

# GIBSON INDEX NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2015: Issue No. 107

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

### 'Debunking the daft claims of the recent 'Tech Nation' survey'

The claims made by the 'Tech Nation' survey, published mid-February, into the apparent success of 'digital' Britain by the **Tech City** organisation has so many flaws it is difficult to know where to start.

First it claims to be the 'first national' survey of the digital world. It covers 2,000 companies, according to a report in the 'Financial Times'. Unfortunately the youthful folk sitting in their offices at No.207 Old St in London are rather new to the game. Not many IT people in the shires have ever heard of, or met the Tech City newbies – the exquisitely titled **Baroness Joanna Shields** or its **CEO Gerard Grech**.

Our own surveys alone since 2003 have covered more than 25,000 companies operating within sectors such as web services, mainstream software, CGI, gaming, advanced computing, SEO and fintech, not to mention security software, eHealth and mobile app development. In addition, a brief peek at the Internet reveals half a dozen highly comprehensive directories of web-related companies, all carried out diligently by reputable data services companies.

We frequently attend regional openings of business centres, and press conferences – but, curiously, no one from Tech City is present. Their survey depends entirely on the number of new companies being registered at **Companies House** – always a dangerous move, and one that is avoided by experienced trend-watchers.

If the importance of the digital and media sector in the UK, as profiled in the 'Tech Nation' report, has been exaggerated, what sort of company does the UK really need?

The answer is more manufacturers, more engineers. The economic contribution made by a multi-generational, family-owned engineering manufacturer – which employs, say, 40 staff, pays pensions and which also buys plenty of British-made components within its own long-term, complex supply chain – is far superior to the contribution made by any digital firm, which rarely buys any British-made goods throughout its existence.

We need to rebuild the manufacturing companies in those key sectors lost to the Chinese in the dark days of the 1990s – building products, consumer goods, plastics and toys – all of which once employed tens of thousands. Let's see if we can re-capture them.

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[www.gibson-index.com](http://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

### Artaic Ltd constructs amazing art mosaics via novel 3D vision robotics

In September 2014 Artaic was one of 26 UK SMEs that won grant funding under the EU's **SME Instrument programme** awarded by the EASME unit. Their project was: **MOSART** – 'Advanced Automated Process for Low Cost Efficient Custom Mosaic Manufacturing'.

Its founding director is American entrepreneur **Edward Acworth**. He has developed software that can turn a computer image into a mosaic pattern, and a robotic arm that picks out glass tiles and lays them down '10 times faster' than human workers can. Artaic holds two provisional patents, but the company is more a business venture than it is art or science, he said.

"To go cash-flow positive in three years with a minimal investment, selling a product to an industry that's one of the most depressed in the economy – I thought, 'This is something I can do'," he said.

Bootstrapped Artaic has taken friends-and-family investment "in the hundreds of thousands," plus a \$50,000 loan from a small-business program through the city. **Children's Hospital Boston** and **St Elizabeth's Medical Center** have both installed mosaic work from the fledgling company, and Acworth hopes Artaic will be profitable by some time in 2010.

Artaic LLC creates robot-made mosaic installations and counts two Boston hospitals among its customers. The 41-year-old entrepreneur is now moonlighting as a ghost hunter, devising tests to detect or debunk paranormal activity on the **Discovery Channel's** Ghost Lab program.

Artaic is Acworth's second start-up. In 2003, he helped found MIT spin-off **Brontes Technology** with MIT professor **Douglas Hart, Eric Paley**, who later started the venture capital firm **Founder Collective**, and Micah **Rosenbloom**, a Harvard Business School alum with Paley. The 3-D machine vision company sold three years later for \$95 million to **3M Corp**. While Acworth was there, the institute worked with UK-based firms **OrthoMimetics Ltd, e-stack Ltd** and **Fibrecore Developments Ltd**, he said.

**Contact:** [www.artaic.com](http://www.artaic.com)

## SME NEWS – ENGINEERING, CONSTRUCTION & ENERGY

### BSA Guns links with new manufacturer to develop complex air rifle components

Although the company no longer makes military weapons, iconic air rifle manufacturer **BSA Guns Ltd** maintains a steady flow of air rifles, hunting rifles and sporting guns to most parts of the world, exporting 557 of its manufactured products.

These would be used in its sporting range of products, following quality and delivery issues with its previous supplier. Suffolk-based metal injection moulding specialist **CMG Technologies** provided BSA Guns with a one stop solution for the manufacture of air rifle components using the MIM process. This included the refurbishment of tooling (owned by BSA) and other secondary operations such as continued support for heat management of MIM components, and full quality documentation and capability reports. Overall this has improved the quality of BSA Guns' air rifle components, whilst saving cost per piece on a mass scale.

CMG Technologies were initially tasked with the development of turnkey components required for the air rifle's trigger action, together with metal injection moulded components for its sporting range of products.

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Using various metal alloys, CMG's technical team manipulated the metal to mould the components in line with BSA Guns' heat treatment requirements, resulting in small, complex components produced on a mass scale.

CMG Technologies' MD **Chris Conway** said "The air rifle components produced for BSA Guns is an excellent example of the benefits of the MIM process. Not only have we been able to mass produce high quality components, we have also helped to reduce overall company costs by introducing other secondary operations into the one process."

**Simon Barron**, Head of Operations at BSA Guns said "Our designed complex components were a perfect fit for the Metal injection Moulding process. This is a process that can be used on many different applications in engineering, and is one designers definitely need to be more aware of due to its unique capabilities in making very small complex metal parts at a consistent level of quality."

During WW2 the **Small Heath** administration alone (BSA Cycles Ltd and BSA Guns Ltd) controlled 67 factories, employing 28,000 people and containing 25,000 machine tools. This organisation produced more than half the small arms supplied to Britain's forces during the war.

**Contact:** [www.bsaguns.co.uk](http://www.bsaguns.co.uk)

### **Nottingham-based firm provides 'step change' in x-ray diffraction techniques**

Halo X-ray Technologies Ltd is pioneering the development of advanced, real-time, X-ray diffraction techniques and systems in aviation security, medical systems and industrial process control.

In September 2013 Halo became lead partner in a consortium to develop a technology demonstrator for Halo IP under **TSB grant 131257**. It is leading a consortium of UK companies and Universities that have secured funding through the **TSB** programme on 'Technology-inspired innovation'. This programme will provide key support for the development of new high-speed materials identification systems using core IP and further underpin Halo technology in all areas of application.

The consortium is led by Halo and includes **Nottingham Trent University, Cranfield University** and **Totalpost Services plc**. This alignment of both academic and industrial partners will be key to deliver a valuable technology demonstrator to support the on-going development of Halo core IP in aviation security, medical systems and industrial process control.

Halo IP provides a step change in the application of x-ray diffraction techniques and systems to real-time applications. This platform technology is designed to solve problems in, for example, security screening of luggage where it can be tuned to identify hidden materials including contraband drugs and explosives.

Other applications include medical systems where they are supporting an **EPSRC** grant into **Point-of-Care High Accuracy Fracture Risk Prediction** and process control and manufacturing where the fine tuning of chemical properties can reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.

Halo CEO, **Simon Godber**, stated "Demonstration of Halo capability in our core areas of application is essential to achieve market acceptance and early adoption of our solutions. We see this demonstrator as a key part of engaging with both industry and future investors in Halo and welcome the opportunity of working with our partners in this programme to develop our core IP."

Simon is also MD of **nDetect Ltd**, from December 2007 to the present. The development of embedded software, firmware and hardware for a variety of industrial application areas.

**Contact:** [www.halo-x-ray.com](http://www.halo-x-ray.com)

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## Regional Growth Fund win for precision engineering specialists A&M EDM

**A&M EDM** provide many services including spark erosion, wire erosion, CNC laser welding and a range of CNC services. The company, based on **Park Rose Industrial Estate** in Smethwick, was able to employ 14 new workers and build a new factory unit after receiving more than £450,000 from the **Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership's Regional Growth Fund**.

A&M EDM has its own R&D capability to complement its manufacturing. Examples include – designing and manufacturing a new crank and connecting rod assembly for a Rally Raid motorbike which will compete in the 2015 **Dakar Rally**; laboratory testing suspension components and advising on structural design for **Rally Raid** motorcycles; design consultancy and structural testing on the strength and effectiveness of motorcycle armour and protective equipment; making design modifications to remote manipulator arms which have increased their effectiveness and performance by at least an order of magnitude (factor of 10); and consulting on the design and structural analysis of induction and mounting systems for hydrogen fuel cell power units.

