

GIBSON INDEX NEWSLETTER

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Your Monthly e-Newsletter on British Enterprise and Innovation

Welcome to the UK's most comprehensive and best-read Newsletter on Small Technology Companies, Academic Enterprise and Latest Innovation

More Support for SMEs and fewer 'Trophy' projects so beloved by politicians..

Some of you may have read the recent article in **'The Times Higher'** in which we criticized the Government's 'Eight Great Technologies', much championed by science minister **David Willetts**.

At **The Royal Society** no less, we described the list as "nonsense", but also took the time to list properly the future economic sectors the Government should be promoting. In case the venue holders didn't get the point we also stated that 'far too many scientists are employed and far too few engineers'. We don't expect to be invited back any time soon..

The so-called Industrial Strategy "is nothing more than a programme for the employment of the maximum number of scientists" and "not really at all" to do with industry.

Along with the endless number of hugely expensive trophy buildings being funded on or near University premises – not least the new **Francis Crick Institute** in London and **Alan Turing Institute** in Manchester – we criticised the support given to graphene. The government has invested at least £70 million to date, including £50 million to set up a global graphene technology hub at the **University of Manchester** and £20 million for academic research to help commercialise the material.

I stated: "We are never going to make any money out of graphene." There is another single-layer material known as stanene being developed in the US that could compete with graphene. "It would be much better if we did focus the money that is available in much more commercially focused concepts," he added. Anyone agree with me?

Compare that with the miserly £20m being spent each year on the critically important **Smart Award** programme by the **Technology Strategy Board**. Under the DTI's tutelage the Smart Award scheme was probably the world's most successful wealth creation programme – certainly the equal to America's **DARPA** and **SBIR** programmes.

In our view spending on Smart should be expanded to become the TSB's primary programme with an annual budget of no less than £200m. Anyone agree with me?

Interestingly, as **UCL Advances'** chief executive rightly received a personal **Queen's Award for Enterprise** for his years supporting innovation, the last significant manufacturer located within a mile of UCL, **Vitsoe Ltd**, was moving out of London.

www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/willetts-eight-are-not-great-but-nonsense/2012560.article

www.gibson-index.com

The Newsletter is compiled and edited by **Marcus Gibson**, former *Financial Times* technology correspondent, who has been covering enterprise and innovation for more than 20 years. The Newsletter aims to highlight developments in at least 100+ companies each month. It is derived from the wide-ranging news-gathering operation that produces the [Gibson Index SME database](#), which now contains profiles on more than 48,000 UK-based technology SMEs.

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COMPANY OF THE MONTH

botObjects Ltd and founder Martin Warner – the ‘Steve Jobs’ of 3D printing?

botObjects claims to be the fastest growing tech start-up in the UK, and in the Top 3 in the US. It isn't, but that doesn't matter. **Martin Warner** is CEO of botObjects – a pioneering 3D prosumer company that has the most advanced 3D desktop printer of its time – creating the ‘world's first full colour 3D desktop printer’ – the **ProDesk3D**.

At a recent US live demo ProDesk3D printed a nautilus gear part, at 25 microns. The nautilus gear was printed in nine unique distinct colour layers mixed from the ProDesk3D, with equally smooth colour transitions, without colour purging, enabling a fast print at 25 microns in just less than one hour.

Co-headquartered in **London** and **New York**, the company says the ProDesk3D printer finally delivers a production-ready, complete experience for the consumer – no more experimentation needed. The ProDesk3D has revolutionized the whole 3D printing process, from cutting-edge design, to compact safe engineering, to an eco-friendly – re-usable cartridge system and much more. The ProDesk3D offers breakthrough innovation, with seamless software integration, to deliver a true full colour experience at an affordable price, with great accuracy and speed, delivered in an easy-to-use experience.

The ProDesk3D is the first 3D desktop printer to offer full colour printing – changing the way the user thinks about what they are printing.

Martin is founder of **Tech Entrepreneurs Week London**, now in its third successful year. At botObjects, Martin recently made the top of the **Hot 100 list** in ‘**T3 Magazine**’ in its No.1 category – 3D Printing.

Contact: www.botobjects.com

SME NEWS – ENGINEERING, CONSTRUCTION & ENERGY

Bolton-based CCM Motorcycles Ltd to develop the new model with help from MAS

The new lightweight adventure bike, named GP450 Adventure bike, is to be made by **CCM Motorcycles** in Bolton, which it hopes will boost turnover to £7m.

CCM Motorcycles, which once supplied stunt performer **Eddie Kidd** with the bike he used to jump over 13 double decker buses in 1976, received funding from the **Manufacturing Advisory Service** to develop the new model.

CCM said the launch of the company's new GP450 Adventure bike was a culmination of five years of development and research. The firm, which employs 12 staff, saw a gap in the market for a lightweight adventure bike that could handle both off road terrain and long distances on road.

It was designed in-house using CAD facilities and MAS, a service offered by the **Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub**, was able to fund the tooling needed to manufacture the foam seat, the seat mould, the vanity case and the windscreen. Retailing at £8,000, CCM said it will help to boost revenues from £2m to £7m in the next three years. The firm said it will also be targeting exports markets in USA, Canada, Australia, Dubai, South Africa and 15 other countries.

CCM founder and former trials rider **Alan Clews** said: “We knew the kind of bike we wanted to bring to market but the design was just the beginning. We then had to buy new tooling – which MAS enabled

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us to do – and to then put our prototypes to the test in Motocross, the world’s toughest motorsport. The launch of this new model will now give us a solid platform from which we can launch a whole new range of motorcycles.”

MAS advisor **Nick Brandwood** said: “CCM Motorcycles is a great company with a great story. Innovation and invention are at the heart of what it does and Austin and his team are always looking for ways to bring something new and better to the motorcycle industry.”

CCM was established in 1971 and has been at the forefront of using cutting edge technology that has led to the first production motorcycle using a Bond-Lite aluminium chassis. Throughout its 40-year history, CCM’s own racing team has used the race track as a test bed for research and development.

Contact: www.ccm-motorcycles.com

Facebook buys tiny UK business to pioneer network of solar-powered drones

Ascenta, run by engineer **Andrew Cox**, is based on a remote Somerset farm. Bought for an estimated £12.5m, the company will help **Facebook** create solar-powered drones which will bring the internet to the remotest places on the planet.

Mr Cox has helped set records for the longest flights for unmanned aircraft powered by the Sun. Its experts will now be working on drones intended to fly 60,000ft above the earth for months at a time to beam broadband signals to the undeveloped world.

Facebook’s ‘**Connectivity Lab**’ includes experts from **Nasa** working on what the company called ‘new aerospace and communications technologies’. Facebook also announced that it had bought Ascenta, which was founded by five Britons who previously worked at major technology firms such as **Boeing** and **Honeywell**.

The Somerset-based firm refused requests for interviews and referred questions to its new US owner. The drones will be capable of staying in the air for months at a time.

They are relatively cheap will be best for suburban areas that do not have the cables or infrastructure to carry internet or telephone signals. The drones are effectively mobile phone masts in the sky and bounce smartphone communications between satellites and base stations on Earth.

