

This is the annual report of Atlantic Corridor Links Company Limited by Guarantee which trades under the name of Midlands Science. The report refers to the trading name of the company as it is shared publicly with many stakeholders and in many forums, where there is interaction with the company's activities which take place under its trading name.

## Annual Report 2018

### CEO's Foreword

Midlands Science is a local development company working to progress socio-economic development in the Midlands of Ireland through the promotion of STEM [science, technology, engineering and maths] education and skills. Throughout the year, we welcome ideas that lead us in new directions and inform our way of working towards spreading messages about both the importance of STEM education and the fact that STEM is everywhere and an important part of the economic and cultural life in the midlands.

Our annual Midlands Science Festival is now heading into its seventh year and is a collaboration of partners and sponsors, who help us make it a lively celebration of all things science, technology and innovation. We would like to thank all of the organisations and individuals who help us to design, manage and continuously improve the quality of our offerings. It is with thanks to them that people of all ages right across the region are given the opportunities throughout the year to explore and discover the wonders of science in a variety of free, exciting and innovative ways. It is important that these opportunities are accessible and available in our region to everyone in our community. I would like to express my gratitude and recognition of all of Midlands Science Board members, partners and sponsors and all other associates for their ongoing support as we work towards a well-qualified and increasingly diverse STEM skills base here in the Midlands region.



**Jackie Gorman,**  
CEO



## Chairperson's Message

Midlands Science focuses on increasing the level of student participation and progression in the identified fields of Science, Engineering, Technology and Maths (STEM) and we believe that education is the best assurance we have of a strong future and investing in young minds now is investment in the future.

Midlands Science collaborates with partners from the private, public and community sectors and we are wholly committed to facilitating and delivering a number of targeted education initiatives in the Midlands region on an annual basis. In order to achieve our vision of increasing STEM literacy amongst the population here, we must continually examine the value and impact of our work. It is also important for us to continually challenge ourselves to do more and to facilitate this we make a concentrated effort to ensure our work is aligned to national policy recommendations in the relevant areas. We are particularly committed to enhancing "science capital" in our community, raising the experience that everyone has of science and its impact in our lives. This year, we covered everything from dinosaurs to crime science in order to bring the science to as many audiences as possible.

I look forward to continuing our work in partnership with everyone who has a stake in realising future STEM related economic and education development opportunities here in the Midlands over the coming years.



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**Dr Craig Slattery,  
Chairperson**



## **Structure & Governance**

Midlands Science is committed to exhibiting best practice in all aspects of corporate governance. The Board of Midlands Science is composed of a diverse group of leaders in their respective fields. The Board is collectively responsible for setting values, guiding strategic aims and funding policies and for the leadership, development and long-term success of the company. Each member brings their own individual skills set and unique perspectives and each is committed to monitoring progress and maintaining very high standards of integrity, corporate governance and ethical business conduct. Some of the current directors have senior management experience working alongside or within major international companies in addition to experience on other boards, ensuring we have a broad range of understanding of different business processes and challenges. The Board agrees a schedule of meetings to be held in each calendar year and meets on other occasions as necessary. Board papers are sent to each member a week before the Board meetings. The Board review, approve and monitor annual budgets and expenditure targets and each member takes a proactive, focused approach to their position. The Board is voluntary and all of the members have a strong commitment to promoting STEM in the midlands region, seeing this work as a vital part of the region's development.

### **Dr. Craig Slattery, Chairperson, Scientist, Lecturer and Science Communicator**

Dr. Craig Slattery is a biomedical scientist, a lecturer and a science communicator who is committed to making science accessible and engaging for the general public. He brings science into all sorts of venues including schools, cafes, libraries, museums, theatres and even local pubs! From an early age, Craig was intrigued with how the human body works and most importantly, with figuring out how to fix it when things go wrong. Craig's own research includes toxicology and safety testing for new medicines, the health complications of diabetes, and investigating cancer biology. As an experienced science communicator, Craig is also committed to helping other scientists communicate their important messages. He regards this as one of the most important skills the modern scientist should develop and has established pioneering training programmes to help them do this. He believes that communicating science and research, in an exciting and engaging way, is the best approach to encourage younger generations to consider a career in science. Craig is a County Offaly native who is currently Assistant Professor of Toxicology and Regulatory Affairs at University College Dublin.