The company's most recent addition, a £250,000 die sinker machine tool, was in the middle of a 26-hour process to refurbish engine parts for a 1930s train.

The company's MD **Mark Wingfield**, said: "We make other people's dreams into reality." With 50 staff A&M EDM continually invest in the latest technology and add new services to meet changing needs.

In some instances the best solution is still hand machining, so it has a fully fitted machine shop staffed by a team with many decades of experience in techniques such as cylindrical grinding. In December 2014 A&M EDM hit the sporting headlines when one of its turners, **Sean Geddes**, scored a series of remarkable goals for his club **Worcester City FC**. Sean first scored two goals in the **FA Cup** first round to knock out former winners Coventry. He quickly followed that with a so-called 'rabona' chip shot over the goalkeeper against Barrow in the FA Trophy. The goal has been compared to shots from football greats such as Lionel Messi and has become an internet hit around the world.

**Contact:** [www.amedm.co.uk](http://www.amedm.co.uk)

## Essex-based contractor Lakehouse planning to float on the Stock Exchange

The move will cap a rapid rise for the firm which was founded in **Romford** in 1988.

Lakehouse currently employs 1,250 staff from 18 offices across London, the South of England, the East of England and Scotland. Its four divisions are: **Regeneration, Compliance, Energy Services and Construction**.

Turnover at the group rose to £345m in the year ended 30 September 2014, at a margin of 6.3%.

**Stuart Black**, chairman of Lakehouse said: "This is the right time for the business to do so. Lakehouse has a strong financial and operational track record, strong client relationships and a focused strategy designed to exploit the growth opportunities in the market places in which we operate.

"The directors and senior management team, who have extensive experience and expertise in the support services and energy sectors, will be very much aligned to the interests of all stakeholders and the planned future success of the Group." The float is expected to raise £30m to fund further acquisitions and growth plans.

Lakehouse was founded in 1988 by chief executive **Steve Rawlings**. In 2008, it celebrated its 20th anniversary by being named **SME Contractor of the Year** in *Contract Journal's* Construction Industry

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Awards, underlining the success of its high quality approach to work ranging from major refurbishments and restorations to design and build projects and upgrading housing to meet the government's **Decent Homes Standard**.

As a company named as one of the top five contractors in **Building's 2008 Good Employer Guides**, which highlights construction companies committed to good employment standards, Lakehouse is also keenly aware of its responsibilities to its 200 plus staff.

**Contact:** [www.lakehouse.co.uk](http://www.lakehouse.co.uk)

### **Q-Bot Ltd develops intelligent tools for the built environment**

Turning difficult, disruptive and dirty jobs into clean, efficient and safe processes, its tools allow installers and contractors to access hard to reach areas where it would otherwise be too difficult or disruptive, for a human operator to do so.

They survey and understand their environment, automatically building up maps and identifying services that can be provided, and apply a range of treatments remotely and provide proof of their application to ensure quality control.

The **Q-Bot** semi-autonomous robot was first used by the **Peabody Trust, Westminster's City West Homes** and **Camden Council**. Thousands of pre-1919 homes need a more cost-effective means of cutting fuel consumption in older properties than internal wall insulation or double glazing.

The robotic system sprays insulation underneath wooden floorboards, and the device also measures U-values before and after the application of insulation, which can be either polyurethane or cellulose based. If the device malfunctions in situ, it can be retrieved via an 'umbilical cord'.

Q-Bot says that the underfloor device is just the first of several robotic-platforms it hopes to launch into the construction sector. It has previously won funding from **DECC's Emerging Entrepreneurs Fund** and the **Technology Strategy Board**, and the company received investment from the **EcoMachines Incubator Accelerator** programme.

Q-Bot Ltd currently provides two services, the first uses robotic tools to insulate hard to reach areas with the minimal of disruption. Insulating the suspended timber floors of the UK's 6 million pre 1919 properties is currently a highly disruptive and difficult task. With Q-Bot a robot can be inserted through an air vent, deploy within the void and without even need to enter the property apply insulation to the underside of the floorboards. This keeps the floor dry side while still allowing the ground to breath.

**Contact:** [www.q-bot.co](http://www.q-bot.co)

## **SME NEWS – ELECTRONICS & TELECOMS**

### **Flexible displays firm FlexEnable rises from the ashes of Plastic Logic Ltd**

In February, Cambridge start-up **FlexEnable** claims to have made a breakthrough in printable electronics which will see flexible displays 'in volume production by the end of 2015.'

The company has been in stealth mode for two years developing a process for making plastic electronic circuits that can be printed in volume on flexible films as thin as 50-micron. The breakthrough is that the process will support the high current levels required for driving OLED displays.

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It is also a low temperature technique which the company claims can readily be applied to standard display panel manufacturing processes. FlexEnable chairman, **Indro Mukerjee** said the company is already talking with materials firms and Asia-based display manufacturers about bringing first flexible displays based on the technology to market.

“The holy grail was is to drive OLEDs at higher currents. The process now does this and we have demonstrated it to display manufacturers in Asia,” said Mukerjee. “We will be in the market before the end of the year.”

The process is based on printable transistor technology originally developed by **Plastic Logic** for electrophoretic displays (EPDs) used in e-readers. FlexEnable has been created from Plastic Logic’s people and its technology assets in Cambridge. “We have developed and matured the Plastic Logic flexible transistor platform to be able to form active backplanes for LCD and OLED displays, but also broadened its application to image sensors and other integrated circuits on flexible plastic with a 0.25mm bend radius,” said Mukerjee.

Unlike Plastic Logic which will continue to manufacture EPDs in **Dresden**, FlexEnable, apart from prototyping, will not manufacture flexible circuits. It will license the intellectual property it has created to display and sensor manufacturers. It also plans to partner with materials suppliers and design firms to bring the flexible technology to volume production.

**Paul Cain**, strategy director at FlexEnable, said “Critically the fabrication process never goes above 100°C and is now compatible with large scale flat panel display production,” said Cain. He said they have also applied the process to the production of graphene transistors and has created a display with a graphene electrode at its R&D lab in **Cambridge**.

**Contact:** [www.flexenable.com](http://www.flexenable.com)

### **Car interior firm K J Ryan signs seven-figure funding deal with Santander**

In 2015 this manufacturer of car interiors, which counts **Bentley** and **McLaren** as clients, is set to purchase new machinery. **K J Ryan** (KJR) secured £1.1m from the bank to buy new plant equipment and specialist tooling to cater for high-demand driven by record sales. Santander will also provide additional working capital to support KJR’s aim to increase sales by 50 per cent over the next four years.

**Kevin Ryan**, chairman of KJR, said: “With the outlook for the automotive manufacturing sector stronger than ever, we are excited to be able to significantly improve our facilities to support our growth strategy.”

Core capabilities of KJR include development – from concept to reality working in partnership with our customers. This covers both sectors of the market. Next, Hand Trimming using leathers, PVCs and soft fabrics – typical applications include centre armrests, seat back panels, steering wheels, seat covers and gear gaiters, etc.

Leather has to hold airbags with stitching that must break at exact pressures, stretch with electric massage cushions, wrap intricate shapes such as instrument binnacles, steering wheels and door pulls, quickly and constantly expand and contract in air conditioning and heated seats, repel dirt, rain, sun and everyday wear.

KJR is a rare company – a producer of components or complete car interiors, using a combination of modern technology and flexible manufacturing techniques with the most traditional of skills and materials.

**Contact:** [www.kjryan.co.uk](http://www.kjryan.co.uk)

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## Vehicle conversion specialist MacNeillie bought by Babcock International

**MacNeillie** has long experience as an established supplier to the police, fire and ambulance services, civil service, military and other security focused organisations in the UK and throughout the world. **Keith Bradley**, MacNeillie chairman, has built the business over the last 40 years.

Customers range from the **Metropolitan Police Service, London Fire Brigade, MoD and Highways Agency**. They strive to push the boundaries of conventional automotive solutions and design. MacNeillie as a pioneering specialist conversion organisation has combined innovation, craftsmanship and technical excellence to supply and support deployed product to a worldwide quality critical market.