It was previously known as **High Altitude Engineering** and has only two directors, Mr Cox, 51, and his wife Helen. Mr Cox has had a long career in the aerospace industry. He was a key member of the team at British defence technology company **Qinetiq** that created the Zephyr drone that holds the record for an unmanned flight, which lasted two weeks. The team also includes experts who worked on the Breitling Orbiter, a balloon that was designed to circumnavigate the world.

Yael Maguire, a director of engineering at Facebook, said Ascenta would join its team working on ‘connectivity aircraft’. He said “We’re looking at a new type of plane architecture that flies at roughly 20,000m, because that’s a point where winds are at their lowest, it’s above commercial airliners, it’s even above the weather, and actually it can stay in the air for months at a time. These planes are solar-powered and they sit there and circle around, and have the ability to broadcast internet down.”

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Deal between two Gloucestershire firms brings manufacturing back from China

ADEY Professional Heating Solutions and **Future Advanced Manufacture** will bring a £1.5 million manufacturing contract back to the county from China and create new jobs.

Staverton-based Future Advanced Manufacture has been awarded the contract to produce a key component for Cheltenham's ADEY Professional Heating Solutions.

It followed a chance observation made by Future Advanced Manufacture's managing director **Craig Peterson** when visiting ADEY's commercial director **Rebekah Howard** on a leadership development programme.

The two were part of a small peer-to-peer coaching group of four Gloucestershire businesses, meeting monthly as part of LEAD, the **Lancaster University Management School** leadership programme, delivered locally under licence by **QuoLux**.

Rebekah said: "We were unhappy with the long lead times, increasing cost and quality issues we were experiencing from our supplier in China, but had been struggling to find a UK engineering company that met our requirements.

"I was discussing this dilemma with my trusted LEAD colleagues, but it was only when I pointed out the actual component as we were walking through the office that Craig realised 'I can make that!' – it was one of those light bulb moments."

Within a month, designs had been agreed and a prototype tested. Within three months, a contract was signed for £1.5million, creating five new jobs in Gloucestershire.

Future Advanced Manufacture makes complex parts for a variety of sectors from the aerospace industry to submarines and won the **Gloucestershire Echo Business of the Year Award** in 2013.

Contact: www.adeysolutions.com – www.futuream.com

New shower pump is 'less than 1/20th' the size of traditional shower pumps

In 2014 Buxton-based **Flowflex Components Ltd** started manufacturing a, invented by Norfolk inventor **Alan Wright**.

'Shower Power Booster' stops the common problem of dribbly taps and showers. It has also launched an automatic version of the pioneering energy-saving product. For almost 50 years the **Flowflex** name has been synonymous with the manufacture and supply of high quality fittings for use with all applications in the plumbing and heating trade.

Distributing a wide range of both compression and copper connections in a variety of types and styles as well as specialist fabricated units for use by original equipment manufacturers. Recent investment in new plant and new developments in the internal sales office, IT, order processing and distribution have all been undertaken to ensure the quality of service and support to customers is continually improved.

Assembly of the pumps moved from Wright's home in **Thorpe** to a 100,000m² factory complex owned by Flowflex in Derbyshire in Jan 2014. To meet the volume of orders, Flowflex has set up an assembly line to manufacture the pumps. Flowflex earlier agreed a licensing and manufacturing deal in the UK. As well as product sales from the UK, Europe and across the world in areas including the **Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand** and **Africa**, Wright is working with UKTI to target and support international export markets.

Contact: <http://flowflex.sharepoint.com>

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Administrators called in at ITI Energy Ltd, a pioneering cleantech company

The Rotherham-based firm had secured millions from investors and counted a senior Conservative MP **Tim Yeo**, former Minister for the Environment and Countryside, as one of its directors. ITI Energy was formed to commercialise an advanced gasification technology developed over 10 years of research at **Newcastle University**.

The company manufactures a compact and highly efficient thermal destruction technology that allows the transformation of difficult-to-process feedstocks such as municipal solid waste and sewage sludge into a gas clean enough to fuel an internal combustion engine.

The firm's major project is in **Nottingham** that included a single gasifier to supply 1.7 MWe/hr Nett to the grid and processes 12,000 tones of refuse-derived fuel (RDF), expanding to five gasifiers in later phases. Michael Wellard and Roderick Weston of **Mazars LLP** were appointed as joint administrators.

Based in the **Advanced Manufacturing Park Technology Centre**, the company moved to Rotherham with the help of a grant of up to £500,000 from **Yorkshire Forward's** ERDF Objective 1 Programme.

ITI went on to secure a fundraising deal of £6m with the sole backing of **Adurion Global** Opportunity Fund (AGOF) that provided £1m of working capital and a further £5m set to be released over the course of the build program for the first ten megawatts of gasification projects. Private equity fund **Next Wave Ventures**, also took an equity stake and made a total investment commitment of £4m to the company.

Contact: www.iti-energy.com

Water-cooled PCs the goal for engineering materials group Versarien plc

The UK firm, which has been selected as a finalist at this year's **British Engineering Excellence Awards** (BEEAs), says the VersarienPC family will offer significant operational advantages over conventional fan cooled products, including greater processing power, higher reliability and quieter running.

Versarien's first offering has an Intel Core i5 microprocessor, 2 x 4Gb of DDR3 1600MHz memory and a 500W supply to deliver speeds of up to 4.6GHz.

Company founder **Neill Ricketts** said "The release of the VersarienPC range represents an exciting new phase in the company's progression. With these products we can show the effectiveness of our pioneering thermal management technology and its ability to boost performance while simultaneously extending operational lifespan.

"This means we can provide the market with computers that are more powerful, longer lasting and less noisy, and at their core rely on home grown British engineering expertise."

In March Versarien acquired **2-DTech**, the University of Manchester company involved in the supply and development of graphene products in a £440,000 deal. The latter produces graphene. Versarien think 2-DTech's technology would significantly enhance the company's product range of advanced materials. They include its innovative VersarienCu heat transfer material said to be up to 10 times more effective than conventional heat removal systems.

The Cinderford company floated on the AIM market of the **London Stock Exchange** in 2013 and has also acquired another company, **Total Carbide** which has been integrated into the firm. It employs around 20 people in Cinderford, Gloucestershire.

Contact: www.versarien.com

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Valeport opens a new £2m factory on the bank of the River Dart in Totnes

Valeport supplies instruments for measuring waves, tides, water depth, temperature and salinity to a worldwide customer base of professional oceanographers, offshore energy and construction companies, and environmental monitoring organisations.

MD **Matt Quartley** said: "We are in a very niche business, which on the whole seems to have ridden the recent recession pretty well, so the company has been steadily growing for some time.

"Investing in a brand new building is not a decision we took lightly, but we are confident enough in the strength of our market and the success of our products that further growth is inevitable, and in the end there was no choice but to expand.

The 16,000sq ft, three-storey building at **St Peter's Quay** has taken a year to construct.

The **Reade Building** represents a significant investment for the company, which is one of the UK's leading manufacturers of oceanographic and hydrographic monitoring equipment.

"Manufacturing doesn't have to be thought of as a dirty business. We are really proud of being part of the high-tech manufacturing sector in the UK as a whole, and in Devon in particular, and hope it will go from strength to strength in the coming years." He added that he expected the number of staff, which currently stands at 75, to increase in the future as part of the growth process.

