

Back to School for Birmingham's Lord Mayor

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The Lord Mayor, Councillor Michael Wilkes, will return to his alma mater when he visits the University of Birmingham's School of Chemical Engineering to launch the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) in Hydrogen, Fuel Cells and their Applications at 4pm on Wednesday 4th November.

The Centre, based at Birmingham with collaborating partners at the Universities of Loughborough and Nottingham, will provide a four-year training ground for 50 postgraduate students, who will graduate armed with the skills to take on the global challenges now faced in the fields of energy, hydrogen and fuel cells.

Fourteen postgraduate students at the Centre are already working on projects key to the hydrogen economy: alternative materials for catalysts in fuel cells so they can compete commercially with fossil-fuelled systems; a new generation of hydrogen vehicle with a range of 250 miles on one tank of fuel; new types of fuel cell power systems for homes; and man-made enzymes for the production of hydrogen.

Professor Kevin Kendall at the University's School of Chemical Engineering, home to the Centre, says, 'Hydrogen and fuel cell technologies are expanding to create jobs in new green industries; there are opportunities for students at this Centre to gain a deeper perspective into the hydrogen economy both in the UK and around the world.'

Dr Bruno Pollet, Coordinator of the Centre, says, 'The skills that our students will develop mean that they can make a significant impact within the field of energy in their future careers – not only will they gain a sound knowledge of the technical aspects of hydrogen and fuel cells, they will be able to transfer their skills to an industrial setting.'

Birmingham already has a considerable track-record in research into hydrogen and fuel cells. The Fuel Cells Group leads a number of high-profile projects. It is the only university in the UK with its own fleet of five hydrogen powered vehicles. These are being remotely monitored by engineers while they carry out tasks around campus to ascertain the feasibility of hydrogen in a transport application. The team is also assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of hydrogen in a domestic setting at a house in the Black Country, where hydrogen is used to heat hot water and power the central heating. The group have recently agreed to collaborate with Canadian universities and Ontario's Hydrogen Village, which will give students an international perspective on a zero-emission environment.

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Michael Wilkes, studied economics at Birmingham graduating in 1962. He gained a PhD in 1977 and remained at the University as a member of academic staff until his retirement in 2002, serving as Head of the School of Social Sciences from 1988 to 1991 and Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Social Sciences from 1991 to 1995.

The Doctoral Training Centre is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council for £5.5 million.

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For further media information

Kate Chapple, Press Officer, University of Birmingham, tel 0121 414 2772 or 07789 921164.

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