South West Competitiveness News

March 2012

Welcome

to the South West Competitiveness Programme European Regional Development Fund newsletter, the first edition since responsibility for the Programme transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

This edition looks at some highlights since transfer, focusing on initiatives the Programme has supported to assist high value manufacturing businesses.

Early in the Programme, a call for expressions of interest led to investment of European funding in facilities providing a focal point for collaboration between businesses and the research and knowledge base. The first of these two Business Technology Centres feature in this edition.

Inside this issue:

National Composite Centre Launch

One of the flagship projects of the South West Competitiveness Programme, the National Composite Centre, based at Bristol Science Park, was formally launched on 24 November 2011 by Secretary of State Vince Cable. The European Regional Development Fund invested £9m in the £25m centre alongside £12m from BIS.

Composite is the material of the future, changing the face of engineering with multiple layers producing a strong but lightweight material that benefits the design of aircraft, racing cars and renewable technologies such as wind turbines among many other products. The centre combines state-of-the-art machinery with highly skilled engineers and researchers able to assist businesses to develop and commercialise new technologies and products.

The centre has powerful industry support with leading companies such as AgustaWestland, Airbus and Rolls-Royce involved since inception and committing almost £5.5m of work over three years. Small and medium sized enterprises from across the UK involved in composites manufacture may take advantage of the opportunities to access state of the art equipment, software, knowledge and experience through the centre's flexible tiered membership system.

Baroness Hanham, Communities Minister in the Department for Communities and Local Government, said: "The National Composite Centre is a fabulous example of national and European funding working together to create opportunities for economic growth. Local partners recognised the opportunity to invest in the National Composite Centre would create a world class facility which benefits both the immediate locality and UK manufacturing as a whole."

To find out more, visit

www.nationalcompositescentre.co.uk

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Centre for Additive Layer Manufacturing (CALM)

Officially opened on 16 September 2011, the £2.6m Centre for Additive Layer Manufacturing at the University of Exeter was set up with the help of £1,003,632 European Regional Development Funding plus private match and other public monies. The centre is helping businesses to understand how additive manufacturing can add value to their products and processes.

Additive Layer Manufacturing – also known as 3D printing – makes objects from 3D model data, usually building up materials layer on layer to create complex or bespoke parts and products.

It offers businesses tremendous opportunities to design complex components, to reduce waste and manufacturing costs and to accelerate the time it takes to get a product to market.

One company to benefit is Bristol-based start-up company TangibleFX, who needed to package their innovative guitar effects electronics into a brand new product, the MIDI-Moov. This is a device that can be attached to the body allowing a musician to create and manipulate music via movement.

CALM engineers spent time with their design team to fully understand the requirements of the product and provided impartial advice on manufacturing options. TangibleFX were able to use the unique benefits of Additive Layer Manufacturing to reduce the number of components in the assembly. Using a technique called Selective Laser Sintering, CALM delivered prototype parts in a few days without the need for additional tooling or fixtures. TangibleFX applied post-finishing to identify the new MIDI-Moov product.

TangibleFX said, "CALM have been instrumental in helping us transform the MIDI-Moov from an abstract concept into something more tangible. For an early start-up company such as ours, their help is invaluable."

To find out more about the Centre for Additive Layer Manufacturing visit

http://www.exeter.ac.uk/CALM

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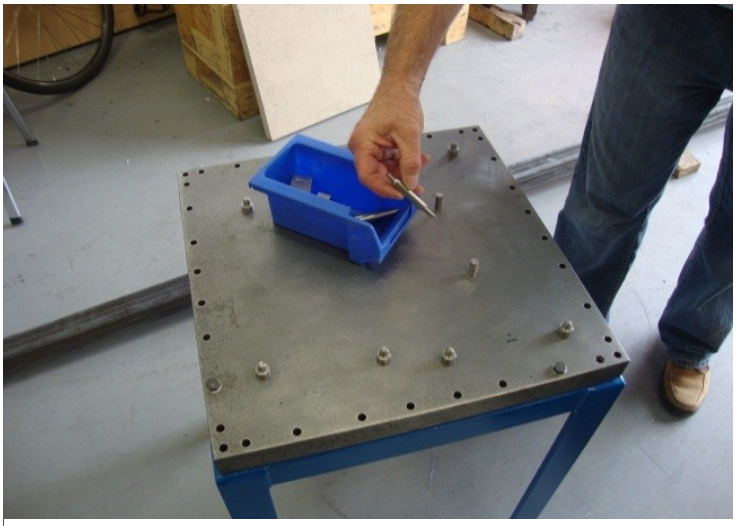
Laboratory for Integrated Metrology Applications (LIMA)

Established in June 2010, the Laboratory for Integrated Metrology Applications (LIMA) Business Technology Centre is almost halfway through its funded programme and has supported over 75 businesses across the South West to improve their manufacturing processes through the better use of precision measurement.

Based at the University of Bath, LIMA collaborates with industrial partners to improve processes of metrology, the science of measurement, for measuring large objects such as aeroplane wings to within a fraction of a millimetre. An investment of £1m European Regional Development Fund has supported LIMA's work to introduce these technologies to engineering businesses across the South West.

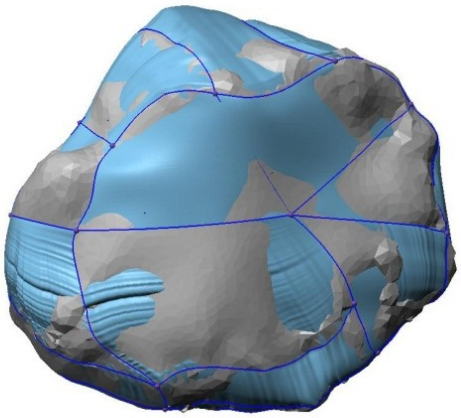
One company to benefit is Devon-based Rockwood Composites, which designs and manufactures composite parts for aerospace and other sectors.