Contact: www.valeport.co.uk

Great British Sportscars run by a team with motorsports performance in its blood

Based on an industrial estate at Tuxford, just outside **Ollerton**, in north Nottinghamshire, the company manufactures sportscars whose performance leaves cars 'costing thousands more for dead'.

Great British Sportscars makes around 100 cars a year and an increasing number of them go for export to buyers in countries like the US, Germany and France.

Former rally driver **Keith Bird** and engineer **Richard Hall** provide the inspiration for a range of cars which are either built by the firm's 14-strong team or sold as kits to be assembled by competent enthusiasts.

They produce cars which are similar in style to the **Caterham**. It is a classic design but engineered by us to provide very high levels of performance and road-holding. Together with their team, they design, engineer and produce a range of cars based around the **Zero** design, which is available with a range of specifications designed to accommodate the demands of customers who might be looking for the ultimate in bespoke driving experiences on the road or the hardcore performance needed for competitive motorsport.

They manufacture the sports car in house – not just the chassis, but the panels and body work and some components. It also has a large stock of parts and every component needed to build the cars can be purchased through are parts department.

Prices start at £2,345 for a self-build chassis kit where the buyer supplies his own drivetrain, while factory-built cars begin at around £19,500 depending on specification.

Contact: www.greatbritishsportscars.co.uk

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Alkane Energy plc reports strong trading performance for 2013

Alkane has more than 800 sq km of acreage under various onshore Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences (PEDLs). Alkane retains a 100% interest in the majority of these PEDLs, which extend to all of the hydrocarbons recoverable from these licence areas.

This includes any CMM, natural gas, coal bed methane (CBM) or shale gas. Alkane has the licence for PEDL 43, which covers the Maltby site, but is yet to come forward with plans to extract shale gas by the controversial method of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and continues to focus on the coal mine methane.

In December, Alkane commenced generation at a new site on the Prince of Wales Colliery in Pontefract. It represented the fourth collaboration with Harworth Estates who are a regular partner to Alkane. Based on the Advanced Manufacturing Park (AMP) in Rotherham, Harworth Estates is one of the largest landowners in the UK with access to over 30,000 acres of land.

Now one of the UK's fastest growing independent power generators, the Nottinghamshire company operates mid-sized, gas to power electricity plants providing both predictable and fast response capacity to the grid. It raised £6m in equity funding to complete a £7.5m deal to buy coal mine methane (CMM) assets at Maltby Colliery in 2012 – though the future of the colliery remains very uncertain.

Now the UK's largest generator of electricity from CMM, Alkane posted a trading update for the six months ended December 31 2013 showing that performance has remained strong with output increasing 15% year on year. For the period, the group said that it expects to deliver electricity of circa 192 GWh, compared to 167 GWh in 2012.

The boost in output was due to the 11MW Maltby operations which Alkane said is performing ahead of plan.

In the six months ended 30 June 2013, Alkane reported that revenues more than doubled compared with the same period in the previous year from £5.3m to £11.1m. Ebitda (earnings before tax) rose to £3.3m from £2.1m.

Contact: www.alkane.co.uk

SME NEWS – ELECTRONICS & TELECOMS

Ultimaker (GB) Ltd sells more than 500 of its 'affordable' 3D printers in UK

This fast-growing business which supplies state-of-the-art 3D printers is set for further expansion after receiving free business support from **Boost Business Lancashire**.

Ultimaker (GB) Ltd took on two new staff since being set up just six months ago by directors **Paul Croft** and **Alex Mayor**. Funding from Boost will help the company with further innovation and growth. The business hopes to hit sales of 10,000 units in Great Britain over the next three years while creating up to 20 jobs.

Mr Croft said: "3D printing is having an enormous impact on design and manufacturing. We're taking 3D printing to the masses." **Ed Matthews-Gentle**, from **Creative Lancashire**, who has been working with Ultimaker, said: "3D printing can potentially make complex parts more cheaply and could revitalise many manufacturing sectors. Ultimaker is a business with enormous growth potential and the support we are providing will allow it to go from strength to strength."

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The firm, which has already enjoyed success in the engineering, design and architecture sectors, recently launched a groundbreaking initiative to promote the advanced technology in UK schools.

Contact: www.ultimaker.com

Electra Partners buys audio console manufacturer Calrec for £14m

A wave of mergers and acquisitions in the UK's sound electronics sector – which produces some of the world's best loudspeakers – has continued apace with the purchase by finance house **Electra** of **Calrec**, which will become a sister company to **Allen & Heath**, another console manufacturer bought by the private equity firm, in 2013.

Other acquisitions this month include **Quantel's** acquisition of **Snell** and **Vislink's** purchase of **Pebble Beach Systems**. Both brands are expected to be retained and Allen & Heath chairman **Malcolm Miller** will work with both companies. Calrec MD **Roger Henderson** it was an open secret that both firms had been up for sale for "some time".

He said: "Electra has bought us to continue to focus on our core markets, and as far as I am aware there are no plans to move Allen & Heath from its Falmouth base or us from Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire."

Henderson said that despite the companies being "about as far apart as it's possible to be in the UK", they already share thinking on technology. We are not closely coupled but there is a relationship between the two companies. Our R&D and manufacturing teams have swapped ideas," he said.

Contact: www.calrec.com – www.electrapartners.com

Plastic card maker Thames Card wins £3.2m from Business Growth Fund

Established in 1994, **Thames Card Technology** is one of the UK's largest card manufacturers specialising in both non-secure and secure cards and it works with major blue chips organisations and international firms across banking, retail, telecoms and ID sectors.

The funding round marks **BGF's** 14th investment in the manufacturing industry with over £60m growth capital invested into the sector since its launch in May 2011. As part of the deal, BGF's investment director, **Rory Pope**, will join the board as a representative and the Fund's head of manufacturing, **Mark Bryant**, will operate as an advisor to TCT.

Paul Underwood, MD and founder of TCT, said: "After 19 years of building TCT and funding growth from our own cash proceeds, I took the decision with my senior team that it was time to secure an injection of equity finance so that we could go further, faster, to realise our growth ambitions.

"Undoubtedly we know our business well but this additional experience can only be a good thing for the company, its staff, suppliers and ultimately our customers."

BGF's Pope added: "For BGF, this is an exciting opportunity to support a UK manufacturing business that is looking to grow its domestic and export sales and we look forward to working with the team."

Having generated sales of £18m this year, the plastic card specialist intends to use the investment to extend its reach to other markets such as international banking and prepaid cards. The finance will also fund the purchase of new manufacturing equipment to drive greater efficiency and productivity.

Contact: www.thamescardtechnology.com

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Father and daughter duo Steve and Stacey Driver run Stickleback Manufacturing

In October 2012 Hampshire father and daughter Steve and Stacey Driver have worked hard to secure the future of PCB manufacturing through their two companies.

Spirit Circuits and **Stickleback Manufacturing** are the pair. Led by Steve Driver, Spirit Circuits Ltd has partnered with the **Manufacturing Advisory Service** (MAS) to bring about ongoing improvement and is the perfect example of a business committed to continuous efficiency gains.

