**GEOMATICS WORLD**

Issue No 3 • March/April 2005 • Volume 13

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**PINPOINT FARADAY – PERSONAL NAVIGATION – GEOMATICS AND THE TSUNAMI**

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**SURVEYING FOR GEOGRAPHICAL AND SPATIAL INFORMATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**
The UK Government is keen to raise the application of new technology in the construction industry. In the East Midlands area plumbing and surveying are amongst the prime beneficiaries. (Let’s hope surveyors will soon be earning as much as plumbers seem to – Editor.)

Photo above shows a delighted Phil Sargent as he gets his hands on some of the equipment. The instrument is one of Topcon’s new GPT7000 series digital imaging total stations.

Phil Sargent and colleagues are benefitting from nearly £200,000 worth of survey equipment supplied by Topcon.

The East Midlands New Technology Initiative (NTI) is the largest of 18 regional NTIs across the UK, and is recognised as a best practice model for all NTIs. A £6m initiative, it is a consortium of 33 universities and colleges formed to strengthen the links between education and the local economy.

East Midlands NTI has eight networks targeting various industry sectors, including the newly-formed Construction Network, which has some £0.5m funding from East Midlands Development Agency to support its work over the next two years. The network aims to work closely with small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in construction in the region to identify their equipment, training and educational needs. The network aims to assist and serve SMEs from one person to 250 employees which are working in any aspects of the provision or supply of construction-related activities or services. The network identified two areas of particular strength among its members: plumbing and surveying. It has therefore just used its Phase 1 capital money to buy a fully-equipped diagnostic workshop for training plumbers, and almost £200,000 worth of surveying instruments and software from Topcon, including robotic, reflectorless, imaging and scanning total stations, GPS and digital photogrammetry. The equipment will be available both for students and accessible by companies. Topcon just edged out Trimble, who also offered a superb value package of equipment.

SMEs will be offered:

- access to this equipment and software for initial inspection, instruction and assessment,
- training courses,
- hire opportunities, and
- assistance with grant applications if purchases are planned.

Assistance to SMEs is not limited to this equipment; the network can assist, companies involved in any aspect of construction. Needs already identified by one group of employers and being addressed by the network are provision of training courses in AutoCAD and Microsoft Project.

The range of equipment bought by the network is a major step in bringing education facilities in line with equipment used on-site. Funding is a constant issue in education and it is not uncommon for students to be learning surveying techniques on relatively outdated equipment. Now students will be able to have hands-on experience of the equipment they are likely to meet when they go out into industry.

Lecturers will also have training in how to use the latest instruments and software, so increasing their skills and helping them to keep up-to-date with industry developments. Ian Lester, lecturer in construction and civil engineering at Lincoln College, agrees: “As a college this gives us the leading edge in technology. A lot of students are on day-release and are using up-to-date equipment in their businesses. Equipment at colleges can be many years old. Suddenly we are at the cutting edge, which students appreciate, and that gives us more credibility.”

The Technical Development Grants which are available include up to £5,000 for the purchase of advanced technology equipment to enhance the company’s productivity with funding matched by the company and one or more employees enrolling on a relevant NTI course. The scheme is open to small and medium sized firms which have been trading for a minimum of one year and operating in the sectors specified by NTI.

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