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£40m confirmed for Manufacturing Technology Centre

Posted on Thursday 29th October 2009

The University of Birmingham will be a research partner in the world class Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) to be built at Ansty Park research and development site outside Coventry, which received public funding approval from Government today (Thursday 29th October 09).

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has confirmed a combined capital contribution of £40 million from Advantage West Midlands and East Midlands Development Agency (emda) – one of the largest public sector investments in manufacturing for many years.

The MTC has the backing of some of the UK's major global manufacturers and will support UK manufacturing companies, and their supply chains, to bring about major improvements in their manufacturing competitiveness.

A new model of collaborative partnership between industry, universities and research and technology organisations (RTO), the MTC reflects the need for manufacturers to move away from competing simply on cost and to compete more on knowledge.

The centre will provide resources and a high quality environment for the development and demonstration of new technologies on an industrial scale.

The £40m public investment will provide a catalyst to drive forward the construction of the centre and the funding to help run it in the medium term. In total, £130 million of public and private sector investments will be made in the centre over the next ten years.

Construction of the MTC will start in the first quarter of 2010 and the centre will open in early summer 2011.

Business Minister Pat McFadden made the announcement at an event in London at which BIS also gave progress updates and further announcements one year on from the launch of Government's manufacturing strategy.

"Britain has a great manufacturing future, not just a great manufacturing past. We are the sixth largest manufacturing economy globally. But the face of manufacturing here is changing and we need to embrace and support the numerous opportunities created as a result.

"That's why we're investing in centres like Ansty Park to help business and universities collaborate and commercialise new and innovative products and processes," Mr McFadden said.

Ian Austin, Regional Minister for the West Midlands, said: "Manufacturing is extremely important to the future prosperity of the Midlands' and UK economy. Today's announcement is fantastic news for the Region and will provide a huge boost for the competitiveness and innovation of our manufacturers, large and small."

Mick Laverty, Chief Executive at Advantage West Midlands, said: "Independent economic assessment predicts a £25 return on investment for the Region for every pound invested in the MTC. This reflects our commitment to investing in activities which add the most value to the regional economy.

"Advantage West Midlands and emda's unique positions as business like and business led organisations with strong relationships across the range of key agencies, such as local authorities, allow us to bring together the private and public sectors to deliver these crucial and major projects.

"It is now more important than ever that we continue to make every pound count and achieve maximum impact through our strategic interventions.

"The combined investment by the two RDAs will also firmly establish Ansty Park as the Region's home of world class research and development.

"Global telecommunications supplier Ericsson has already transferred its European research and development department to high quality purpose built offices at Ansty Park, securing 850 high value, technology driven jobs for the West Midlands. The MTC will provide up to 150 more highly skilled jobs on site for local people.

"By helping to secure Ansty's future, the MTC is in turn helping Advantage West Midlands, emda and our partners to deliver what is one in a number of projects that are critical to the regeneration of the Midlands."

Bryan Jackson, Chairman of East Midlands Development Agency (emda), which takes the lead role for manufacturing on behalf of England's RDAs, said: "The Manufacturing Technology Centre is an excellent example of Regional Development Agencies using their funds in partnership with business to ensure that UK manufacturing retains a competitive advantage.

"emda and Advantage West Midlands recognise that manufacturing is critically important to the economies of the East and West Midlands. This world-class centre of excellence, operated by some of the Midlands' leading universities working in collaboration with manufacturing companies, will help to ensure that the UK and the Midlands stays at the forefront of manufacturing technology and innovation over the coming years."

Peter Flinn, interim Director of the MTC, said: "The MTC provides a real step change for regional manufacturing. By bridging the gap between academic research and commercial production the MTC will meet the needs and requirements of industry in a way which has not been achieved until now.

"Research activity will focus on assembly, fabrication and joining technologies, including: high integrity fabrication, net shape manufacturing, advanced tooling and fixturing, and intelligent automation. This work will be underpinned by research into modelling and simulation.

"Research has already started with 15 to 20 programmes already lined up to occupy space at the MTC."