### **Anne Scally, Director of Pro-Activ Management and Associates**

Pro-Activ Management & Associates was set up in 2005 by Anne Scally to provide human resources consultancy services and management development programmes to a wide range of businesses. Anne worked at senior management level as a Human Resources Manager/Director with a number of leading multinationals over several years. She has considerable experience in the areas of employee relations, employment law, organizational development, people management and people development. Anne is particularly interested in helping organizations and individuals to achieve their full potential through business growth and development. Pro-Activ Management now provides HR Consulting, Management Development and Coaching Programmes across a broad client base for the corporate, SME, public sector and not-for-profit sectors. Anne is qualified to Masters level having completed an MSc.Mgmt. specializing in Organisational Behaviour at Trinity College Dublin in 2005. Anne has also completed a Diploma in Executive Coaching in 2007. She is a fellow of the IITD and is a qualified Trainer and Coach (NUI Maynooth & DDI). She has vast experience in dealing with and resolving employee relations issues and works closely with several clients in this area. She designs and delivers training and development programmes for a diverse range of businesses. Anne is also an occasional guest lecturer on the MBA programme at Athlone I.T.

### **Paul Carroll, Business Development Director, CPL**

Paul Carroll is the Business Development Director of Cpl Resources, a resourcing/placement company based in Dublin, Ireland and active on several markets in Europe. His expertise combines 10 years in HR practice, working for companies such as KPMG, Intel, Gateway and Aer Rianta International with 8 years in recruitment with Cpl. A graduate from Maynooth NUI in Physics and Maths in 1985, he holds a Higher Diploma in Education and has studied Information Technology in DCU. Paul worked as a HR management consultant in KPMG for 5 years before joining the senior management team in Gateway 2000 to establish the HR function.

### **Brian Garvan, Company Secretary**

Brian Garvan comes to Atlantic Corridor with 27 years experience working with IDA Ireland, including six years at the IDA office in Chicago and several years as Manager of the International Services Division of IDA Ireland. He has extensive experience of business development, covering both the multi-national sector and indigenous development of SME's. A qualified Accountant by profession he also worked as an advisor on economic development to the Government of Bahrain for four years.

### **Gerry Buckley, CEO, NIS– Network & Infrastructure Support**

Gerry Buckley is the founder and CEO of NIS, a leading IT services company based in the Midlands. He is a computer specialist with over 15 years' experience in a variety of roles, specialising in Windows Based server/computing environments and Cisco networking environments. He has previously worked for SSI and Compaq Professional Services and has international experience having worked in the IT industry in the USA for a number of years. He is an engineering graduate of Athlone Institute of Technology. He is active in a number of voluntary activities in the region including Tullamore Chamber of Commerce, Invest in Tullamore and has given considerable time and expertise to a range of projects focussed on developing IT and STEM skills in the region, including D2D, a project which links local schools with Georgia Tech, Atlanta for science classes.



## STEM Education

The vision that underpins our work is of a future-thinking Midlands, which is at the cutting edge of technology, where the link between education and economic development is clearly heard and acted upon. We seek to do what is in the best long-term interest of Midlands' people and businesses. Evaluation of impact has shown that the work is making a huge difference, as there has been growth in the number of students choosing a STEM subject at third level in the region. Compared to a regional increase of 28% during a five year period, there has been a growth of 41% in progression to STEM in the midlands at the same time – this is a testimony to the impact of sustained engagement with students and other stakeholders to communicate the message that STEM provides opportunities for further education and career progression.



## *JUMP Maths*

JUMP Maths (Junior Undiscovered Math Prodigies), is a Canadian organization and a registered charity which champions innovative methods to stimulate enthusiasm and improve educational attainment in Mathematics. The JUMP Maths philosophy is founded on a belief that all children have the capability to perform well in Maths and its methods aim to remove common myths and psychological barriers to effective learning in this essential subject. To date almost 2,000 students and 120 teachers have participated in this programme. In 2019, a comprehensive review of this programme will be undertaken and the findings used to contribute to the national debate on maths education.

## *Midlands Science Festival*

We have run the Midlands Science Festival for the past six years in partnership with Science Foundation Ireland and this event has been a welcome addition to the midlands festival calendar. In 2018, Midlands Science Festival had 9624 people attend a range of school, library, pop up, public and open day events in the midlands during Science Week. 92% of participants travelled less than 25 minutes to attend. 35% of our audience was aged 12-18, 49% aged 4-12 and the balance of 16% was 18+. In terms of content provided in workshops and event, the breakdown is as follows - nature and environment [28%], maths, coding and tech [17%], psychology [7%], astronomy and physics [ 21%] and life-sciences and biology [27%]. 20% of our participants came from schools that would be designated as disadvantaged or from groups that would be defined by working with disadvantage.

