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PRESS RELEASE

STARTS

“Composites Grand Challenge” celebrates technical success and an inspirational year

A consortium of 22 companies from across British industry and led by GKN Aerospace, i-Composites, has concluded a unique one year challenge set by the Technology Strategy Board on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Called ‘The Composites Grand Challenge’, the programme required the companies to collaborate to progress innovations in vital composite manufacturing technologies. These technologies will extend the UK’s ability to rapidly and sustainably manufacture affordable, high-performance composite products – a key global growth market for the future.

From now until July 2011 the i-Composites consortium will be participating in and hosting events showcasing the results of their research and sharing the outcomes across UK industry to boost the country’s leadership in this area. The first of these will be exhibiting at the BIS Composites Exhibition from 6-17 June 2011 at 1 Victoria Street, London, which Mark Prisk, Minister for Business & Enterprise, visited today.

Business Minister Mark Prisk said, "Today's exhibition at BIS demonstrates the success of the joint funded Grand Challenge programme. It also highlights the UK expertise that is putting our country at the forefront of new developments.

"The composite market is a high value and fast growing sector with huge opportunities to create economic growth. Opportunities in the UK wind turbine blade and aerospace markets alone will be worth an estimated £22bn by 2020.

"Later this year the new Government funded National Composites Centre will open in Bristol providing manufacturing facilities on an industrial scale, capable of building prototypes to validate design concepts and rapid manufacturing process."

The final showcase event for the i-Composites programme will be at the newly built National Composites Centre at SPark in Bristol towards the end of July.

The competition to win the Grand Challenge was run by the Technology Strategy Board on behalf of BIS who funded the competition. The winning consortium gained £10m funding - £5m from BIS with matched funds from the participating companies. This funding has been used to progress 26 projects which were focused around 5 themes: energy reduction, automation, process time reduction, materials and sustainability.

Marcus Bryson, CEO of GKN Aerospace said, "Without doubt, the Grand Challenge programme has substantially progressed the UK's manufacturing capabilities in the growing field of composites. We encourage BIS and the Technology Strategy Board to embark on further programmes of this nature in order to maintain the momentum the Grand Challenge has stimulated and support the creation of sustainable economic growth for the UK."

Results from a year of work across the research programme include the development of advanced methods of wing manufacture, the development and validation of rapid curing technologies and techniques to significantly increase the affordability and availability of high performance composite fabrics. In the latter case a significant automotive market opportunity has been established. Over the year capability levels have improved by an average of two increments, typically from Capability Readiness Level 3 to CRL5.

"When we set the Composites Grand Challenge last year, part of the objective was to create a new, strong force for innovation in a sector that has been fragmented. We are delighted to see that this diverse consortium has worked so well together to address the challenges faced by their industry. They have found innovative approaches, shared the outcomes of their research and moved the UK's manufacturing capabilities forward in this vital and growing sector," said Dr John Morlidge, Lead Technologist for Advanced Materials at the Technology Strategy Board.

For further information on the 26 cost and energy reduction projects within the i-Composites programme and their showcase events, please visit www.i-composites.org.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

Three photographs attached:

1. i-Composites partners meet Business Minister Mark Prisk at BIS Composites Exhibition, 7 June 2011



Front row l-r: Scott Tolson (Sigmatex), David Chambers (EPL Composite Solutions), Mustafa Rampuri (University of Bristol), Will Searle (Axillium Research), Business Minister Mark Prisk, Richard Newley (GKN Aerospace), Nigel Platt (ABB), Peter Chivers (NCC)

Back row l-r: Jon Mabbitt (UMECO), James Robertson (Technology Strategy Board), Mark Lees (Cobham), Kevin Barlow (GKN Aerospace), Alasdair Ryder (ACG/UMECO), Stefanos Giannis (MERL), Ian Schofield (ABB), Marcelo Grassi (Spirit Aero), Jonathan Dennison (GKN), Paul McCubbin (Spirit Aero)

2. i-Composites Partner Map

icomposites
Inspirational Composite Technologies



3. i-Composites Consortium Partners



Row 1 - front (l-r): Antony Dodworth (Bentley Motors), Richard Newley (GKN Aerospace), James Robertson (Technology Strategy Board), John Morlidge (Technology Strategy Board), Lynette Carstens (Axillium Research), Will Searle (Axillium Research), Sandy Grom (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills), John Cornforth (GKN Aerospace), Mustafa Rampuri (University of Bristol)

Row 2 (l-r): Sam Hutchins (GKN Aerospace), Lee Bateup (Bentley Motors), Andrew Ball (Sigmatex), Pawandeep Kalyan (Airbus Operations), Scott Tolson (Sigmatex), David Chambers (EPL Composite Solutions), Julian Spooner (Princess Yachts), Ebby Shahidi (Advanced Composites Group), Phil Collins (GKN Aerospace), Robert Backhouse (Rolls-Royce), Sophie Cazuc (Advanced Composites Group), Vicki Clarke (NWAA), Richard Scaife (AMRC University of Sheffield), Mark Lees (Cobham), Matthew Fox (Cobham)

Row 3 (l-r): Alasdair Ryder (Advanced Composites Group), Iain Minton (Aircelle), Scott Murray (Sigmatex), Amaury Vuillaume (Vestas), Frank Spee (Vestas), Kevin Barlow (GKN Aerospace), Gary Connery (Bombardier), Stefanos Giannis (MERL), Ian Gurnell (Advanced Composites Group), Nick Savage (Cobham), Toby Kilham (AMRC University of Sheffield)

Row 4 – back (l-r): Stuart Lewis (GKN Aerospace), Chris McHugh (Sigmatex), Julian Rishton (Aircelle), Andreas Lutz (Spirit Aero), Paul McCubbin (Spirit Aero), Alun Reece (Loop Technology), Gary Taylor (Kuka), Andrew Dyer (Vestas), Gary Ottley (Güdel), Adrian Bates (GKN Aerospace)

Absent: ESI, Frazer-Nash Consultancy, ABB Robotics

The Technology Strategy Board is a business-led government body which works to create economic growth by ensuring that the UK is a global leader in innovation. Sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Technology Strategy Board brings together business, research and the public sector, supporting and accelerating the development of innovative products and services to meet market needs, tackle major societal challenges and help build the future economy. For more information please visit www.innovateuk.org.

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