

£650,000 funding grant awarded to West Midlands' foremost research universities

Posted on Friday 1st October 2010

The University of Birmingham and the University of Warwick have been awarded a £650,000 research grant by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) for a collaborative project developing new materials for a highly efficient class of fuel cells.

The new project will run for three and half years from October 2010 and involve academic investigators Dr P.R. Slater and Prof C. Greaves (University of Birmingham), Dr J.V. Hanna and Prof M.E. Smith (University of Warwick).

The research will investigate novel doping strategies to improve the performance of electrolyte and electrode materials for use in Solid Oxide Fuel Cell systems. The funding will also support a postdoctoral researcher and a PhD student, along with some equipment to expand the synthesis and testing facilities at Birmingham.

This project is part of a larger investment under the Birmingham Science City initiative by Advantage West Midlands and ERDF (The European Regional Development Fund) in the research infrastructure of the West Midlands region. The universities of Birmingham and Warwick are partners in a Science City Research Alliance (SCRA) working across the fields of Advanced Materials, Translational Medicine and Energy Efficiency.

The EPSRC-funded project will also utilise equipment gained through the Advanced Materials projects to deliver the objectives of this research. The team at Birmingham will investigate the synthesis and electrical characterisation of the materials, while at Warwick the environment of the dopants will be examined in detail through NMR (Nuclear Magnetic Resonance) measurements.

Dr Peter Slater said "The funding through AWM and ERDF has proved instrumental in enhancing the facilities at Birmingham and Warwick, and developing closer links between the two universities. This EPSRC funded project is a consequence of this investment and reinforces the collaboration between the Birmingham Chemistry SOFC team and Warwick Physics NMR team, offering the potential for significant advances in materials performance for next generation Solid Oxide Fuel Cells."

Notes to Editors:

The Science City Research Alliance is part of Birmingham Science City - a region-wide partnership of public sector, businesses and the research base, which is facilitating the use of science and technology to improve the quality of life and prosperity of the West Midlands. Funded by Advantage West Midlands, Birmingham Science City's aim is to create strategies to exploit centres of world-class scientific research, by developing relevant activities for sustainable economic and social benefit.

www.birminghamsciencecity.co.uk (<http://www.birminghamsciencecity.co.uk>)

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