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West Midlands Wins Bid to put Electric Cars on the Road

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The Technology Strategy Board – the government body that exists to promote business innovation in technology - has announced that a West Midlands based consortium is one of the eight winners from across the UK, of its Ultra Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator competition that hails an important step forward for the future of transport in the UK.

Known as CABLED (Coventry and Birmingham Low Emission Demonstrators) the successful consortium, led by design, engineering consultant Arup, combines the expertise of six car manufacturers , Advantage West Midlands, power provider E.ON, the city councils of Birmingham and Coventry and three academic institutions, to implement and operate a regional demonstrator programme of low carbon cars aimed at accelerating both further development and their adoption by consumers.

Neil Butcher, project leader of CABLED and Associate within the Vehicle Design Group at Arup, said: “The West Midlands’ automotive expertise is globally renowned. Combining this with the capabilities of our academics and public sector partners ensures that the region will be at the forefront of developing the next generation of road vehicles.

“The appointment is testament to the consortium’s collective dedication to developing sustainable, ultra low carbon vehicles. CABLED is the largest of all eight regional consortiums and will contribute approximately 110* of the 340* vehicles that this Technology Strategy Board initiative will involve in UK road trials over the next six to eighteen months.”

As a winning consortium, CABLED receives part of the £25 million of funding that the Government has committed to invest jointly with the industry as part of its ongoing commitment to speed up the introduction of low carbon vehicles. This will support the substantial investment already made by the consortia themselves and is the most significant step to date in the UK of a co-ordinated move towards low carbon transport and making initial niche vehicles become a regular sight on our roads.

All 110 vehicles will be tested in and around the Birmingham and Coventry areas and include four electric models - the Mitsubishi i MiEV, Mercedes Benz smart Car ed, LTI’s TX4E taxi and the Tata Indica Vista EV - as well as the hydrogen-powered Microcab and Land Rover’s Range_e hybrid vehicle.

Crucially the consortium partners include E.ON, the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council and Coventry City Council – who between them provide electrical charging points for vehicles across the two cities, access to the university’s hydrogen refuelling station – which is currently one of very few of its kind in UK – and a firm commitment to developing the infrastructure necessary to service the needs of electric vehicles throughout the two cities.

Professor Kevin Kendall, from the University of Birmingham's Department of Chemical Engineering says, ‘We are delighted to be involved in this UK-wide project and to see the beginnings of an electric vehicle infrastructure, complete with electric plug-in points and hydrogen filling stations.’

Following this announcement Coventry University will begin the driver selection process and all information gained from the West Midlands project will be analysed by Aston University and submitted to the Technology Strategy Board to inform future plans regarding low carbon vehicles for the mass market.

Iain Gray, Chief Executive of the Technology Strategy Board said: “The journey towards low carbon transport will not be easy, but the demonstrator programme, which we are launching is a major step in the right direction. With over 340 cars being trialled in several regions across the UK, and with the involvement of large and small manufacturers, local authorities and infrastructure companies, it is the biggest project of its kind to date.”

The Technology Strategy Board created the Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator competition to act as a catalyst for industry, the public sector and academia to come together to create low emission vehicles and provide solutions to powering them. The winning consortia showcase new and emerging low carbon vehicle technologies in real world situations - many of the electric cars will be recharged via plug-ins around cities across the UK, as well as at home.

The programme is led by the Technology Strategy Board, as part of the Low Carbon Vehicles Innovation Platform, and co-funded by Department for Transport, Advantage West Midlands, One North East and the South East Development Agency. Many of the top car manufacturers are involved in the programme, including, Ford, BMW, Jaguar Land Rover, Mercedes-Benz, Toyota, Nissan and Tata Motors alongside the wider car industry supply base, four energy suppliers, five universities, and three regional development agencies.

Demonstrator programmes will take place in Glasgow, the North East, the West Midlands, Oxford, three projects in London (central London, West London, Westminster) and countrywide.

For further information on the Technology Strategy Board visit http://www.innovateuk.org.

Ends

*this figure does not include any hybrid cars currently on the road.

The Technology Strategy Board is hosting a regional media call at 2.00pm on Tuesday 23rd June at Central Square in Brindley Place, Birmingham. All members of the consortium will have spokespeople present and four vehicles will be positioned for photographs. At 2.30pm, members of the media will have an opportunity to drive the Mitsubishi i MiEV and the Mercedes Benz smart Car ed – a valid driving licence will be required.

For media enquiries contact:

Tom Rawlings: Trimedia, 0121 265 2764 or 07912 540548, **Tom.Rawlings@trimediauk.com (mailto:Tom.Rawlings@trimediauk.com)**

Or

Stuart Humphreys: Trimedia, 0121 265 2777 or 07713 334854, **Stuart.Humphreys@trimediauk.com (mailto:Stuart.Humphreys@trimediauk.com)**

or

Kate Chapple, University of Birmingham press office, tel 0121 414 2772 or 07789 921164, email:**k.h.chapple@bham.ac.uk (mailto:k.h.chapple@bham.ac.uk)**

Notes to editor

About the Technology Strategy Board

The Technology Strategy Board is a business-led executive non departmental public body, established by the Government. Its mission is to promote and support research into, and development and exploitation of, technology and innovation for the benefit of UK business, in order to increase economic growth and improve quality of life. It is sponsored by the UK’s Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). www.innovateuk.org

Ultra Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator Competition

As part of the Low Carbon Vehicles Innovation Platform, £25 million has been allocated to highly innovative, industry-led collaborative research projects in the field of ultra low carbon vehicle development and demonstration. The competition focused on encouraging the development of industry-led consortia that can deliver in bringing significant numbers of vehicles onto roads quickly. The competition winners will deliver over 340 new innovative cars on the road in eight locations around the UK in the next six to eighteen months.

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