Steve Driver, MD, said: "Our forward looking business approach has seen us achieve month on month growth, which in this uneasy economic climate, has been a real challenge. We owe our business growth to strategic planning and always advocate a focused and targeted approach to business."

Learning from her father's success, Stacey Driver now heads up Stickleback Manufacturing Ltd, providing PCBs and chemically etched signs for a wide range of industries including machine manufacturers, architects and the domestic market. With the continued support of MAS, the company intends to drive growth in both the UK and overseas further.

MAS advisor **Mark Knowlton** and Portsmouth-based **Parachem Consulting Chemist**, worked with the companies to develop short and long term objectives. Mark Knowlton, MAS advisor, said: "A clear implementation plan with KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) was developed in order to deliver their agreed strategic objectives. Coaching and leadership development skills were introduced to the management team in conjunction with the implementation of lean manufacturing techniques."

Contact: www.sticklebackuk.com

Loma Systems wins EEF award for 'innovative detection systems for food industry'

Its x-ray and metal detection systems earned the praise of the EEF judging panel made up of Britain's finest. Comprising **Aldermore Bank**, **Rolls-Royce**, **University of Cambridge** and **UKTI** picked Loma for their creation and successful implementation of a suite of business methods, which Loma named their 'ToolBox'.

Loma Systems MD **Simon Spencer** said "The TookBox has resulted in the launch of two new food inspection systems, unparalleled customer service response rates, plus a recent upsurge in equipment sales. Tools used including the Pareto Concept (80/20 rule), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Supplier Scorecard Systems and an Employee Engagement Plan, saw profitability rise dramatically in the last 12 months, as well as enhancing employee welfare and retention."

These business simplification tools have been used to engage their workforce in the development of cutting-edge inspection equipment, which ultimately make food safer.

Loma's inspection systems are used by leading food manufacturers including **Kinnerton Confectionery**, **Alatoni** and **Jardox** and are designed to ensure that the foods we eat on a daily basis remain free from rogue contaminants including metal, bone and plastic, which occasionally work their way into the food manufacturing process.

Award sponsor **Pera Technology** chief executive Paul Tranter, said: "When developing a new process repeatability is key. This was something that was fully understood by Loma Systems, which is now reaping the benefits across its businesses. I'd like to extend my congratulations to Loma Systems as an inspiration for other manufacturers looking to invest in new processes that are yet to take the first step."

Contact: www.loma.com

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SME NEWS – CHEMICALS, MATERIALS & ENVIRONMENT

Plastics recycling firm Veka Recycling Ltd invests £1.1m at Kent facility

The company says the new equipment will allow it to supply UK and European markets with PVC pellets made from post-industrial and post-consumer window frame material.

VEKA Recycling's MD **Tony Cattini** said the investment will help the company meet continuing demand for recycled content in new products with all the associated economic and environmental benefits for manufacturers and consumers. "It also underlines our commitment to progressive growth and development in this sector as well as continuing to offer a sustainable and reliable outlet for PVC window waste," says Cattini.

"More businesses are recognizing the tangible economic and environmental benefits of recycling PVC and we have already had interest from a number of major players in the U.K. With our new push into the extrusion market we can now offer a closed loop solution in our home market," he adds.

Simon Scholes, Veka's business administration manager, says the company's approach fits in with European PVC trade association Recovynyl's 'Pull Market Concept', which involves both existing recyclers and new converters. The concept has been created to support the re-use of as much post-consumer and post-industrial PVC from the market as possible by stimulating the regular use of recycled material in production processes.

"This is becoming more widespread, with recycled PVC being used in new window profiles such as VEKA's Infiniti, as well as other plastic building products," Scholes says. "We will also continue to focus on maintaining high quality standards of waste PVC frames."

Contact: www.vekauk.com

Gibson Index long-time favourite Revolymer Ltd to lead TSB project

About five years ago polymer company **Revolymmer** made its first appearance before investors in London – and no one took any notice until we highlighted the company's strengths and the determination of its then Bristol-based founders.

This month the **Technology Strategy Board** awarded £500,000 to a project which includes polymer company Revolymer and the **University of Liverpool** working to develop new coatings to prevent fouling on ships.

Rob Cridland, acting chief executive of Revolymer, said: "The project to develop new and improved fouling control coatings will use Revolymer's polymer technology. With demand for sustainable marine coatings expected to increase, this project represents a new opportunity for Revolymer."

The funding was awarded as part of the Technology Strategy Board's 'Materials Innovation for a Sustainable Economy' competition. The two-year collaborative research project between Revolymer, which is based in Deeside, AkzoNobel's **International Paint Ltd**, the University of Liverpool and **Newcastle University** will seek to develop technology to control the accumulation of marine organisms on the underwater areas of marine vessels and structures, known as fouling.

The presence of fouling on a ship's hull results in an increased drag, causing increased fuel consumption and therefore increased carbon dioxide emissions.

Contact: www.revolymmer.com

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Catagen Ltd secured a deal with US firm Mahle worth \$1 million

Belfast-based Catagen Ltd attracted **Mahle's** attention with its revolutionary large-scale testing equipment for catalytic converters called **Maxcat**. This deal is the latest in a series of sales secured by Catagen from major automotive companies.

The new technology has the potential to outperform all current testing methods, reducing costs by up to 85 per cent, and providing major environmental impacts through delivering a '98 per cent reduction in CO2 emissions at the testing source'.

A spinout from **Queen's University**, the company used its patented technology, developed over several years, to produce two smaller products for the automotive industry – **Labcat** and **Testcat**. The Maxcat is capable of testing four catalyst assemblies at once. It recreates engine exhaust gas composition, flow rates and temperatures to provide safe and clean testing that replicates traditional engine dynamometer-based testing at significantly lower cost.

Invest NI has offered over £374,000 to support the development of the Maxcat, part funded by the **European Regional Development Fund**.

Catagen co-founder **Dr Andrew Woods** said: "Automotive companies need to conduct extensive testing and verification on new and aged catalysts to verify that emission regulations will be met throughout the typical life of a vehicle. The industry now has a viable, full size, much more environmentally friendly alternative method to age and test catalysts."

Hugh Blaxill, General Manager of Mahle Powertrain said "The Maxcat's testing and aging solutions deliver significant reductions in operating costs with an increase in testing flexibility and agility." Since the company was spun out of Queen's in 2010.

Contacts: www.catagen.co.uk – rosemary@catagen.co.uk

Scottish company Waveblade has a tool to remove barnacles and slime from boats

The technology behind Waveblade was invented by Ayrshire-based architect **Hugh Fisher**, who is a director of the company and a shareholder. The patented technology generates a high-speed harmonic vibration which removes all types of 'marine fouling' from any boat surface or marine structure without damaging the paint.

Adapted for the oil and gas sector Waveblade has now raised more than £1.1m from Glasgow-based venture capital investor **Kelvin Capital** and the **Scottish Investment Bank**, a unit of economic development agency **Scottish Enterprise**.

Jim Hall, co-founder of specialist early-stage investor Kelvin Capital, said Waveblade had the potential to "do extremely well in a lucrative global marketplace".

Dumbarton-based Waveblade was launched in late 2012, and raised £550,000 at that stage. **Steve Smith**, chief executive of Waveblade, put the company's current annual turnover at below £100,000. He highlighted his belief that Waveblade could build a multimillion-pound annual turnover in coming years.