Its high security production facilities which are based over three sites within the UK are made up of several manufacturing divisions. MacNeillie will continue to trade and operate from its existing facilities under MD **Nigel Rowley**.

It will benefit from the growth opportunities that Babcock's scale, broader customer base and international operations will bring. Currently Babcock manages over 30,000 vehicles globally. The firm uses performance software named ALCAMiE, a way to optimise fleets.

**Neal Misell**, MD for **Babcock's Critical Services** business said: "MacNeillie is renowned for its quality, expertise and innovation within the sectors it serves and we both share the same values."

**Contact:** [www.macneillie.co.uk](http://www.macneillie.co.uk)

## Seneye Ltd design and manufacture water sensing equipment for aquariums

Using patented optical technology the firm's water monitoring device helps users understand what is happening inside an aquarium or pond. The company's website continuously tracks the changes in water parameters in detail, alerting pond owners to problems before they upset the fish. So far, the firm has sold thousands of **Seneye** devices – especially has prized fish can be worth thousands of pounds.

In 2015 it teamed up with **RangeXD Ltd**, designers and manufacturers of antennas and mobile broadband products. **Dr Andrew Fox**, MD of RangeXD Ltd said "Seneye selected WiBE for such a key element of their unique monitoring solution. The revolutionary, patented antenna technology used in WiBE, was specifically designed by us, to improve performance in locations with poor signal strength, such as **Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary**." The Seneye system, incorporating WiBE, is now installed fully working and providing real time information to the staff even when they are off site.

Although RangeXD is a new company its parent firm has been trading for over 10 years. **BBC Click** first reviewed **WiBE's** revolutionary antenna technology in August 2010.

The initial portfolio of four products, WiBE, WiBE Extreme, WiBE Enterprise and WiBE Marine, incorporates antenna technology that boosts performance without the need for special alignment to the mobile network.

**Contacts:** [www.seneye.com](http://www.seneye.com) – [www.rangexd.com](http://www.rangexd.com)

## Loudspeaker firm Acoustic Transducer Company Ltd wins key award in Las Vegas

**ATC** is a specialist British manufacturer of loudspeaker drive units and complete sound reproduction systems, including all associated electronic equipment. ATC designs and manufactures all of its drivers in-house, and features both active and passive models. Numerous recording studios and motion picture houses throughout the world use ATC products, and the company's future has never looked brighter.

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In January 2015 in **Las Vegas, Nevada**, the new ATC SCM40A loudspeaker won one of 10 *What Hi-Fi* 'Stars of CES' awards. Their systems and components are designed and built in-house to achieve levels of performance far in excess of the industry norm.

Today ATC still hand builds one speaker at a time for one person, while the rest of the industry focuses on building thousands of units to supply mega-stores. ATC is still owned by now legendary founder **Billy Woodman**, who comes to work everyday to keep inventing new drivers, new speakers, new ideas. Billy is continuing the legacy, the way he learned, bringing in a young engineering staff to learn by apprenticeship. Working side by side with Billy, the young engineers are carrying the torch onward, continuing the mission to help people do better work with better loudspeakers.

In January 2015 ATC released a brand new professional monitor, the **SCM45A Pro**. The SCM45A Pro is a completely new design, yet shares many features with its smaller sibling, the highly-successful SCM25A Pro three-way, compact active loudspeaker.

**Contact:** [www.atcloudspeakers.co.uk](http://www.atcloudspeakers.co.uk)

## SME NEWS – CHEMICALS, MATERIALS & ENVIRONMENT

### Fibre Metal Laminate materials to be developed by Magna Parva Ltd

New materials are being developed to help protect **European Space Agency** astronauts and spacecraft from damage by radiation, space junk and micrometeoroids.

To protect spacecraft, satellites and crews from these dangers, **Leicester**-based engineering company **Magna Parva** is looking at developing FML – Fibre Metal Laminate – materials that have the ability to provide more protection per kilogram than anything that is currently on the market.

Owing to the needs of the space industry, any new material developed must be both lightweight and low cost. At least 15 concepts are being considered, including aluminium, titanium and polymers reinforced with a material such as glass fibre, carbon fibre or Kevlar.

Spacecraft in orbit around the Earth continually sustain damage from hyper velocity impacts, colliding with micrometeoroids and tiny fragments of orbiting debris left over from previous launches and missions.

However, although small, these objects are travelling at a velocity several times the speed of a bullet. Over time, the impacts can cause abrasions similar to an object having been sandblasted, as well as microscopic holes. There are also some larger objects in orbit, which have the potential to create catastrophic damage.

Magna Parva director **Andrew Bowyer** said that not only must shielding for spacecraft protect against impacts, it must also shield astronauts from radiation received from energetic particles originating from the Sun and supernova explosions and other high-energy events outside the solar system.

He said "The materials we develop in this contract will be particularly useful in deep space missions such as those planned for the Orion capsule." Outside the Earth's protective magnetosphere, these can harm both sensitive electronics and the astronauts themselves.

**Contact:** [www.magnaparva.com](http://www.magnaparva.com)

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## **Manufacturer Cygnet Group Manchester University secures two-year KTP**

The university's **School of Materials** will deliver the KTP to advance the production of high-performance composite materials including carbon fibre, for use in the aerospace and automotive industries.

The two organisations will deliver an extensive programme of trials into new manufacturing techniques and materials, as well as developing new process machinery.

**Luke Vardy**, technical director at **Cygnet Group**, based in **Northwich, Cheshire**, said "We aim to lead the market in terms of new processing technology. It gives us valuable access to the academia and expertise of the University and **The Northwest Composites Centre**, which is one of the largest and most respected composites centres in the world."

**Professor Andrew Walker**, commercial director at the University's School of Materials, said: "The partnership will develop some highly innovative and very complex textile composites, which will shape the way motor cars and aeroplanes are built in the future."

**Contacts:** [www.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.manchester.ac.uk) – [www.cygnet-group.org](http://www.cygnet-group.org)

## **Gateshead-based Nano-Porous Solutions Ltd pioneers anti-pollution process**

In Nov 2014 said it was set to almost treble its workforce. MD **Colin Billiet** and R&D manager **John Pearson** said the workforce was soon to rise from 35 to 100 on the back of growing export demands, which could take turnover to £25m within five years.

**Nano-Porous Solutions Ltd** was established in 2007 by Mr Billiet, the firm's main investor, who is previously best known for building up filtration firm **Domnick Hunter** into a £200m business, alongside other directors and **Bath University**.

The company's technology, first harnessed at Bath, is named **Adsorption Media Tube Technology**. It uses tiny hollow fibres to filter out pollutants from gas streams and create compressed air, which can be used in a whole range of industries, including construction, the manufacture of cars, food, pharmaceuticals and healthcare.

After going into production with its first filters the business has seen staff levels rise from an initial team of three to 35, with worldwide sales topping £1m on its first product.

Export sales now account for 85% of turnover, with the US being the company's main market. Since going into production the firm has risen to become a leader in technological advancement, operating in a market worth more than £65m. Now, as it ramps up its activities, the business said it aims to put ambitious growth plans into action, which will see a steady growth in headcount. Yet business development director **Phil Huddy** said finding skilled workers sometimes proves a tough task.

The technology is used in the rail sector, where it is used for drying compressed air that's used to operate braking systems, doors and pantographs – the roof-mounted apparatus on top of trains that collects power from overhead lines. There has also been demand for nitrogen gas generation units, for applications in the food packaging, chemical blanketing and laser cutting market sectors. The biggest problem we have in terms of filling roles is finding engineering staff, particularly design engineers."

In 2010 the firm was helped by a £750,000 grant from the **Royal Society Enterprise Fund** and business angels **John Clough** and **Dave Routledge** to develop the technology.

**Contacts:** [www.n-psl.com](http://www.n-psl.com) – <https://royalsociety.org/investment>

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## **Innovate UK awards sizeable grant for 3D printing of glass and metals**

In 2015 **Glass Technology Services Ltd** was part of an £8.4 million grant in the UK awarded to multiple entities for the development of new innovations through 3D printing.

As part of a larger group, GTS will be able to focus on research and development to use glass and metals in 3D printing for biomedical and photovoltaic purposes.

