

£10 Million to Boost Advanced Materials Research

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The Universities of Birmingham and Warwick have been awarded £10 million from regional development agency, Advantage West Midlands, and the European Research Development Fund (ERDF), as part of the Birmingham Science City Initiative, to establish both universities as international competitors in advanced materials.

The Science City Advanced Materials programme will create a virtual centre that will undertake internationally-leading research and development (R & D) into the creation, development and characterisation of new, advanced materials for applications in a diversity of industries from aerospace engineering to healthcare and information computing technology (ICT).

Biomedical/healthcare, energy, aerospace and automotive transport, environmental technologies and advanced manufacturing are all sectors which are likely to benefit from advanced materials developments. Research will focus on product challenges such as more efficient materials for batteries; novel hydrogen storage materials; increased data storage capacity for computers; biodegradable materials for aiding re-growth of tissue and bone; and monitoring systems for performance assessment of bio-fuels.

Nick Paul, Chairman of Advantage West Midlands says, 'Innovation is absolutely key to driving forward the West Midlands economy and this project will also help to create high level jobs and further cement the West Midlands' reputation as a lead centre for Advanced Materials. Birmingham Science City is about demonstrating how the science and technology in West Midlands universities can improve the quality of life of people in the region and support local businesses.'

Professor Richard Palmer, from the University of Birmingham's School of Physics and Astronomy, says, 'Without new materials and new methods for manufacturing them, it would be increasingly difficult to maintain our economic position and sustain key industrial contacts. In order to remain competitive, investment in the research, growth and commercialisation of advanced materials is critical. The development of new products, with improved performance and functionality, will substantially depend on the development of advanced materials.'

Professor Pam Thomas, from the University of Warwick's Department of Physics, says, 'Research in Advanced Materials is fundamental to key economic sectors both locally to the West Midlands region and world-wide. This significant investment through Science Cities in state-of-the art equipment for collaborative materials research between Birmingham and Warwick is an exciting new development and we are looking forward to a productive and innovative joint project in the years ahead.'

Industry will work collaboratively with universities on joint research projects and will have access to wider research knowledge and innovation as there will be opportunities for companies to engage with university expertise through networking opportunities and briefing sessions on the latest developments coming from the centre. In addition Challenge Away Days and Foresight Days will be held where future developments in specific areas will be discussed with an audience from industry and research organisations.

The research programme will also lead to greater graduate and postgraduate retention in the region as new and diversified businesses working alongside the universities will create new opportunities for postgraduate employment.

Ends

Notes to Editors

Birmingham Science City is a widely drawn partnership of industry, business, education and the public sector, working together to establish the West Midlands region as a centre for world-class scientific research. By building on the region's well established reputation for innovation, working closely with the knowledge base and bringing partners together through supported projects and communications, Birmingham Science City aims to promote the value of science and innovation in improving Quality of Life.

For more information please visit www.birminghamsciencecity.co.uk

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