

There are plenty of places in the UK with Silicon Valley inspired nicknames; in recent times, Silicon Roundabout in Shoreditch has had a lot of attention in the press, writes *Richard Redman*, relationship director, TMT team, Barclays Eastern Region. Many household names have invested in the area and a number of universities are involved in projects designed to encourage innovation and entrepreneurialism.

But while London's Tech City has only really been going the last few years, Cambridge has a history of innovation spanning back to the 1960s and is now one of the most important centres for technological excellence in Europe. Kick-started by the foundation of Cambridge Consultants, Silicon Fen, as the region is sometimes known, has produced some big names in technology; from Acorn Computing and Sinclair Research of yesteryear, to successful multinationals ARM Holdings and AVEVA. Arguably the most famous 'graduate' of the Cambridge Cluster is Autonomy, which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of HP.

Graduates of Cambridge University have had a big part to play in the formation and development of many of the 1,500 plus technology companies that exist in the area today. It was Trinity College that founded Cambridge Science Park in 1970, the first of its kind anywhere in the UK. Centres of excellence like this remain central to the city's reputation as a top destination for the industry, as does the support of the Cambridge Network and venture capitalists such as Amadeus Capital Partners.

Recently, Cambridge Innovation Capital (CIC) set up a £50 million investment fund to assist technology start-ups and early stage companies based at the university. Backers include lead investors Invesco Perpetual and Lansdowne Partners as well as the University of Cambridge Endowment Fund, ARM Holdings PLC and IP Group, while Barclays banks the fund and has been involved in helping to raise some of the capital.

But despite all this, promoting what Cambridge has to offer the rest of the world has its challenges. While the city benefits from close proximity to London and its own airport, the A14 and its traffic jams have been a constant source of frustration for many, who will have welcomed the improvement plans published in September last year. And while commercial rents were historically lower than other parts of the UK, this has been flipped on its head in the last few years and Cambridge now has one of the highest costs of living in the UK outside of London.

One of the many TMT businesses based in Cambridge Barclays is currently working closely with is Sepura. Sepura is a global leader in TETRA digital radio products delivering communications to public safety, military, transport, utilities and commercial sectors.

We have supported Sepura with funding for the next three years in a new relationship that is taking the company forward. Sepura's new range of products can be used in highly hazardous environments and they are poised to take advantage of opportunities in the United States, as a result of recent Federal announcement concerning TETRA. With opportunities in new technologies and geographies, the future looks very exciting for this company.

It's taken decades of hard work and commitment for Cambridge to achieve its status as a high-technology centre, but if it is to remain at the front of the class, it must now do more to promote the excellent work that goes on in the Silicon Fen. While the city does a great job of promoting itself within the local area, it is now time to look beyond the Fen to shout about the region's capabilities and what has set it apart for the last 50 years.