The funding is provided by a government investment program, **Innovate UK**, which is the national innovation agency. GTS will be collaborating with **JRI Orthopaedics, 3T RPD, Delta T Devices, the Mercury Centre for Innovative Materials and Manufacturing**, based at **Sheffield University**, and **The Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC)**.

The MTC was established to encourage innovation in the UK with coordinating institutions from a broad range of disciplines that are all mutually beneficial to one another in R&D.

**Contact:** [www.glass-ts.com](http://www.glass-ts.com)

## **Bonnington Plastics Ltd to increase its products – with £7.5m re-financing**

The Nottingham-based wholesaler and importer of plastic homeware, DIY and gardening products, which started business nearly half a century ago, said it had increased turnover by a fifth in the last year and added 18 new jobs, taking its staff numbers to 90.

**Ian Fisher**, the group's MD, said it hoped to maintain its growth profile, buoyed by the new funds, and add more jobs to its existing team. He said "We've experienced an impressive increase in turnover in the last year and with the funding from Yorkshire Bank will be able to continue to grow and diversify. Recruitment will be a major priority for the company.

"Working with the bank has always been a simple and positive experience, which I contribute partly to our long relationship of 12 years. The team has a deep understanding of our business and always supports our aspirations."

**Carl Dickinson**, head of **Yorkshire Bank's** business and private banking centre in Nottingham, said: "We have supported Bonnington Plastic's development for more than a decade. It is an innovative business with more than 40 years of experience under its belt and we will continue to help it reach its growth ambitions."

**Contact:** [www.bonningtonplastics.com](http://www.bonningtonplastics.com)

## **Leyland-based Clean Air Power develops new form of engine**

The company agreed a significant contract extension to develop and deliver a demonstration vehicle, equipped with its **MicroPilot** technology, for a global truck manufacturer.

The new contract extends the agreement to commence the first phase of a production development programme for a MicroPilot compression-ignited natural gas engine for the **South East Asian** and other markets.

Clean Air Power's patented MicroPilot and **Dual-Fuel** technology enables engines to run on natural gas mixed with diesel or any suitable combustion fuel.

The contract extension includes both engine and vehicle system development, and is worth approximately

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£750,000 in additional revenue in 2015 for Clean Air. It will also strengthen the company's cash resources and the contract contains an option to extend the programme to a second vehicle.

Clean Air Power will continue to be supported by **Ricardo plc** on this extended programme as part of the on-going co-operation agreement signed in September 2013.

**John Pettitt**, chief executive of Clean Air Power, said: "This significant contract extension reflects the increased commitment by our progressive global truck manufacturing partner to MicroPilot technology and further underlines their bold ambition for this programme.

"This new contract is another step forward in our ambition to be the design, development and delivery partner of choice for compression-ignited natural gas engine systems."

**Contact:** [www.cleanairpower.com](http://www.cleanairpower.com)

## SME NEWS – BIOTECH, PHARMA & MEDICAL SCIENCE

### Endomagnetics Ltd wins a further £2m in funding – raising total to £7m to date

**New Wave Ventures, Sussex Place Ventures** and **UCL Business** invested £2m in Endomagnetics, a UK biotech specialising in treatment for cancer. Sussex Place invested via its Regents Park Partners II fund, which is a £30m fund raised in March of this year under the Enterprise Capital Fund scheme.

UCL Business and Sussex Place are existing investors in the company, which has to date raised £7m in funding. Endomagnetics will use the fresh capital to finance its US clinical trial, as well as further market development beyond its existing markets in EMEA and Australasia.

The company will also use the funds to support the launch of a new cancer market product in 2016. Founded in 2007 and headquartered in **Cambridge**, Endomagnetics has developed the instrument **SentiMag**, designed to allow surgeons to locate lymph nodes in cancer staging procedures alongside the company's Sienna+ tracer material.

**Eric Mayes**, CEO of Endomagnetics, claims its products make the process faster and more cost-effective and convenient than traditional radioisotope-based methods.

**Contact:** [www.endomagnetics.com](http://www.endomagnetics.com)

### Convergence Pharmaceuticals bought out by US firm Biogen Idec

The US firm is gaining a foothold in the neuropathic pain treatment sub-sector with the acquisition of Cambridge-based Convergence, a drug developer, valued at \$675 million. The US biotech firm, which has a UK base at Maidenhead, Berkshire, is known best for its drugs for multiple sclerosis. It announced the acquisition of Convergence Pharmaceuticals on the first weekend of the JP Morgan Healthcare conference in San Francisco.

Biogen will pay \$200 million up front, plus up to \$475 million in future milestone payments. Convergence will continue to operate out of its Cambridge in the UK, headquarters under the leadership of its current CSO, Simon Tate. Convergence has an experimental drug in mid-stage trials, CNV1014802, for trigeminal neuralgia, a chronic orphan disease that causes debilitating facial pain.

**Contact:** [www.convergencepharma.com](http://www.convergencepharma.com)

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## Cambridge-based Bactest wins 'The Telegraph's SME of the Year

Bactest has come up with an innovative product that has a huge amount of practical uses. **Prof Annie Brooking**, chief executive of Bactest, said it made *Speedy Breedy*, a portable contamination testing device which cuts out the need to send samples to a lab to be tested by technicians, instead returning results in as little as two or three hours.

It is used to incubate bacteria and detect and measure biological activity, thereby showing whether there is contamination in a wide range of substances including water, food, beer, stem cells and swabs.

It eliminates the need to send samples away to a lab to be tested, using agar plates, a method that's now 70 years old. Speedy Breedy only weighs three kilos and tests can be run and interpreted by non-experts.

The business has raised £2.6m of investment since 2011. Its cornerstone investor is the **Low Carbon Innovation Fund**, and the company also has 63 angel investors including one who has put in £330,000. Bactest plans to start a new fundraising round this month to raise £250,000 via Cambridge-based crowdfunding platform called the **Syndicate Room**.

Bactest was re-started in 2010 to commercialise a technology originally developed by former **Unilever** microbiologists. Speedy Breedy has been on sale for a year, and has 22 distributors.

Bactest's next goal is to get regulatory approval from environmental protection and medical device bodies, particularly in the US, because many worldwide industries are governed by US standards.

**Contact:** [www.bactest.com](http://www.bactest.com)

## Pulse Medical Technologies design and manufacture medical devices for pain relief

Pulse Medical Technologies uses **Pulse Electro-magnetic Field Therapy** (PEMF) to provide pain relief and wound relief products. The method has been 'cleared' by national medical authorities to treat medical conditions such as non-union bone fractures.

The company is based in the **Institute of Life Sciences** in **Swansea University**. It was granted FP7 funding for a project called **Amethyst** – Ambulatory Magneto-Enhancement of Transdermal High Yield Silver Therapy, with project leader **Dr David Beynon** – [d.g.beynon@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:d.g.beynon@swansea.ac.uk).

Norfolk-based electronics manufacturer **Barric Ltd** is a partner. The project entails passing an electromagnetic wave through silver to increase the efficiency of wound healing. Chronic wounds such as venous leg ulcers affect about 2 million people in **Europe**. They typically take between 12 to 24 weeks to heal but 30% take over two years to heal so as well as the suffering experienced by patients there is an associated European healthcare cost of €8bn a year.

**Pulse Medical Technologies'** role in the project is R&D of the electromagnetic coil element forming the top layer of the wound dressing. There are several design constraints: The dressing must be flexible, significantly two-dimensional and capable of treating a 5x5cm area within a 10x10cm dressing. Using the screen printing process a stacked electromagnetic coil has been produced which when connected to bespoke electronics and thin film battery technology produces an effective electromagnetic pulse to the wound bed.

**Contact:** [www.pulsemedtech.com](http://www.pulsemedtech.com)

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## Imperial College spinout DNA Electronics starts diagnostics technology

The firm has produced semiconductor sequencing (on-chip sequencing and measurement) – a new platform that is suited to point-of-need diagnostics, combining the ease of use of real-time PCR with the analytical depth of NGS.

Called **Genalysis**, their first flagship product is a test that quickly identifies the microorganisms responsible for blood infections that may lead to sepsis. They were the first to build a purpose-designed NGS-based diagnostic platform to complete the entire diagnostic process, from raw sample input to clinically actionable output, within 2 to 3 hours.