Part of the latest £610,000 of funding has been ring-fenced to help finance a trial project with a major global oil and gas company to test Waveblade products on sub-sea pipes.

Mr Smith noted marine fouling included mussels, barnacles and their husks, slime and worm. He said Waveblade's current turnover was derived mainly from selling its eponymous power tool to private boat

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owners in the leisure marine sector. He added that Waveblade would next week launch a new product with a wider blade, which would be more powerful and operated by battery rather than a 12-volt cord, at a marine expo in **Virginia** in the US. Waveblade aims to start shipping this new product, which is called Power Shark, in July.

Waveblade is already selling into 15 to 20 countries, noting its focus on the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. He highlighted plans to move into Asia later this year. The company, which employs about 10 people, has a small office in the US city of **Seattle** and a presence in **Florida**.

Contact: www.waveblade.com

Tensile fabrics firm Base Structures Ltd is exporting its talents to South America

Base Structures, which specialises in tensile fabrics, is partnering with Brazilian subcontractor **Remaster BR** and its Colombian counterpart to sell its complex architectural structures.

The firm has worked on projects including Heathrow's **Terminal 5**, the sky walkway over London's O2 Arena and the Mound Stand at **Lord's cricket ground**. The alliance will see Base offering design, manufacture and installation of technically challenging tensile fabric structures in both countries.

Remaster will act as the **South American** face of the British firm, while Base will offer the technical expertise, specialist training and manufacturing, which is in short supply in the designated countries.

Both **Brazil** and **Colombia** have recognised demand for these lightweight, architectural structures, which can be installed quickly to support major infrastructure through cladding, link walkways, entrance canopies or otherwise for standalone temporary venues.

Andy Traynor, head of installations and overseas development, said: "The key to this relationship is the mutual values our companies share. Remaster is a recognised innovator, offering high-quality products and great customer service, which is an excellent match for Base. We see this as a long-term strategic relationship and look forward to building a solid Anglo-South American arm."

Typical projects will be in the sport and leisure sector, such as temporary venues and shelters as well as major infrastructure with entrance canopies, facade cladding, link walkways, shelters, shades and covered atriums.

Contact: www.basestructures.com

SME NEWS – BIOTECH, PHARMA & MEDICAL SCIENCES

Spectromics Ltd brings personalised medicine approach to excess use of antibiotics

In April 2014 Spectromics Ltd was formed as a result of three years of research by **Professor Roy Goodacre** and **Dr Mathew Upton**, of **Plymouth University** and **University of Manchester**.

The technology, relating to rapid diagnostics for antimicrobial susceptibility testing, will allow doctors to determine the most effective drug to be prescribed for each patient. Growing resistance to antimicrobials is a global threat to the successful treatment of bacterial infections.

This is a problem that is recognised by all of the major nations; the **UK Chief Medical Officer** stated that it is one of the three biggest threats to human health and it featured at the **2012 G8 conference** as a threat ranked alongside terrorism. Resistance to antibiotics is exacerbated by the current practice of issuing

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“best guess” prescriptions without knowing whether the patient actually has a bacterial infection, and whether that particular infection may be resistant to the drug being prescribed.

To run tests today to determine whether a drug is required and which is most effective takes days in a microbiology lab. The Spectromics technology will allow a doctor to run a 10 minute test which will indicate if an antibiotic is required, and if so, which one. The test will comprise of a small instrument and a cartridge into which the sample is added.

Over the next three years Spectromics will develop the commercial system for the first application. This will be for urinary tract infection which is the most prevalent bacterial infection affecting human health. Following this, other test specific cartridges for other clinical applications will follow.

Neil Butler, CEO of Spectromics said: “What really excites me about Spectromics is the compelling need for a diagnostic that guides antibiotic treatment at the point-of-prescription. This technology is very differentiated as nothing else comes close to our test turnaround time. We are planning to raise significant investment, so that we can build the organisation rapidly, which in turn will bring the commercial system to market ASAP. This product was needed yesterday and we are going to make this technology the answer to the global call for a solution to antimicrobial stewardship.”

Mr Butler was CEO from formation of two other companies in the past – **Vivacta** and **Oxford Biosensors**, and has worked in point-of-care diagnostics for 15 years.

Contact: roy.goodacre@manchester.ac.uk

Surrey biotech company Bioventix has market cap of about £29m for AIM listing

The Farnham-headquartered company, which develops sheep antibodies that are used by larger businesses for clinical diagnostics, is currently listed on the smaller ISDX market.

It expects to transfer from ISDX on AIM on 29 April 2014 – a move which should offer increased shares activity and a higher valuation. However, Bioventix will not raise capital on admission.

Henderson Global Investors own 27.5 per cent of the company, while a share of 22.6 per cent is held by Miton Group. Chief executive Peter John Harrison owns 16.7 per cent. Other shareholders include ISIS Equity Partners, which owns 7.6 per cent, and Hargreave Hale, which owns 4.9 per cent.

Bioventix has a turnover of £2.7m and posted pre-tax profit of £1.2m to the year ended 30 June 2013, up from £1.5m the year before. Following the acquisition of KS Biomedix Ltd by Xenova plc in 2003, Mr Harrison led a management buy-out that resulted in the formation of Bioventix and he has led the subsequent commercial development of the company.

In 1986 he joined Celltech Ltd to manage the contract antibody production and in 1991 he joined KS Biomedix Ltd and helped to establish Sheep monoclonal Antibody technology at their Farnham research laboratory.

Non-exec Nick McCooke has led several successful companies. He was the founding CEO of Solexa, the Cambridge University spinout where he built the team that invented and developed Next Generation DNA Sequencing.

Contact: www.bioventix.com

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Stem cell regenerative therapy company ReNeuron lease Welsh building

At **Pencoed Technology Park** near **Bridgend**, as part of a £33m investment to relocate to Wales, ReNeuron plans to move existing jobs from its base in **Guildford** and create up to a further 70 highly skilled jobs in Wales. The Aim-listed company is taking over the entire ground floor of the building, more than 25,000 sq ft in size. The facility will be almost three times the size of ReNeuron's existing base in Guildford.

The firm is the 'first company in the world' to have been granted permission to run clinical trials using neural stem cells to treat patients left disabled by the effects of strokes, one of the top three causes of death.

It has also started clinical trials with its cell therapy candidate for critical limb ischaemia, a serious and common side effect of diabetes, and is also developing therapies for diseases of the eye that lead to progressive loss of sight.

Detailed design work is underway to provide a state-of-the-art facility for ReNeuron to include research and development laboratories, GMP clean rooms designed for automated cell culture, and office accommodation, with scope to expand further if required in the future.

The Welsh Government financial package to ReNeuron includes a £5m equity investment from the £100m **Wales Life Sciences Investment Fund** managed by **Arthurian Life Sciences**. The Pencoed Technology Park site is due to be handed over in April 2015 and is expected to be licensed for **GMP cell manufacture** from 2016 onwards.

Contact: www.reneuron.co.uk

University of Oxford spinout OxSyBio developing 3D printing for wounds

It will initially produce 'tissue-like synthetic materials' for wound healing and drug delivery', but in the longer term the company aims to print synthetic tissues for organ repair or replacement.

