 

No. 020.21 3September 2021

**N E W S R E L E A S E**

**University of Buckingham launches School of Computing’s Centre**

**for Artificial Intelligence and innovation hub**

The University of Buckingham, School of Computing’s Centre for Artificial Intelligence and innovation hub was officially opened by Lord Clement Jones on Friday 3rd September.

A former chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence, Lord Clement Jones was joined by [Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership](https://www.buckstvlep.co.uk/) (Bucks LEP) CEO Richard Harrington, University of Buckingham Vice-Chancellor James Tooley and Dean of Faculty of Computing, Law and Psychology Dr Harin Sellahewa for the opening.

The launch celebrates Phase 1 of the £3.2m investment in Computing at Buckingham - a joint university and Bucks LEP partnership. The Bucks LEP has provided half the funding for the new Centre for AI and also for an iHub - labs, equipment and space for start-ups. There is also a Living Lab - a place where there is research involving students, academics and businesses developing and commercialising new products and services. It will complement existing Living Labs, Clusters and Innovation Centres in Buckinghamshire to help drive economic growth and skills in line with [Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy](https://www.buckstvlep.co.uk/our-strategies/local-industrial-strategy/).

As part of the project the School of Computing has established new computer suites and has acquired specialist equipment to introduce academic programmes specialising in artificial intelligence, cyber security, games and immersive applications development, and robotics. The University is the first organisation in the UK to have Birdly, an immersive flying machine that enables the user to fly over

**more…**

**University of Buckingham launches School of Computing’s Centre for AI: 2**

landscapes and cities of the world using virtual reality. There is also Spot, the mobile canine robot, by Boston Dynamics, Single-arm Yumi robots and several state-of-the-art virtual and augmented reality headsets.

The project is to keep Buckingham at the forefront of AI and robotics teaching and research. Buckinghamshire leads the way in AI and robotics and the University is helping local businesses with projects involving computing students.

Lord Clement Jones said: “I am thrilled to open this trailblazing Computing Department. It’s fantastic to see the partnership between the local LEP and the university resulting in pioneering AI and robotics equipment which will help to produce the next generation of leaders in computing and the development of ground-breaking technology in Buckinghamshire.”

Richard Harrington, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership, said*: “*Bucks LEP is delighted to be contributing £1.6m of Local Growth Funds into the University of Buckingham’s centre for Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Innovation. This match investment aims to address the gap in academic application and ethical research into the use of AI. The opportunities provided by the application of AI is of growing importance to Buckinghamshire businesses and we are supporting the University to work collaboratively in this field with entrepreneurial businesses and particularly with those businesses located at the rapidly growing Enterprise Zone sites at Silverstone Park and Wescott Venture Park. It will also enhance Buckinghamshire’s pivotal position to help attract inward investment and create a step change in local economic growth.”

Vice Chancellor Professor James Tooley commented: “Buckingham is known for its pioneering spirit. We are extremely grateful to Buckinghamshire LEP for jointly funding this state-of-the art equipment. These new facilities will be used in partnership with local companies and organisations and will help us develop the next

**more…**

**University of Buckingham launches School of Computing’s Centre for AI: 3**

generation of experts in these fields. I know our faculty and students will benefit immensely from the newly refurbished computer labs."

Dean of the Faculty of Computing, Law and Psychology Dr Harin Sellahewa said: “We are very grateful for the Bucks LEP funding which enables us to lead the way with AI, cyber security, immersive technologies and robotics. We want our students to be developing the next generation of autonomous systems and innovative applications that solve real and complex problems. Our region is home to innovators in agritech, motor racing, driverless cars, robotics and satellite technologies, to whom we can provide graduates within demand digital and analytical skills”.

More than 50 guests including the mayor of Buckingham Margaret Gateley were at the launch looking around the refurbished labs and seeing the state-of-the-art equipment being demonstrated by students.

**Ends**

**Note to editors**

The [**Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership**](http://buckstvlep.co.uk/) (Bucks LEP) is a business-led ‘partnership of equals’ between local government and the private sector, building the conditions for sustainable economic growth in the County.

[**Buckinghamshire Business First**](http://www.bbf.uk.com/) (BBF) is the Growth Hub for the county and is backed by Buckinghamshire-based entrepreneurs, thousands of SMEs, the Buckinghamshire LEP and Buckinghamshire Council. BBF provides the link between public policy and the business community in Buckinghamshire and works with partners to create a dynamic business environment in the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain.

For further information, please contact:

Richard Burton MCIPR, MPRCA

Communications Manager

Buckinghamshire LEP

T: 01494 927160

M: 07866 492292

E: richard.burton@buckslep.co.uk