DNAe hopes to meet the medical need in the treatment of pre-sepsis with a rapid, accurate and affordable diagnostic device that can deliver results in hours not days.

**Steve Allen**, Chief Operating Officer of DNAe said “37,000 people die in the UK every year from sepsis, more than lung cancer or bowel cancer. Currently, treatment decisions are made without identifying the disease agent.

“The often unnecessary prescription of the most powerful, but ineffectual antibiotics worsens the global crisis of antimicrobial resistance and at the moment there is no viable solution.”

The last few years have seen an emergence of semiconductor-based technologies in clinical diagnostics. These technologies use existing mature semiconductor-based components – such as field-effect transistors (FETs) – that are produced in the billions, and configure them in a way that means they can measure a biochemical reaction.

Developments of core diagnostic technologies by multinational semiconductor companies such as **Panasonic, Hitachi, Samsung, Sony** and **Intel**. These proprietary technologies cover a wide area of the diagnostics space including DNA microarrays, single-molecule DNA sequencing, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and isothermal PCR.

It is part of a trend of shifting functionality from the instrument to the consumable, resulting in instrumentation of vastly reduced complexity. The elimination of a large instrument could shift the current value proposition in diagnostics – repeat consumables for an installed base of high-cost lab-based instruments – and introduce low-cost point-of-care diagnostic testing platforms suitable for personalised medicine.

**Contact:** [www.dnae.co.uk](http://www.dnae.co.uk)

## Dundee University spinout Ex Scientia Ltd probes medicines via poly-pharmacology

In Feb 2015 **Professor Andrew Hopkins**, of University of Dundee, was named one of this year’s winners in Life Sciences Awards for life sciences business leadership.

Prof Hopkins is founder and CEO of **Ex Scientia**, a Dundee University company, pioneering medicines tailored to poly-pharmacology for a wide range of human diseases where improved efficacy is required. He is also director of **SULSA**, the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance, and Chair of Medicinal Informatics at the **University of Dundee**.

He said “The ambition of Dundee University really encourages an entrepreneurial environment. I’m delighted for my team that our work at Ex Scientia, SULSA and the **College of Life Sciences** has been recognised at a national level.”

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Overall, he has raised a total of £30 million for research activities – both academic and commercial – in Scotland in the past two years and in the role of entrepreneur created two commercial companies. Ex Scientia was named *Young Business of the Year* at the 2014 by **Courier Business Awards** and **Kinetic Discovery Ltd** was also created.

**Contact:** [www.exscientia.co.uk](http://www.exscientia.co.uk)

## SME NEWS – IT, SOFTWARE, SERVICES & INTERNET

### Scotland's TVSquared uses data analytics to measure TV audiences

Created by media veteran **Calum Smeaton**, TVSquared provides an easy-to-use and effective attribution and econometric modelling solution for DRTV advertising. In essence, it is a statistical model that works out which adverts are driving traffic to your ecommerce website.

Advertisers need clear evidence of how their ad spend is working across all media channels to effectively inform future strategy and spend. Despite the abundance of cross-channel analytical tools, until now advertisers have been running 'TV scared' without access to a reliable TV advertising attribution system. **TVSquared** fills the void in effective and transparent **DRTV** attribution.

Calum Smeaton asked "Unless you can measure your response spot-by-spot, you're flying blind. TVSquared enables companies to measure the impact of their TV ad spend to the spot and manage it.

"TVSquared can help you answer the following client questions – what channel drives the most sales and responses? What genres bring results for the brand? What's the weakest link in my ad spend? What is my highest-performing demographic? TVSquared gives you transparency, clarity and an understanding of the value of your DRTV investment, enabling you to inform and embrace your future TV ad spend."

**Contact:** [www.tvsquared.com](http://www.tvsquared.com)

### Money transfer service WorldRemit wins staggering \$100m in Series B funding

Led by **Technology Crossover Ventures**, the round follows the \$40m that WorldRemit raised in March 2014 in a series A round led by **Accel Partners**, which also participated in this new round.

WorldRemit lets users transfer money internationally, and its services span mobile money transfers and digital wallets – meaning you don't need a bank account to send or receive money.

Today, **WorldRemit** has more than 150 staff and is available to money-senders in 50 countries. A further 67 countries are able to receive funds, taking its total international presence to 117 countries. The business processes 250,000 transfers every month.

It turned over £5.5m in the year to December 2013, according to accounts, a 354% increase on the year before.

WorldRemit isn't even five years old. The London-based company was founded in 2010 by **Dr Ismail Ahmed**, who had previously been a compliance advisor to the **United Nations** and has two decades of experience in money transfer, both academic and commercial. He holds a MSc and PhD from the **University of London** and an Executive MBA from **London Business School**.

**Contact:** [www.worldremit.com](http://www.worldremit.com)

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## Mobile payments security experts Omlis emerge as fast-growing firm in North East

The firm has recently finalised its first licensed implementations, producing contracted revenues to the value of \$31 million over the next 5 years. Funded by private investors, Omlis has expanded from 2 to 43 full-time employees in **Newcastle** and **London** since February 2014 and is on its way to becoming the fastest growing mobile payments security company in a swiftly expanding market.

These contracts are based on secured partner and client opportunities across Europe, South America, the Middle East and Africa, all secured by Omlis in the first 12 months of business.

The company, founded by Newcastle-born **Markus Milsted** in October 2012, has set the new standard for mobile transaction security with their unique mobile payments encryption solution which presents businesses with the opportunity to deliver convenient and secure mobile payment transactions.

Despite several opportunities to set up operations in other regions in the UK and abroad, Mr Milsted decided to keep the Omlis HQ in central Newcastle. Its rapid growth can be attributed to the continuous and rapid increase of global payment fraud issues attributed to the mass adoption of mobile solutions by consumers. Omlis presents an opportunity for the mobile payments ecosystem to deliver 100% fault-tolerant mobile payment security.

The company is adding to its high calibre partner network of organisations including **Stratus Global Technologies, Stratus Technologies Mexico, Seric Systems, ISN Technologies** and **Orion Software and Services**. It is also recognised as only one of three global security software solutions approved for the **IBM** marketplace.

It is on track to becoming one of the region's largest technology employers by 2016.

Mr Milsted, said: "It's hard to believe that the company has expanded so quickly. Our CCO, **John Stuart**, previously shaped the commercial strategies for world-class organizations including **S1** and **Verifone** securing orders in excess of \$350 million in competitive global markets. The Omlis team is growing and the talent is immense. Omlis has recruited highly skilled, world-class talent, creating over 30 jobs in the region within its first year, and is on target to almost triple the headcount in 2015."

**Contact:** [www.omlis.com](http://www.omlis.com)

## Software start-up Onfido raises £500,000 in seed funding

The firm's 'online real-time employee screening service' is being rolled out to employers. With the fine for hiring an illegal worker rising to £20,000 in 2014, screening potential employees for identity, right to work and criminal record is now more important than ever. Onfido screening services, which costs less than a third of traditional background checks, makes it 'more accessible' to smaller companies.

Onfido MD **Husayn Kassai** said "We have ensured that cost and timeliness do not put screening beyond the reach of employers of high-risk low-skilled workers who would otherwise risk reputational damage and business disruption from bad hires.

"The average Onfido full check costs £26, and ID verification is £10. Our turnaround is around four and a half days for criminal record checks, instead of the industry average of 10-15 days and we're able to return 85 per cent of employment verifications within 5 days."

Onfido has raised £500,000 in seed funding from investors including the **Saïd Business School Entrepreneurship Centre's Seed Fund**. The company has also completed the **Isis Innovation Software Incubator** programme.

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Onfido introduced technology into an industry which has been reliant on manual checks – opening the door for employers in sectors such as childcare, cleaning, and retail to conduct fast, inexpensive checks on right-to-work, ID verification and global criminal record checks.

Onfido claims it has built an international client base of over 300 clients in eighteen months simply from referrals. Kassai said: “People also log on to Onfido.com when employing managerial level staff since we’re much faster and less expensive than traditional screeners. We now offer ID checks across 28 countries and criminal record checks across the world.”

Onfido’s systems are synchronised with official databases and data sources worldwide, enabling automated, real-time, online checks. Kassai said the company plans to continue to invest in its technology in order to further reduce turnaround times and broaden its geographic reach.

