Delegation

The official party consisted of Mayor Lohwasser who led the delegation, Mayoress Dr. Elisabeth Preuss, former Mayor Dr. Dietmar Hahlweg, three Council representatives Frau Ursula Lanig (Labour), Frau Renata Aigner (Green Party), Herr Albrecht Boerner (Conservative) as well as two International Relations Officers, Frau Dagmar Paliwal and Herr Peter Steger.

The official group were also joined by staff from the Friedrich Alexander University Hospital in Erlangen, and an editor from an Erlangen daily newspaper, the Erlangen Nachrichten.

Other delegates joined the official party as their individual programmes allowed.

City Council officers provided support and information to all delegates throughout the visit.

Directorate of Regeneration and Community

Engaging our community, regenerating our City

University Visits

The following day, Thursday 20 May, the programme reflected the individual interests of the delegates who dispersed into groups led by City colleagues.

An early start for the main party began with a visit to Staffordshire University's Beaconside site, to be welcomed by Deputy Vice Chancellor, Paul Richards and Enterprise Director Sandra Booth. This was followed by presentations from other colleagues on the topics of medical and information technology, robotics and nursing.



Presentation at Staffordshire University

A site visit was planned to the university nursing school at Blackheath Lane, set up to provide practical experience and training for student nurses in the treatment of patients. Mayor Lohwasser agreed to have his blood pressure taken.

The delegation was impressed with the training facilities and gained a good overview of the priorities and activities that the university was involved in.



Mayor Lohwasser under pressure at Blackheath Lane

Lunch was arranged at the Gladstone Pottery Museum where the Lord Mayor, Cllr. Clive Brian and the Lady Mayoress were invited guests.

This was followed by a virtual tour of The Hothouse facilities by the Manager of The Hothouse, Andrew Briggs and his colleague, Sebastian Daneels. This presentation focussed on 3D design and rapid prototyping.

The Hothouse has one of the largest 3D printers in the UK, offering real time product manipulation. An offshoot of this technology has allowed The Hothouse to develop links with the medical sector.

Later in the afternoon the whole group made their way to Keele University, where they were welcomed by Prof. Maggie Pearson, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Ros Gallagher and Dr. Annette Kratz.

Here, the delegates split into three groups; the first toured the Medical School followed by a visit to an on-site company, Cobra Biomanufacturing Plc; the second, had a focus on language learning and overseas placement; while the third consisted of two delegates who talked on the history and culture of Erlangen at the local History Group based at Keele University, an event organised by Phil Morgan.

Medical Technology

At the time the main party was visiting Staffordshire University, the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry was hosting two delegates, Dr. Jens Reiter from Bayern Innovativ in Nuremberg, and Dr. Astrid Ritter-Heinrich from the Consulate-General in Munich. John Easom, an International Trade Advisor at the Chamber of Commerce joined them during their tour. Both delegates have a specialism in medical technology and pharmaceuticals and their involvement was initially due to the work conducted under the **Reach Bavaria** project. This was conducted in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Chamber of Commerce over the last eighteen months.

The visit focussed on developing contacts with small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in the City. Ceram/CSMA, one good example, hosted a breakfast meeting, looking for potential project opportunities to promote their expertise in biomedicine and medical technology.

This was followed by a visit to Keele University, with the Medical Technology Priority Working Group, chaired by Ros Gallagher. This provided a fact finding opportunity on differences in infrastructure and developments in the medical technology sector, so that any collaboration, either through project work or on a business footing would now have the contacts to do so.

The two delegates joined the official group at the Gladstone Pottery Museum for lunch. After lunch, they visited Staffordshire University's Stoke site to meet with academic spin-off companies - Rehab Robotics, Flexi-Bot and Intelligent Orthopaedics - who are involved in therapeutic applications of robotics. Louise Richardson from the Innovation Relay Centre in Coventry joined the delegates and all met the official party at Keele University later that afternoon.

History and Languages at Keele

Two honoured guests, Professor Hoeltgen and his wife Freda, initiators of the twinning link, participated in the Keele University visit. Professor Hoeltgen was invited to talk to local historians on the history of Erlangen.

This opportunity was kindly made available by Phil Morgan from Keele University, to the local History Group that meets there regularly. Special booklets were printed to promote this event.

Acquaintances were re-established between the Erlangen delegates and their North Staffordshire counterparts, such as Roger Jones, who was also involved in the initial twinning set up.

The modern languages meeting at Keele University, hosted by Dr A Kratz, proved extremely interesting and gave invaluable information for potential student exchange programmes to the delegates from the Institute for Foreign Languages and Cultures in Erlangen.

It focussed on European Funded Programmes that Keele University participates in, such as Socrates and Erasmus.

Exploring the possibility of Erlangen students gaining dual honours degrees at Keele University was discussed, however Erlangen students would probably have to study the same length of time as required by UK students to gain full BA/BSc status.

Cultural Development

A topic linked to the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery was cultural development. This offered the delegates an in-depth look at our cultural strategy - how educational elements are incorporated into museum activities, national and international art exhibitions, and how to encourage audiences to the museum to learn about new and historic developments about the City's traditions and its culture.

