1 RECENT RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

1.1 RECENT VISITS

Forrester High School (visited Informatics) June 12
Armadale Academy (visited Informatics) June 13
Durham High Flyers (visited Informatics) June 19
Cramlington High School June 23
Durham Sixth Form College June 25
Kickstart Summer School (visited Informatics) July 1
Aberdour Festival July 28
Scottish Schools Ski-ing Championships August 23

1.2 RESIDENTIAL WORKSHOP

The Durham High Flyers residential workshop took place from July 17th-19th.

The students visited Engineering as they have in previous years, and then extended their visit by a day visiting Informatics. The feedback from this visit was very good. Apparently our workshops were judged to “Separate the sheep from the goats.”

Durham would like to repeat this visit though there is some difficulty with scheduling it. The main benefit to us is in building up a relationship with the NE England career services.

2 FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

2.1 PLANNED VISITS:

Carnegie Festival, Dunfermline September 4-6
Lochgelly South Primary School September 9th
South Queensferry High School September 16th
Jordanhill High School September 24
Bo’Ness High School January 30, 2009

I’m expecting to be asked to visit a lot more schools over the winter and early spring.

2.2 TEACHERS CPD SESSIONS

These are still being organised, in cooperation with Heriot Watt and Napier universities. Miles Osborne and Aris Efthymiou have been asked to deliver sessions on AI and Computer Architecture respectively.

RECRUITMENT DVD

I suggest that rather than reshooting our film to include more footage of our students we continue to use the same one, but add to the DVD the two new films produced by Colin's team and the SDP film arranged by Diana.

3 NEW DEVELOPMENTS

3.1 FIRST LEGO LEAGUE TOURNAMENT

We'll be hosting the first ever regional First Lego League Tournament on December 1st in the forum and the
Appleton Tower.

See the website http://www.firstlegoleague.org/ for more details.

FLL is an international robot tournament for teams of children ages 9-16. To run we need to recruit at least 10 teams: we don't have a lot of time to do this as the competition "starts" in a couple of weeks. The challenge is released at the beginning of September each year and the regional tournaments are held at the end of November or beginning of December. The winner will progress to the UK final.

I asked Engineering to get involved and perhaps to seek out local industry help in the shape of judges or perhaps sponsors for the winning team. Andrew Mitchell of the commercialisation team has run this sort of competition before and has offered to help out.

The organiser of the UK competitions, Chris proctor visited us this week and is satisfied with the facilities we can offer. I plan to visit Birmingham for an organisers training day on September 4th.

3.2 SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING WEEK, 2009

I'd like to organise an event with other schools from Science and Engineering. The working title is "Transformers" and what I'd like to do is feature examples of work in progress - not necessarily museum-quality demos. This would be work that is likely to have significant impacts on society and the aim would be to get young people thinking about this. At the moment I'm sounding out interest from other departments.

Brain Awareness Week follows shortly on from SCIENG week. Do we want to get involved in this too?

3.3 ROBOT CREATURES KITS

Our technicians will be developing a new generation of IPAB's "bug bots" which I expect to use a lot during school visits. It's important to have something new to offer when I make repeat visits to schools and we know that children enjoy making up these kits and seeing their own robots function.

3.4 EXHIBITIONS AS WELL AS COMPETITIONS.

I'm interested in work being done in drawing in people not attracted by traditional robotic and programming competitions. We need to find new ways of showcasing the creativity of computer scientists. I have ordered a picocricket and two picoboards (from http://picocricket.com/).

The picoboards allow Scratch programs to be written which respond to sensory inputs from the environment. I am meeting with some teachers from East Lothian this week and hope to get their interest in a competition that would use these.

The picocricket is a robot kit which encourages the user to make robotic craft items which can be displayed in an exhibition. The hope is that these will draw in children who aren't enthused by more traditional "line-following" type competitions.

3.5 LEAPS SUMMER SCHOOL

I am meeting with LEAPS to see if there is a way in which we can contribute to their annual summer school programme. (http://www.leapsonline.org/summer_school.html) The computing stream has been run by Heriot Watt for years. They run a JAVA programming course.

The issue for us is, as always, maths. It could be awkward to teach children in summer school to whom we are very unlikely to offer a place.

4 MISCELLANEOUS

4.1 COOPERATION WITH IGS

I'd like to find a way to work better with the IGS. For example, it appeared for some time that the IGS might be planning to develop their own program to replace the Research Communication in Action program in which we have participated for a number of years. My efforts to find out about their plans have not been very successful.