**Contact:** [www.onfido.com](http://www.onfido.com)

### **London-based Kimble Applications Ltd software streamlines business processes**

Customers include IT and management consultancies, accountancy and law firms and communication agencies, almost any firm with a professional services offering.

In May 2015 Kimble won the ISV Innovation Award at the **Salesforce Partner Awards** – ‘The Most Innovative App Exchange Application’. In 2015 VC firm **Sussex Place Ventures** invested part of a £1.17m fundraising in Kimble Applications – to expand its international operations with a new office in **Boston**, its third in the US.

Kimble claims to be is the only genuinely integrated solution providing support for all the key business processes. Kimble enables management of the whole business, rather than the traditional narrow focus on operations, sales or delivery solutions. In a single product, Kimble provides the combined functionality of separate Opportunity management, PSA, T&E and Financial reporting systems, dramatically reducing process complexity and boosting business.

**David Scott**, CTO, has worked in the professional services industry for over 25 years in a number of major organisations including **Oracle Corporation**. He has a background of delivering highly complex solutions across a broad spectrum of businesses.

In 2015 professional services automation firm Kimble Applications was put into the government’s **G-Cloud Digital Marketplace** for the next two years. G-Cloud is an initiative which aims to make it easier for public sector bodies to procure IT services that use cloud computing. Kimble will be a part of a number of suppliers allowed to market their services to governmental departments on this system.

CEO **Sean Hoban** said: “We came through a very thorough evaluation process, and demonstrated great confidence in Kimble Applications’ ability to deliver.”

**Contact:** [www.kimbleapps.com](http://www.kimbleapps.com)

### **Mercia Technologies invests £1.5m in digital trading card company VirtTrade**

**VirtTrade**, a digital card trading platform technology business based in East Sussex, is the first direct investment made into a new ‘emerging star’ from the group’s third party funds.

It is managed by its wholly owned subsidiary, **Mercia Fund Management**, since it listed in December 2014. VirtTrade’s technology means that any IP or content can be built into a Digital Trading Experience to suit your audience.

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VirtTrade's trading engine takes the principle of a traditional printed card/sticker album and turns it into an interactive digital trading environment. Unlike traditional trading cards, its driven cards can take live data feeds from a player, the IP owner, and the outside world.

VirtTrade was set up in 2012 and has developed an advanced technical platform. Mercia's investment in VirtTrade follows the latter's recent acquisition of key IP rights and, separately, a partnership with a significant owner of numerous high profile global IP rights.

Mercia suggests this partnership provides validation of VirtTrade's technology and model, targeting the release of its first cards later this year. **Mark Payton**, chief executive of Mercia Technologies, said: "The trading cards sector has yet to succumb to the digital revolution and we believe this business is well placed for rapid growth across multiple markets."

**John Howard**, CEO and co-founder of VirtTrade, said: "Our team offers significant expertise across technology, sports, entertainment, IP and gaming, which will underpin and drive our future growth. We are currently developing several digital collectables for major established IPs."

**Contact:** [www.virttrade.com](http://www.virttrade.com)

## FUNDING & INVESTMENTS

### FinTech Innovation Lab London – the other successful companies...

The companies include Warsaw-based Atsora, UK firms Cytora, Duco, PontusVision and Ripjar, the Spanish firm Torusware and Germany-based xWare42, enter 2015 Lab.

FinTech Innovation Lab London is designed to nurture early-stage companies from the UK, Europe and elsewhere that are developing new technologies for the financial services sector. For the third consecutive year it is based at Level39, Europe's largest financial technology accelerator space, in Canary Wharf.

The seven start-ups were chosen from a wide range of applicants and will be mentored for 12 weeks by leading executives from financial services, venture capital and angel investment firms through a series of panel discussions, workshops, leadership coaching and networking opportunities. At the end of the programme, the entrepreneurs will be given an opportunity to present their concepts to potential investors and participating industry executives at an Investor Day, hosted at Royal Bank of Scotland's offices on March 26, 2015.

Atsora provides financial institutions with innovative tools for small business owners. The core product, Momentum, is an integrated online and mobile application used for business planning, monitoring cash-flow and growth forecasting.

Cytora uses web-based data to provide real-time geopolitical risk assessments to organizations that operate in volatile, emerging or complex markets. The solution allows users to customize their risk assessment to capture information relevant to their businesses and includes alerts for immediate updates when conditions suddenly change.

Pontus Networks helps businesses increase the performance of their computer systems. Its flagship product, PontusVision Threat Manager, enables different types of business software to run more efficiently and nearly three times faster.

Ripjar's platform provides real-time social media monitoring and data analysis. Using proprietary natural language processing, deep learning algorithms and visualizations, Ripjar's platform allows organizations

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to make sense of the growing number of external data sources.

Torusware enables businesses to increase the processing speed of their IT systems, whether these systems are hosted on the cloud or implemented on premise. For instance, trading systems, which need to exchange information in nanoseconds, can experience unpredictable high-load at specific times, such as when exchanges open or close, and Torusware ensures low latency responsive times during these critical periods.

xWare42 is a software developer whose core product, xPay, allows banks to give customers additional information about their purchases. For instance, payment details on a bank statement can be enriched by adding information such as receipts, addresses, opening hours, service numbers and other details about the retailers.

**Contact:** Accenture – Melodie Laroche-Gray – 020 7844 8513 – [melodie.laroche-gray@accenture.com](mailto:melodie.laroche-gray@accenture.com)

### **New York finance analysts say investment in UK tech firms reaches £1.4bn**

The near-\$1bn rise in funding represents the biggest annual increase in technology investment in the last four years, state **CB Insights**, which completed a survey funded by London promotion agency **London First**.

UK-based tech companies attracted \$2.1bn in venture capital funding this year, compared to \$1.1bn in 2013, according to data compiled by CB Insights. Notable deals include the travel search engine operator **Momondo Group** raising \$130m in October, peer-to-peer lender **Funding Circle's** \$65m funding round in July, and the online payment specialist **Powa Technologies** raised \$80m in November.

The near-\$1bn rise in funding 'represents the biggest annual increase in technology investment in the last four years,' it said. In total, 284 technology companies attracted institutional funding in 2014.

**Contacts:** [www.momondogroup.com](http://www.momondogroup.com) – [www.fundingcircle.com](http://www.fundingcircle.com) – [www.powa.com](http://www.powa.com)

### **Model Two Zero Ltd t/a Duco wins the 2014 FOW International Award**

In December 2014 **Duco**, a London-based technology provider of hosted reconciliation services. It won 'Best New Product – Reconciliation' for its flagship **Duco Cube**, launched in April 2013.

Duco CEO **Christian Nentwich**, said: "We introduced a fundamental rethink into this field, enabling firms to drastically simplify their processes for business-critical functions while eliminating unnecessary technology expenditures and substantial infrastructure investments. Major organisations around the world have already deployed Duco Cube to bring tremendous efficiencies and control of valuable information in a highly secure environment, with very little investment of time and resources."

Duco Cube provides the infrastructure to interrogate any data, across asset classes, with a game changing pricing structure. Since its launch, Duco Cube has reconciled more than 300 million transactions.

In January 2015 it was of seven financial technology entrepreneurs selected to participate in this year's **FinTech Innovation Lab** London. The Lab, which was launched in London by **Accenture** in 2012, is a collaboration between Accenture and leading financial institutions, supported by the **Mayor of London**, the **City of London Corporation** and **Innovate UK**.

**Contact:** [www.du.co](http://www.du.co)

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## VC fund joins with two leading innovation organisations

The new trio will help finance and support high growth companies. The **Rainbow Seed Fund (RSF)** – managed by long-established venture capital specialist **Midven** – will work with the **Royal Academy of Engineering's Enterprise Hub** and the **ERA Foundation**.

The chairman of the Rainbow Seed Fund's advisory board, **Ian Taylor**, said the partnerships reflected the fund's increasing reach and influence in investing capital into early stage ventures emerging from the UK's high quality science research.

RSF is a £24m early stage venture capital fund dedicated to kick-starting promising UK tech companies. The fund is independently managed by Midven and focuses on promising technologies developed at some of the UK's largest publicly-funded research facilities and at the campuses they support.

The fund will work with the Royal Academy of Engineering's Enterprise Hub and the ERA Foundation to provide support and investment capital for some of the UK's most ground-breaking and innovative concerns. Ian Taylor added that the fund's "unique and adaptable structure" played a key role in ensuring the new partnerships went ahead.