Dr Hamid Mughal, Rolls-Royce's Executive Vice President, Manufacturing Engineering, said: "Today's announcement marks a key milestone for the UK's manufacturing sector. High value-added manufacturing will increasingly play an important role in securing the UK's future competitiveness and prosperity. The MTC has been designed to enable Rolls-Royce, and other industrial partners to develop, evaluate and implement innovative manufacturing technologies to improvements in manufacturing performance.

"Our leading involvement in the MTC is a critical component of our strategy to develop a global network of advanced manufacturing research centres, and we are looking forward to working alongside our partners in the open, collaborative and innovative environment that the MTC will provide."

David Smith, Chief Executive Officer at Jaguar Land Rover, also welcomed the news. "As one of the Manufacturing Technology Centre's industry partners, Jaguar Land Rover welcomes this significant investment from the Regional Development Agencies. Today's announcement is an important step forward in progressing what will be a world class research and development centre, based here in the West Midlands," he said.

Professor Nigel Weatherill, Head of the University of Birmingham's College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, commenting on behalf of the three universities, said: "The MTC is crucial to the economic development of the Midlands and the UK. Manufacturing technology equates to productivity, one of the key elements of competitiveness. The centre will capitalise on research flowing from universities and deliver production-ready solutions for industry. The collaboration focuses on industry needs and will allow scientists to try out novel ideas on production scale equipment."

Dr Bob John, Chief Executive Officer of TWI Ltd, said: “The Manufacturing Technology Centre is an exciting new way for TWI Ltd to work with universities in support of key UK industrial companies. It will combine academic output with our research and development skills to provide new technologies that are production ready for exploitation. Therefore, I am very pleased that my organisation is a research partner in this new initiative, and I look forward to seeing it make a real difference to manufacturing by the development and transfer of innovative and productive technologies.”

Notes to Editors:

Advantage West Midlands and East Midlands Development Agency are two of nine Regional Development Agencies in England whose role is to transform the English regions through sustainable economic development.

For more information about Advantage West Midlands visit: www.advantagewm.co.uk

For more details about emda **visit (http://www.emda.org.uk/)**

For more information about the MTC email: info@the-mtc.org

MTC project partners

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

The MTC is outlined in Government’s manufacturing strategy.

MTC funding partners

- from Advantage West Midlands (AWM)
- £15million from East Midlands Development Agency (emda)

The MTC has received a £40 million combined capital contribution from regional development agencies AWM and emda.

Revenue funding will be sought through the Technology Strategy Board / Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council / FP7 applications, and through industry contributions. Industry will become members of the centre through subscriptions as well as through contracted research.

MTC research partners

- University of Birmingham
- University of Nottingham
- Loughborough University
- The Welding Institute Limited

The MTC will enable knowledge transfer from research partners into industry.

MTC industry partners

- Rolls Royce
- Airbus UK
- Aero Engine Controls
- Jaguar Land Rover

The MTC will enable industry partners to collaborate on key technological developments.

Additional information about the MTC:

1. Developed in response to Government’s manufacturing strategy, ‘Manufacturing: New Challenges, New Opportunities’, published in September 2008

2. A new model of collaborative partnership between industry, universities and research and technology organisations

3. A beacon for manufacturing technologies for local SMEs. As well as supporting national and international companies, the MTC aims to develop the indigenous supply chain, as well as creating highly skilled jobs

4. Inaugural industrial members and key partners include Rolls Royce, Airbus UK, Aero Engine Controls and Jaguar Land Rove

5. Comprises a unique collaboration of research partners including the University of Birmingham, University of Nottingham, Loughborough University and TWI Limited (The Welding Institute)

6. Represents a £130m combined investment over 10 years, the single largest investment in a manufacturing research facility for many years

7. The largest of the UK manufacturing research centres both in terms of scale as well as having multiple partners

8. Housed in a purpose-built 12,000 sq m facility, eventually employing 100-150 highly skilled people

9. Initial research projects commence Autumn / Winter 2009, building construction in 2010, centre open for business in 2011

For further information

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