We received media coverage from September to December across a range of regional titles and some national coverage. The total reach of these publications was 484,533. For public audiences, events such as weather science with Gerald Fleming, crime science with Forensic Science Ireland and our popular science book club provided a unique opportunity to engage with science and see that science is everywhere and related to everyday experiences. From the increasing number of events to attendee numbers, the festival has grown progressively. The positive experience feedback that has been gathered from attendees reflects our commitment to provide all audiences with dynamic and high quality events which make them want to return the following year.

‘Educational events like the Midlands Science Festival are starting to have real impact in terms of encouraging more young people to consider science when pursuing a place at third level. We recruit graduates and postgraduates from a broad range of disciplines including Engineering, Quality Systems, Science and Supply Chain so they are a really important part of our talent pool. It is extremely important that as a company, we continue to promote the importance of science based subjects and find diverse ways to engage with as many young people as possible to ensure they are aware of the many potential career opportunities available in the Midlands in this field.’ *Ciaran Corcoran, Plant manager of Abbot Diagnostics Longford.*

*"I want to say a huge THANK YOU to Midlands Science for all that you do. Our homeschooling family are having a fantastic science week with you and your wonderful facilitators ! Amazing and so very important organisation. More of this ! " Annette Morris Keane*

*"My son was in the Exploration Dome today, was bowled over by it. He has a genuine interest in Astronomy and loved it." Honor McGuinness*

*"I attended the snakes in the library in Granard with my little boy. It was absolutely amazing, thank you !"*  
*Kasia O'Reilly*

*"This is brilliant. Steve is a wonderful advocate for a career in science. He engaged so well with the children. Alex hopes he's still teaching in Edinburgh when he's ready to study palaeontology !!" Andrea Feeney [referring to events with Sunday Times Science Writer of the Year Steve Brussatte with Midlands Science].*

*"Just come from Steve's talk he was absolutely brilliant with all the kids and kept everyone of them interested until the very end and answered all their questions. Great event. Thanks for organizing midlands science !" Denise Donnelly [referring to same events as above].*

SWIM – Science With Inspirational Mentors is a project to create more interest in the life sciences sector, a sector of growing importance for the Midlands region. This project provides careers workshops and we are particularly pleased through a new partnership with AIT to be working closely on the delivery of workshops and events appropriate to this focus in schools across the midlands region.

Midlands Science Diaspora - We are developing a network to drive further developments in the region by connecting with STEM diaspora for possible FDI opportunities, education links, public engagement and policy development.

Direct to Discovery – linking school students in the midlands with scientists and researchers in Georgia Tech, Atlanta for live video conferenced classes in nanotechnology, biotechnology and astronomy.

Little Numbers – fostered awareness of numeracy among pre-school children, including teacher training and information sessions for parents and activities/materials for preschoolers.

Engineering Your Future - In 2018, piloted a number of outreach events focused on engineering for primary and secondary school students through a number of youth club partnerships. Such partnerships allow us to work directly with those seeking after school support and youth club activities and these groups come from larger towns within the region, which are experiencing disadvantage.

Citizen Science -Through partnerships with the Royal Microscopy Society and UCD, we delivered a range of citizen science activities to primary and secondary schools in the region in 2018. These included the opportunity to use top of the range microscopes, digital photography equipment and participate in real time local research on issues as diverse as ecology and sugar.



## **Plans for 2019**

The organisation will continue to work on the expansion of existing projects and expanding its reach to 16,500 people across the region over 2019. The organisation welcomes feedback and submissions on its work and holds regular consultation sessions and focus groups with various stakeholders and it welcomes in particular suggestions from those who have previously not engaged with STEM issues. Midlands Science looks forward to continuing our work in 2019 on projects that promote STEM through working with a range of existing and new partners.



We intend in 2019 to do as much outreach as possible throughout the year, engaging more people of all ages, building partnerships with new groups in our community to ensure we grow our impact and reach even more people than ever before. We plan to develop relations with more academic providers so that our wealth of expert speakers and pool of workshops providers continues to grow.



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