The Royal Academy of Engineering **Enterprise Hub** has been created to bring about a step change in the success of UK-based entrepreneurial technology businesses, harnessing the expertise and insight of **Academy Fellows**. The ERA Foundation supports activities that help bridge the gap between research and commercialisation in engineering.

Ian Taylor said: "Investors play a key role in the success of new engineering and technology companies, and these partnerships will provide a collaboration that brings not just capital, but the real world business experience that early stage companies so often need.

"That is particularly helpful in areas such as commercialisation – bringing those ideas to market – meaning we are suitable partners for institutions wanting to stimulate the application of research. The fund has a proven track record and has stimulated a multiple of follow-on private investment into its portfolio companies".

**Contact:** [www.midven.co.uk/news](http://www.midven.co.uk/news)

## The Business Performance (BP) Group acknowledges support from UKTI

From a standing start in 2013 it now has a \$1m sales forecast for 2015. The BP Group is a business development agency that helps office product resellers win new business and achieve profitable growth. By accessing advice and support from UKTI, the consultancy has been able to gain significant US wins six months ahead of schedule.

Commercial director **Nick Wilkinson** said: "In July 2013 support from UKTI enabled us to attend the **Advantage Business Conference (ABC)** in Nashville. This is an annual event, run by a major US wholesaler of office products, which attracts independent resellers from across the continent.

"We were able to exhibit at the conference and speak face-to-face with around 100 independent dealers and potential customers. This was crucial for our business, as it allowed us to progress in person the telephone leads we had generated in the UK."

He added "There are only two office product wholesalers across the entire United States, which has made it relatively easy for us to research our target market and develop our own customer contacts.

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UKTI international trade adviser **Martin Senior** has been working with The BP Group for just over a year. He said: "The company now has nine employees based at a new office in Atlanta and **Luke Chapman**, the managing director, is spending an increasing amount of his time leading the sales element there. The company grossed \$600k within their first six months of trading in the US and looks on track to invoice a further \$150k before the end of the year." The BP Group has also worked with UKTI to 'Americanise' its website, and online materials.

**Contact:** [www.thebpgroup.co.uk](http://www.thebpgroup.co.uk)

## UNIVERSITY NEWS

### University of Southampton spinout Joulo Ltd bought by Dutch firm Quby NL

In Feb 2015 an energy technology company spun out of the University of Southampton was snapped up by **Quby**, a developer of smart thermostats and energy displays.

Joulo, co-founded by **Dr Reuben Wilcock** and **Professor Alex Rogers** from electronics and computer science at the university, develops smart energy monitoring technology that delivers insight into heating systems. Financial details of the deal were not disclosed.

Joulo co-founder Wilcock said: "Quby is a great match for Joulo and I am delighted about this acquisition. I am confident that Quby will have great success taking Joulo to international markets whilst continuing to develop the underlying algorithms. "In Quby's hands, I have no doubt that Joulo will soon make an appearance in millions of homes across the world."

Quby chief executive **Joris Jonker** added: "We are excited to announce this acquisition. The founders of Joulo have developed a great product, and we are proud to have the opportunity to bring it to market. At the same time, this is a great opportunity for Quby to become more active in the UK by using Joulo as a springboard for our smart thermostat offering."

**Contact:** [www.quby.nl](http://www.quby.nl) – Professor Alex Rogers: 023 8059 9008 – [acr@ecs.soton.ac.uk](mailto:acr@ecs.soton.ac.uk)

### Driverless vehicles trials begin on Thames Path at Greenwich

On the Greenwich Peninsula in southeast London the **UK Government** hopes they can transform urban transport. The tests, however, have forced the temporary suspension of a cycle path – not a popular move.

In 2014 the **Royal Borough of Greenwich** successfully bid for an £8 million grant to test three different types of the vehicles in partnership with the **Transport Research Laboratory** and the **University of Greenwich**.

A trial of a driverless 'pod' supplied by **Phoenix Wings** under way on a cycle path between the **O2 Arena** – formerly the Millennium Dome – and John Harrison Way on the eastern side of the peninsula.

The GATEway project is based in Greenwich, South East London, and will model how driverless cars could be implemented in London, and further afield. Led by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), testing will include automated electric shuttle vehicles, a demonstration of tele-operated driving and a simulated 3D model of the Greenwich peninsula.

**Contact:** <https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/intelligent-mobility/article-view/-/blogs/19877073>

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## University of Manchester helps Innovus scheme secures £1.5 million

Cumbria-based **Innovus**, which helps businesses to make commercial success of innovative technology was developed and is delivered by Manchester's **Dalton Nuclear Institute** and the **National Nuclear Laboratory**. The new funding will lead to further investment totalling over £2.5m into developing new technology based projects in Cumbria, creating new high-value jobs.

Innovus projects thus far include a novel graveyard mapping project with international potential, and the application of scallop dredging techniques to accelerate the safe clean-up of Sellafield's legacy storage ponds.

Innovus hosts its next event at Energus on 5th March, focusing this time on robotics, sensors and remote systems. **Adrian Davis-Johnston**, programme manager at Innovus, and **Prof Francis Livens**, of the Dalton Nuclear Institute said "This additional investment to Cumbria along with our experience will help make a commercial success of new technologies."

The Innovus scheme is open for applications for support and funding. Businesses wishing to apply can do so via the Innovus website – [www.innovus.org.uk](http://www.innovus.org.uk) – or via email [innovate@innovus.org.uk](mailto:innovate@innovus.org.uk).

## Two of Bristol's best new ventures seek investors in London

The firms, touchless haptics company **Ultrahaptics** and a video on demand service by **VUIN Ltd**, are based in Bristol's **SETsquared** innovation incubator.

Ultrahaptics, which is developing technology that uses ultrasound to create the feeling of touch in mid-air, and VUIN, a video-on-demand service for Bollywood movies, will be among more than 20 SETsquared tech start-ups that pitched to investors in early 2015.

The event, called **Accelerating Growth** and now in its 11th year, is organised by SETsquared, the business incubation programme run by a partnership of the universities of Bristol, Bath, Exeter, Southampton and Surrey.

Over the past 12 years SETsquared has helped more than 1,000 businesses raise over £1bn in investment, figures that have contributed to it being named as the top university business incubator in Europe and No.2 in the world.

Among the SETsquared companies to receive substantial investment in the past year is Bristol-based retail management software business **Brightpearl**, which secured a \$10m funding injection led by new investor **MMC Ventures**, alongside participation from **Quayle Munro** and existing investors **Eden Ventures** and **Notion Capital**.

**Ultrahaptics** is the world's leading touchless haptics company. Their unique technology brings the sense of touch to gesture control, creating the magical experience of feeling without touching.

VUIN is a video on demand service which offers an easier solution to watch Indian movies at your convenience. VUIN has already built strong strategic relationship with movie distributors in the **UK** and **India**. VUIN operates its own Content Delivery Platform where by reducing the cost per stream which enables VUIN to provide a unique Revenue share proposition to the distributors. VUIN also offers cine news, galleries, trailers and short films that can be accessed on various internet-enabled devices including computers, mobile phones, tablets and smart televisions.

**Contact:** [www.vuin.tv](http://www.vuin.tv) – [www.ultrahaptics.com](http://www.ultrahaptics.com)

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## **Edinburgh University investment fund gives Li-Fi spinout a brighter future**

**Old College Capital** (OCC), the venture investment arm of the **University of Edinburgh**, participated in the investment round for University spinout, **pureLiFi Ltd**.

OCC invested £250,000 in pureLiFi as part of a £1.5 million co-investment with **London & Scottish Investment Partners** and the **Scottish Investment Bank** (SIB) in a deal, managed by Edinburgh-based corporate finance firm **Quest Corporate**.

pureLiFi is developing wireless communication products based on visible light communication technology, or 'Li-Fi', that was developed by **Professor Harald Haas**, chair of mobile communications at Edinburgh. The new investment will be used to support the development and roll-out of the company's product roadmap and growing the marketing and sales function.

Li-Fi refers to high-speed, bidirectional, networked and mobile wireless communications using light. Li-Fi uses the visible light and infrared spectra, which are plentiful, free and unlicensed. The visible light bandwidth is more than 10,000 larger than all the bandwidth that is currently used by wireless communication systems. This is one of the objectives set out by the 5G Infrastructure Public Private Partnership, 5G-PPP, for next generation 5G cellular systems.