Isis Innovation, the University's research commercialisation company announced that OxSyBio raised £1m from **IP Group plc**, the developer of intellectual property based businesses, subject to the achievement of milestones. The new company will refine and advance the 3D droplet printing technology devised by **Professor Hagan Bayley's** group at the University's **Department of Chemistry**.

Professor Bayley's group has developed a technique to print synthetic tissue-like materials from thousands of tiny water droplets each coated in a thin film mimicking a living cell's external membrane, and studding these membranes with protein pores so they act like simplified cells. The group's research was featured on the cover page of Science in April 2013.

Professor Hagan Bayley said: "We have been able to print networks of droplets through which electrical impulses can be transmitted in a manner similar to the way cells in the nervous system communicate: the signal moves rapidly and in a specific direction.

"We also aim to integrate printed tissue-like materials with living tissues, and to print materials that themselves contain living cells.

"Our long-term goal is to develop a synthetic-tissue printer that a surgeon can use in the operating theatre. In ten years' time, the use of pieces of synthetic tissue will be commonplace. The fabrication of complex synthetic organs is a more distant prospect.

Contact: www.isis-innovation.com

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Diagnostics firm Enigma Diagnostics awarded second grant from TSB

The firm is a leader in molecular diagnostic point-of-care (PoC) infectious disease testing. The new Technology Strategy grant will support further development of its test for multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) on its CE Marked Enigma® Mini Laboratory (ML) system.

Enigma Diagnostics has already demonstrated feasibility testing of a single tube assay that can identify and differentiate human and bovine TB in an earlier trial, funded by an initial grant from the Technology Strategy Board's Biomedical Catalyst programme. The MDR-TB assay also detects all mutations responsible for Rifampicin and Isoniazid resistance.

The consortium led by Enigma Diagnostics includes the **Clinical TB Research Laboratory**, London, headed by **Prof F Drobniowski** and **Health Sciences Research Ltd**. Enigma will focus on further development of the MDR-TB assay and fully automated sample preparation for use on Enigma's flagship ML system.

The Enigma Mini Laboratory system uniquely combines a number of features critical to PoC testing. The fully automated raw sample to result instrument platform delivers results equivalent to central laboratory standards in up to 70 minutes and can be used by non-technical users in both laboratory and decentralised settings.

Contact: www.enigmadiagnostics.com

SME NEWS – IT, SOFTWARE, SERVICES & INTERNET

Teaching software firm Impero Solutions now employs 76 staff in Loughborough

Having moved to Loughborough in 2009, Impero, which specialises in an anti-bullying programme, says it is almost "bursting at the seams" after more than doubling its staff in the last year – including 11 new apprentices. It has a further two members of staff based in Ireland and Scotland.

The software is now in 1,400 secondary schools in the UK, and 45 countries worldwide, including South Africa and the Middle East. It is also used in several of Britain's prisons as well as police forces and NHS organisations up and down the country.

Impero Solutions was started in 2001 by Nottingham IT consultants **Jon Valentine** and his friend **Lee Tuck** after Jon created a "simple programme" to lock school computer screens from one server to help teachers during class.

Over the years it has been developed to become a piece of software capable of fighting against cyber bullying and inappropriate behaviour on school networks by recognising and flagging up key words – working with the children themselves to find out what slang words are used in different areas.

The software also provides technical support and power management, helping organisations save money in electricity bills with the power to switch off groups of PCs either at a set time or when they have been left on standby.

Jon, who is now in his 30s, said the business is now reaching out to primary schools. "This time last year we were on 35 or so [members of staff] and now we're on 78 so we've more than doubled in a year".

Contact: www.imperosoftware.com

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Bath-based DigitalBox Data Ltd collaborates with start-up ContentClick

Based in Bath and London, Digitalbox is a performance marketing business with a strong background in email marketing, online lead generation and content marketing.

Its latest initiative is the native advertising and content marketing start-up, ContentClick. The company works with bloggers & publishers to earn extra revenue from their content whilst also providing advertisers with a unique platform for generating new customers.

Digitalbox is backed by a series of well-known digital investors, including **Sir Robin Miller**, former CEO of Emap plc; **Bill Dobbie**, co-founder of Iomart plc, Maxymiser, and Cupid plc; and **Martin Higginson**, founder of Monstermob plc, and NetPlayTV plc.

In April 2014 ContentClick, the native advertising and sponsored content specialist, registered its name as a legal trade mark. Granted by the **Intellectual Property Office**, the operating title of the **UK Patent Office**, the trade mark patent number is listed under the name of parent company, DigitalBox Data Ltd.

The awarding of the patent is yet another milestone for ContentClick, not least because the trade mark describes its business model perfectly – content is clicked and monetised. It follows other recent developments including ContentClick's network reaching a total of 45 million page impressions and 15 million unique visitors in just a few short months.

Backed by industry heavyweights, ContentClick is now one of the UK's 'most exciting' publishing start-ups. With more than 500 publishers and bloggers signed up to its network, the company looks set to become one of the fastest growing digital media companies in the UK, with international expansion already earmarked for Q2 2013.

Alex Attinger, co-founder of ContentClick, said: "ContentClick does exactly what it says on the tin – publishers' content is monetised with a single click. That's why we felt it was vital to protect our brand name and trade mark it, although it's quite rare for the UK Patent Office to register names that describe an activity, which makes gaining our trade mark even more valuable."

Contact: www.contentclick.co.uk

Oxford Capital leads £1.9m backing of 'big data' storage provider Arkivum

Founded in early 2011 as a spinout from the **University of Southampton**, Arkivum specialises in digital archiving services for large organisations with complex storage needs.

It claims to be one of the only companies that provides a 100% guarantee of the integrity of data for its clients by backing up information across multiple locations in secure UK-based data centres.

Since foundation it has gained a number of high-profile clients, including the **Tate Galleries** and **Janet** – an organisation which manages data networks for universities and research organisations.

Oxford Capital led the investment into Arkivum, alongside existing investors **IP Group** and **Parkwalk Advisors**. Arkivum said the investment would enable it to accelerate the commercial roll-out of its data archiving service, widen its customer base and invest in marketing.

Jim Cook, CEO of Arkivum, said: "We've made significant progress in recent months, establishing a number of successful customer and partner relationships. We're now poised to build on our successes by expanding our partner and channel base."

Kimberley Marvell Curry of Oxford Capital added: "'Big-data' companies in sectors including healthcare,

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financial services and media production and university research departments, create and store huge volumes of information. Many organisations have a regulatory requirement to retain data for 20 years or more – with more data being added every year.

“Arkivum is offering a complete archiving solution which combines the benefits of a ‘Software as a Service’ business model with the potential for ultra long-term customer relationships. Arkivum is also the only company in the market to offer an insurance-backed guarantee of data integrity. We believe it is well-positioned to generate recurring revenues in a high-growth market sector.”

Contact: www.arkivum.com

UNIVERSITY NEWS

University of Warwick Science Park celebrates 30 years since first building opened

Over the past 30 years the science park has evolved to meet the changing delivery needs of businesses. In 1984, the founders of the Science Park set up the **Venture Centre** in a bid to build upon the joint strengths of a well-established scientific community and a skilled workforce to play an important role in the economy of the West Midlands region.