Ian Lawley, the Head of Museums, organised a programme on Thursday, accompanied by some of his colleagues who provided invaluable information to the Erlangen delegation.

An invitation to the launch of the latest art exhibition was extended to our colleagues, showing art work created by the homeless.

Funding mechanisms were explained for many of the initiatives including the use of EU funds for an ongoing project under the Culture 2000 programme. This project involves the collaboration of six leading European Ceramic Cities.

This partnership has already enhanced the City's national and international status. The Hot-house worked closely with the museum in delivering and exploring new ways of working to promote cultural developments and networks for socio-economic prosperity.

A visit to historic Ford Green Hall also took place.

Young Pianist Is All Keyed Up

The City also hosted one of Erlangen's young and talented musicians, David Theodor Schmidt, a pianist studying at the Karlsruhe Music School in Germany.

Two concerts were organised for him to play on Thursday, one at Stoke-on-Trent College's Burslem Campus through Charles Bartholomew and Kevin Barber, and another at Berryhill Retirement Village, arranged through Christine Sumner.



David Schmidt playing at Stoke-on-Trent College

Both venues provided opportunities for local students, professional musicians and the general public to see him play a selection of classical music.

A visit to the prestigious Cheethams Music School in Manchester was arranged, to allow him to meet Director Murray McLachlan who hosted a lunch for David and allowed him to sit in on some of their classes.

To allow David to practice, arrangements were made with existing musicians around the conurbation, such as Mike Lambert and Reverend Franklin, to allow him to use their instruments.

These events were very much appreciated and further encouraged contact between other musicians across the City and those who had visited Erlangen as part of the 1000 Years of Erlangen historic visit in 2002.

Youth Agenda

Delegates from Erlangen's Youth Service also had their own agenda on Thursday, seeing various initiatives throughout the City, such as the Bus Stops Project, Street Sport Queensbury Centre, Studio Q and Meir Youth Resource Centre.

They met young people and held meetings to discuss the way forward for the Move Together International Youth Project with the City Council.

This project is in its third year, funded by Youth for Europe and involves five transnational partners, including Erlangen.

New dates were set to hold a youth camp at the Stanley Head Outdoor Recreation Centre, a venue specially built with young people in mind.

Overall, this is a five year project with the next international youth camp due to take place in November this year.

Urban Environment

A City tour showing its transport and environmental initiatives was organised on Thursday, by the Urban Environment Directorate for former Mayor Dr Hahlweg, one of the original initiators of the twinning link. This involved travelling across the City accompanied by specialists in their field who gave commentaries on different sites.

Some of Stoke-on-Trent's former brownfield sites, greenways, cycling strategy, transport network, CCTV centre, traffic calming measures were viewed with a final working lunch attended by the Director of Urban Environment, Phil Harper and other team members.

Dr. Hahlweg, who had not been to Stoke-on-Trent for a long time, was a good friend of Ted Smith, a past City Council leader. As part of his tour he called on Mr. Smith's widow as a sign of respect and to present her with a bouquet of flowers.

Languages at Staffordshire University

Two delegates, from the Foreign Languages and Culture Institute based in Erlangen, joined by Joanna Thomas, took part in the visit to Staffordshire University to meet Collette Carty, Steve Brewer and John Ward to exchange information on student placement opportunities for overseas students. They started with an overview of the role of the new Partnerships Department.

The impact of removing languages as a compulsory subject from the national curriculum has affected demand for the take-up of 'pure' language degrees, thus languages are being offered as part of a degree, for example, with Business and Finance.

Changes in national policy and strategy proved of interest to the delegates. Opportunities were also discussed about Erlangen linguists studying towards a Staffordshire BA/BSc in one year.

Five Year Co-operation Agreement

Friday 21 May was set aside for meetings to discuss the next **Five Year Co-operation Agreement** between the two cities.

The official party arrived early at the Civic Centre in Stoke to discuss how to move the co-operation forward, and which areas to prioritise to reflect mutual areas of interest to both cities. The latest developments were incorporated into the new document. After one and a half hours of discussion, a draft document was agreed and prepared for signing by the two Mayors of the twin cities later that afternoon.

The official party left to visit the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where they were met by the Chief Executive, Bryan Carnes, and later joined by other business leaders responsible for inward investment.

A presentation by the International Trade Team took place, outlining the kind of services, infrastructure and socio-economic overview available to businesses. A luncheon, hosted by the Chamber, who also invited local MPs, giving them the opportunity to meet the Erlangen delegation for networking and



MPs and Mayors exchange information at the Chamber of Commerce

sharing best practice. This was a very successful visit providing the necessary overview of the economy and role of the Chamber. The party returned to the Civic Centre for the official signing of the Five Year Co-operation Agreement by the Principal Mayor, Gerd Lohwasser and former Mayor Dr. Hahlweg, together with Elected Mayor Mike Wolfe and the Lord Mayor Cllr. Clive Brian, attended by the Council Manager and Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ita O'Dovovan and senior officers.



Mayor Lohwasser and Mayor Wolfe sign the five year Co-operation Agreement