Professor Haas, pureLiFi's Chief Scientific Officer, has first coined and demonstrated 'Li-Fi' on stage at **TED Global** in July 2011. He and his colleagues have since been pioneering Li-Fi chip and networking technologies and have demonstrated data rates of 15 Gbps.

**Contact:** [www.research-innovation.ed.ac.uk](http://www.research-innovation.ed.ac.uk)

## **UEA spinout Spectral Edge Ltd launches Eyeteq image enhancement technology**

Together with the University of East Anglia, Spectral Edge has pioneered new approaches to image fusion, colour perception-based processing, and image enhancement.

Based on research from the University of East Anglia (UEA), Eyeteq uses mathematical perception models to modify image colours, so that the 8% of men and 1 in 200 women around the world that are colour blind enjoy improved visibility when viewing both still and moving images. There are estimated to be around 250 million colour-blind people worldwide.

Its image processing technology is underpinned by strong mathematics and a focus on winning image preference tests. MD Christopher Cytera said "Service providers and set top box manufacturers can see the benefits in increasing accessibility to colour blind viewers, and Eyeteq provides the perfect solution for the living room TV screen.

"Our trials have proved the concept, and it is now ready for integration into prime time consumer technology in order to transform how colour-blind people, and their families, watch TV."

Spectral Edge's Eyeteq technology combines details that are beyond what colour-blind people can see to make them visible in such a way that non-colour-blind people like it too.

By adding Eyeteq as an option in the Accessibility menu, consumer electronics manufacturers and service providers will be able to offer a dramatically improved TV viewing experience to the estimated 4% of the world's population that suffers from colour blindness.

**Contact:** [www.spectraledge.co.uk](http://www.spectraledge.co.uk)

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## **MRC Human Nutrition Research win 'Best New Emerging Technology' prize**

Scientists at MRC Human Nutrition Research have developed a new oral iron supplement that uses nanotechnology to mimic the natural structure of dietary iron. The nano-iron supplement is called **IHAT** and aims to treat iron deficiency anaemia – the world's most common nutritional deficiency.

It replenishes blood iron stores almost as well as currently available iron supplements, according to a new human trial in the journal *Nanomedicine*, and is designed not to have the unpleasant gastrointestinal side-effects of current supplements.

The supplement recently won top prize at the **Royal Society of Chemistry Emerging Technologies Competition** – winning one-to-one mentoring from the competition's multinational partners and £10,000 prize money, which was presented to the winners by the BBC's 'Dragon's Den' judge, **Richard Farleigh**.

**Dr Dora Pereira**, lead author on the paper and co-inventor of IHAT said: "This will raise awareness of the problem of iron deficiency anaemia. We hope to attract further funding to continue trials in humans with the aim of developing an effective and safe treatment for iron deficiency anaemia. After the 10 years hard work that we've put into basic research on how natural dietary iron is digested, and using that knowledge as a basis to develop this new technology, I feel very proud to have received this award."

In the UK alone, iron deficiency anaemia affects 2 million pre-menopausal women and 1 million children. Lack of iron in the body leads to a reduction in the number of red blood cells, which are needed to carry oxygen in the blood. Effects of iron deficiency anaemia may include tiredness and lethargy, shortness of breath, heart palpitations and impaired cognitive development.

In human trials, IHAT was about 80% as efficient as current ferrous iron supplements at replenishing the iron-containing protein in red blood cells called haemoglobin.

**Contact:** [www.mrc-hnr.cam.ac.uk/people/dora-pereira](http://www.mrc-hnr.cam.ac.uk/people/dora-pereira)

## **University College London devises new signals processing method**

**Dr Robert Maher** of UCL's **Electronic & Electrical Engineering Department**, said it had found a new method of processing signals via fiber optic cables could vastly increase the distance at which error-free data is transmitted via submarine cables without additional signal amplification. As the technique is capable of correcting corrupted or distorted data being transmitted, it may also assist in increasing the capacity of all optical fiber communications.

Dr Maher said "The challenge is to devise a technique to simultaneously capture a group of optical channels, known as a super-channel, with a single receiver. This allows us to undo the distortion by sending the data channels back on a virtual digital journey at the same time.

"By eliminating the interactions between the optical channels, we are able to double the distance signals can be transmitted error-free, from 3,190 km (1,982 mi) to 5,890 km (3,660 mi), which is the largest increase ever reported for this system architecture."

With demand for internet connectivity running at an all time high – and only increasing – the fiber optic cables over which much of the data flows draw ever-closer to reaching capacity. Short of laying more cables, growing demand is being increasingly met by boosting the number of available frequency channels on which the data, in the form of encoded light signals, is transmitted. This is often achieved using a variety of compression and error-correction techniques, as well as employing methods designed to overcome nonlinearity in long lengths of optical fiber.

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Unfortunately, given that many of these techniques are reaching the limit of their capabilities to transmit and receive light without adjacent light signal overlap and subsequent interference, data is often received with distortion errors.

In detail, the research team used a laser to generate the optical carrier and passed this through a comb generator to form seven equidistantly-spaced, frequency locked signals in the form of **Quadrature Amplitude Modulation (QAM)** – specifically a 16QAM super-channel. This super-channel signal was then introduced into one end of a fiber optic cable and captured at the other end with a high-speed super-receiver. Employing a range of new signal processing techniques specifically developed by the researchers, reception of all the channels was received intact and without error.

**Contact:** [www.ee.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.ee.ucl.ac.uk)

## AND FINALLY...

>> Crowdfunding may have suffered its first public reality check. Games designer **Peter Molyneux OBE**, famed for inventing the 'god game' genre with his 1989 title, Populous, has seen his latest venture, **Godus**, collapse in disarray. Godus challenges players to grow and support a population of followers who can then interact with the worlds developed by other players. In December 2012, Molyneux's small studio, **22 Cans**, received £500,000 via the crowd-funding site **Kickstarter** to develop the game. Rewards were offered to backers and the release date was set within a seven-to-nine month window.

The problem is, although a smartphone version has been released, the PC iteration of the game hasn't. 18 months after its proposed release date, it is still in development. Many backers would not receive the rewards they were promised for financially supporting the game, and that some of the Kickstarter pledges may not be achieved.

>> Feeling a little old – now hear this. Four Northampton sisters with combined age of 386 could soon be oldest ever siblings. One sister, **Lilian Brown** celebrated her 103rd birthday. Lilian, a great-great grandmother, was joined by sisters **Sylvia Sturgess**, 91, **Dorothy Thompson**, 96, and her twin **Ellen George**, 96, who all grew up on Monarch Street under the maiden name Clarke. **Guinness Book of Records** has confirmed the sisters are three months from totalling the highest combined age ever recorded for four British siblings. Between the sisters, they have lived through 19 Prime Ministers, survived two world wars and have 19 great-grandchildren between them.

>> Having a group of gypsies invade a commercial property can be frustrating when the police refuse to take action. One cafe owner on **South Beach, Brighton**, has found a way to get travellers moved on by police. The **Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994** states that Section 61 requires travellers to move, and it can be enforced if "it can be shown that the presence of the encampment is seriously disrupting the ability of the settled community to make use of facilities or conduct their business". Café owner **Chris Kraszewski** now encourages businesses to shut up shop as police will act quickly to move on an encampment a business is forced to close its doors.

>> Doctors have launched ambitious and 'ground breaking' plans for a 24-hour GP surgery to be built outside the **Royal Blackburn Hospital**. The development, believed to be the first of its kind in the country, would aim to transform the fortunes of the hospital's emergency department, which has been struggling for several years with the sheer volume of patients turning up at the door.

Patients would generally be referred to the centre by the triage nurse in A&E, or when they are unable to get an appointment at their own GP practice, but it could also take 'walk-ins'. People would be given a time slot to avoid long waits, while appointments would be spread throughout the day to avoid the 'surges' that so often leave emergency staff struggling. The centre, which would be staffed on a rota basis

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by all **90 GPs** in the borough, as well as nurses and support workers, would cater for minor injuries and ailments, such as an infected wound, sprains or minor burns. It would not serve patients who need help with chronic or long term conditions.

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