Since then, the park itself has expanded to over 20 buildings across four sites, the home for more than 130 businesses today.

The success of the park’s Venture Centre – which offers accommodation and a range of support services to small and growing businesses – led to the building of similar innovation centres in **Warwick, Binley** and **Blythe Valley**. Overall 750 businesses have been based at the University of Warwick Science Park since it was created.

The UWSP’s business support team has helped raise £36.7million in financing and helped to secure more than 750 jobs in the last decade. The ‘incubation’ service Ignite gives office space, business support and time to grow on flexible terms to not only start-ups, but also early stage companies.

David Grindrod, acting director at the University of Warwick Science Park, said “we are best known for the space we provide to companies because people see the physical buildings at the university and across the region. But the support we provide is available to firms right across the region – even beyond. Over the years, we have helped thousands of companies and individuals and we want 2014 to be our biggest yet when it comes to business support. We consistently work with companies that go from a handful to over 100 employees.”

The **Minerva business angel network** invests on average in a dozen businesses per annum and attracts three-fold investment from other investors, venture capitalists and banks. Its technical marketing service **Torchmark** helps companies close the gap between technical ability and market realities. Its specialist expertise in this field has helped ‘over 600 companies’ refine their propositions and products/services as well as accessing market opportunities.

Contact: www.warwicksciencepark.co.uk

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Cranfield University focuses on field of Concentrating Solar Power (CSP)

In March 2014 it opened the **Global CSP Laboratory**. The University is home to the largest CSP research activity in the UK and Cranfield is the only UK representative on the **EERA** (European Energy Research Alliance) **Joint Committee on CSP**.

The new laboratory – the UK Centre for Concentrating Solar Thermal Manufacturing, sponsored by Manchester-based company **Global CSP** – will be the home of an internationally recognised research and manufacturing team led by Cranfield's **Dr Chris Sansom**, working on concentrating solar power and solar thermal technologies and their applications.

Graham Provan, CEO of Global CSP, said: "The collaboration between Cranfield University and Global CSP has the potential to make a significant contribution to many renewable energy roadmaps worldwide. We jointly have the talent and passion to be a world leader in small-to-medium-scale CSP applications."

Cranfield has been involved in a number of CSP projects over recent years, including the MATS Project, FRESH NRG, and STAGE-STE, all funded by the European Union.

The Cranfield team is also working with Pakistan's COMSATS Institute of Information Technology on a solar cooker, to significantly improve the quality of life for rural communities in the developing world.

Contact: www.global-csp.com

Glasgow University's innovator Professor Lee Cronin to focus on energy storage

Leading Scottish chemist and innovator **Professor Lee Cronin** has been awarded the 2013 RSE/BP Hutton Prize in Energy Innovation by the **Royal Society of Edinburgh**.

The £10,000 award is in recognition of the Cronin Group's work in developing 'Promise' – a fuel cell electrolyser platform for sustainable energy storage realised via renewable 'Inorganic Fuel.'

The project aims to deliver a high-growth spinout company based on the technology patented by the **University of Glasgow**. The spinout will exploit a major materials innovation that converts surplus renewable generated electricity into a liquid fuel which can then be converted into hydrogen or electricity.

The 2016 global market for the combined electrolyser/fuel cell device that will be developed is the part of the energy storage market currently served by electrolysis/fuel cells – worth \$44m – and batteries, which have a market value of \$322m.

In addition, the technology has a number of other applications and markets that are believed to have even larger potential. Further spinout growth will be achieved by longer term exploitation of the technology in both conventional electrolysis, for example hydrogen for industrial uses or at refuelling stations and other chemical transformation production from renewable sources, desalination of water and CO2 fixation and transformation.

The **Cronin Group's** technology platform directly addresses both a priority of the Renewable Energy Sector Delivery Plan in 'Renewable Energy Management and Storage', which explicitly mentions electrochemical storage and the Scottish Smart Grid Sector Strategy developed by **SSE, Scottish Power, Strathclyde University, GE, Cisco** and **Scottish Enterprise**. In particular, it relates to two key areas of the **Smart Grid Action Agenda** – encouraging innovation and maximising the impact of pilot and demonstrator projects. The research has been supported by a £500,000 Scottish Enterprise Award.

Contact: www.chem.gla.ac.uk/cronin

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Power Electronic Measurements enters key KTP with Nottingham University

PEM has sold its high performance ac current transducers to over 35 countries and can count major international companies, government bodies and research institutions as its customers.

Chris Hewson, chief executive of PEM, said “We are now looking forward to progressing these exciting new developments. We were very pleased at how simple The University of Nottingham made the process of applying for the KTPs and to get both projects approved is excellent news.”

Before PEM's existence, **Rogowski** transducers were relatively unknown and only used for a few specialist applications. PEM can justly claim to have pioneered the general purpose Rogowski transducer as a readily available wideband commercial product. Since its first range in 1991 PEM has continued to provide state-of-the-art Rogowski transducers across a broad range of applications and provides advice and assistance to engineers with current measurement problems.

The pair will now develop new technologies and ideas through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), and as a result of this it is now offering two post graduate/doctoral engineer positions.

KTP is a long-standing programme, funded in part by the **Technology Strategy Board**, that uses the knowledge and technology of universities to help successful SME businesses to improve their competitiveness, productivity and performance.

The KTP will involve working with world leaders in wideband **Rogowski** technology, PEM, and the renowned **Power Electronics, Machines and Controls Group** at the University of Nottingham.

Contact: www.pemuk.com

Imperial College London lecturer devises new catalytic converter

Dr Benjamin Kingsbury established an Imperial start-up company in December 2013 to market the prototype device. A key next step is to develop a production process for mass manufacturing. His design of a new catalytic converter could cut fuel consumption ‘by 3 per cent’ and manufacturing costs.

The design uses up to 80 per cent less rare metal, a development that could significantly reduce costs for vehicle manufacturers. Catalytic converters are expensive to manufacture because they use precious metals such as platinum to eliminate emissions. These metals currently account for up to 60 to 70 per cent of the cost of the component.

The prototype is also predicted to perform better than existing models because the rare metal degrades less over the lifetime of the component. Laboratory tests suggest that it deteriorates by only four per cent over a distance of 100,000 kilometres, compared to 35 per cent for a standard catalytic converter.

The inventor Dr Kingsbury is also a Research Associate in the **Department of Chemical Engineering** at Imperial College London. He says: “Catalytic converters are the most important component in a vehicle for controlling exhaust emissions. Yet their design has not changed since they were first developed in the 1940s. The prototype I have developed could make cars cheaper to run because they use less fuel. It could potentially help manufacturers to reduce their costs.”

Dr Kingsbury developed the technology in conjunction with **Professor Kang Li** and **Dr Zhentao Wu** who are both from the Department of Chemical Engineering at Imperial. He has been awarded funding from the **Royal Academy of Engineering** to take his prototype to the marketplace.

Contact: ben.kingsbury06@imperial.ac.uk

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Millions spent on London Business School... and its best startup business idea is..

A quick-service pizzeria start-up – founded by a graduate of London Business School – has been nominated in the Best Start-Up of the Year category for the Crowdcube crowdfunding awards.

The first outlet is expected to open in central London early next year. The concept is the brainchild of Corrado Accardi, an engineer from Sardinia, and was developed with the help of friends and colleagues at the School, where Mr Accardi did an Executive MBA.

Mr Accardi said: “We are proud of our relationship with Crowdcube. The nominations we received for the awards are a recognition of our hard work and record-breaking campaign. We are very grateful for the support of the London Business School community.”

Mr Accardi has already won the School’s annual business plan competition, having secured £440,000 in funding for his venture, and was a runner-up in the European Business Plan of the Year finals in June.

Pizza Rossa has also been nominated for Crowdcube’s People’s Choice Award, in which the public are given the chance to vote for their favourite new start-up idea.

Contact: corrado@pizzarossa.com

Leeds University spinout Evocutis seeks buyer for its technology and assets

The skin research company achieved sales revenues of £395,000 and a reduced overall loss for the year of £1.01m but the board now thinks the unpredictability and magnitude of revenue generating contracts were a significant problem.

They hopes to sell its technology and assets within the next three months after takeover talks were wound up last year. The **Wetherby**-based company held talks with around 100 companies across the UK, Europe and US as part of its formal sales process, but this was terminated last October. As a result, the decision has been taken to change the focus of the company to managing its intellectual property.

Discussions are continuing over the potential sale or licence of the group’s assets. Interim CEO **Dr Gwyn Humphreys** said: “The past year has been a difficult one for Evocutis. In October 2013 Evocutis warned that if it couldn’t form trading relationships with other companies it may go bust.”

Evocutis has created a patented human skin equivalent called **LabSkin**, which emulates living skin tissue in research and product testing. But the group has failed to make much money from its invention.

Contact: www.evocutis.com

AND FINALLY...

>> **Munich**, not **London**, has been named Europe’s leading tech hub in a questionable report released by the **European Commission** in mid-April. This comes as a second blow to London’s **Silicon Roundabout**, the much publicized digital media and mobile comms hub just to the east of the capital’s financial district with around 330 companies. It came soon after the annual **Shoreditch Festival** was cancelled ‘due to lack of funding’.

The findings, published in the 140-page Atlas of ICT Activity in Europe report, saw the European Commission compare a small part of **East London** to entire cities across Europe. ‘Inner London – East’ came second to Munich, with **Paris** in third place.

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Critics claimed that a comparison between one part of London with the whole of Munich was ‘wrong’, and neglected to take into account London’s other digital districts, such as **Croydon**, **King’s Cross** and **Canary Wharf**.

The report ranked regions on their overall business activity, R&D and IT innovation, considering 42 factors in the process, such as turnover growth, number of employees, international partnerships and networking.

Munich came top in ICT research & development, 3rd in ICT innovation and 4th in business activity, while Inner London-East ranked only 5th in R&D, 9th in innovation, but 1st in business activity.

A spokesman at the Mayor of London’s promotional office, **London & Partners**, said: “London leads the world in areas such as fintech, adtech and visual effects”, they couldn’t explain why high speed broadband is not available in both **Tech City** and **Mayfair**, Europe’s No.1 venture capital district.

Tech City entrepreneurs have long complained to **BT** about slow web speeds. One said “BT is more interested in broadcasting third division Estonian football rather than providing fast access as its core duty.”

Other UK cities to make the EU list included **Cambridge** in sixth place, **Oxford** and **Edinburgh** at 19 and 20, while the counties of **Berkshire**, **Hampshire** and **Surrey** also get a mention. These areas were included due to their strong universities, suggesting that academic excellence was a major factor in the report.

Inner London – East was ranked as 18th for its universities, leaving a number of the city’s leading academic institutions out of the equation, including UCL, Imperial College and King’s College London.

Oddly, the European Commission found Gwynedd, a region of North Wales, to be the continent’s ‘best university region’.

>> Proof that Brewdog, Scotland’s maverick, hypergrowth, craft beer maker, is the funniest and least ‘corporatist’ company in Britain has come, once again, in a press release.

Back in 2012 its brush with drinks giant **Diageo**, which forced an awards organiser to stop giving an award to Brewdog, became legendary. It caused Diageo intense international embarrassment and forced it into a swift climbdown.

Routinely attacking po-faced drinks watchdogs and other establishment figures, its latest blast on April 2014 was concentrated on the drinks industry’s ‘responsibility body’ **Portman Group** which had criticized Brewdog’s **Dead Pony Club** ale as being in breach of the alcohol marketing code. The swift riposte from **James Watt**, Brewdog’s co-founder, starts with these two paragraphs:

“On behalf of BrewDog plc and its 14,691 individual shareholders, I would like to issue a formal apology to the Portman Group for not giving a shit about today’s ruling. Indeed, we are sorry for never giving a shit about anything the Portman Group has to say, and treating all of its statements with callous indifference and nonchalance.”

“Unfortunately, the Portman Group is a gloomy gaggle of killjoy jobsworths, funded by navel-gazing international drinks giants. Their raison d’être is to provide a diversion for the true evils of this industry, perpetrated by the gigantic faceless brands that pay their wages. Blinkered by this soulless mission, they treat beer drinkers like brain dead zombies and vilify creativity and competition. Therefore, we have never given a second thought to any of the grubby newspeak they disseminate periodically.”

Starting in 2007 with two staff, Brewdog became famous for its fruity named beers – the world’s strongest

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'Tokyo', for 'Sink the Bismarck', 'Equity for Punks', and 'Tactical Nuclear Penguin'. It is now the fastest food & drink firm in the UK, and employs 224 staff.

This month, Brewdog opened **BottleDog**, its first craft beer shop in **London**, at 69 Grays Inn Rd, WC1X 8TP, stocking 250 different beers. Customers can also fill up takeaway flasks, named growlers, from taps on site.

Contact: www.digitalnewsroom.co.uk/brewdog/dead-pony-portman-group

>> **Your Summer Hamper Supplier – all the way from Devon...**

Purely Devon Hampers offer a broad range of West Country hampers filled with the finest Devon produce, for birthdays present, luxury foods, or corporate hampers.

Customers can also use the website to build their own hamper. Choose from artisan cheeses, seafood pâtés, homemade preserves, chutneys, ciders and real ale and of course **Devonshire Farmhouse Clotted Cream**.

Their suppliers include **Ashridge Cider**, of Totnes in South Devon. **Burts Crisps** starting making their first chips in 1997, when they were only able to buy an industrialised processed chip lacking in flavour. Plus **Brendon Hill Crafts** preserves; **Chocolate Heaven** made in Devon; **Clive's Pies** in Buckfastleigh; **Curworthy Cheese**; **Dartmoor Chilli Farm**; **Freds Kitchen**; **Heal Farm Smoked Meats**; **Hunter's Brewery**; **Highfield Preserves**; **JB Preserves**; **K Basterfield & Son**; **Langage Farm**; **Midfields Granola**; **Old Walls Vineyard**; **Owens of Modbury**; **Pymân Pâtés**; **Quickes Traditional**; **Red Rock Brewery**; **Sandford Orchards**; **Sharpham Estate**; **South Devon Chilli Farm**; **Teonis handmade biscuits**; and **Willow Tree Farm**.

Contact: <http://purelydevonhampers.co.uk>

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