After a site visit to discuss the company's measurement and verification challenges, LIMA agreed to measure a fixture plate, manufactured in-house by Rockwood and used to verify dimensions on a complex composite wing-tip part. Confirming that the part was correct and the verification process accurate would ensure that all wing tip parts would be accurately validated before being supplied to the customer.



The plate was taken to LIMA's measurement laboratory, where its critical features were accurately measured on a coordinate measurement machine (CMM). Fortunately, the part had been very accurately machined and was well within required limits. The part was returned to the company with a full report.

Rockwood maintained its links with LIMA. When considering a contract to produce composite parts in the shape of natural, freeform objects, the company discussed measurement issues with LIMA. LIMA performed a laser scan of a rough stone and generated a computer model of the item to demonstrate the reverse engineering process relevant to the contract.



Qualifying small and medium enterprises in the South West region may currently benefit from both free and subsidised services.

To find out more, visit the LIMA BTC website **www.limauk.com**

or call the team on 01225 385138

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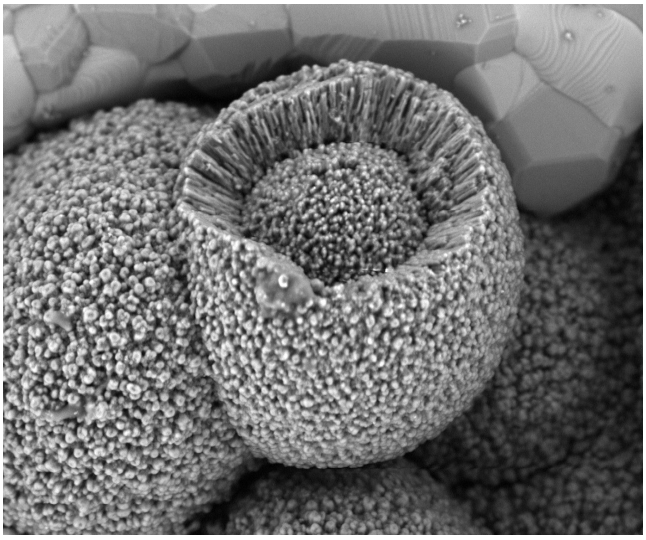
Plymouth Electron Microscopy Centre

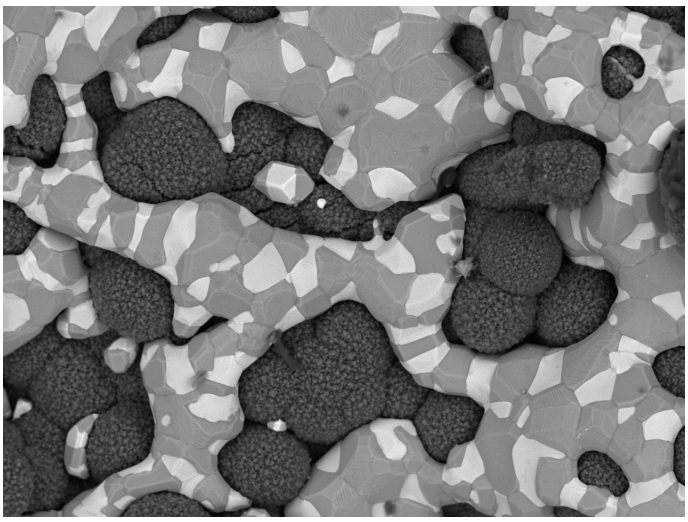
The Plymouth Electron Microscopy Centre is a collaboration between Plymouth University and JEOL (UK) Ltd which is establishing a world class centre for materials characterisation and analysis.



The European Regional Development Fund has invested £579,960 in the £1.3m project, based on the University campus in the heart of Plymouth. Over the life of the ERDF project, the centre aims to provide more than 120 business assists, create around 50 new jobs and attract around 40 firms to business networks.

Electron microscopy is a key technology for businesses operating across a wide range of sectors including advanced engineering, bio-medical, environmental technologies and food and marine. Scanning electron microscopes use a beam of high-energy electrons to image samples at a significantly higher magnification than is possible with traditional techniques. This allows for more accurate and precise analysis of natural and synthetic materials, allowing users to investigate the causes and effects of failures, develop new and improved products, processes and materials and enhance quality control.

Despite being a relatively mature technology, electron microscopy is generally only used by larger firms and the initiative aims to open it up to a whole new market previously unaware of the business benefits available from this technology.



The project will see three state-of-the-art machines being installed on the University campus. The first is already in place, with the second due by the end of March and the third later in the year, when a series of awareness events will be held to promote their benefits to businesses across the region.

To find out more, visit **http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/emc**

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About the South West Competitiveness Programme

The South West Competitiveness and Employment European Regional Development Fund Programme 2007-2013 is managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government, following a transfer of responsibilities from the South West Regional Development Agency in July 2011. The programme of investment from the European Union aims to improve the competitiveness of the local economy through investments which help businesses increase their productivity and by encouraging enterprise. The allocation for 2007-13 is €124.7 million.

The Programme has three "priority axes":

- The projects outlined in this newsletter were delivered through **Priority One—Innovation and Knowledge -** which aims to increase business innovation and encourage collaboration between business and higher education institutions.
- **Priority Two - Enterprise and Growth** provides business support targeted at high growth businesses and those requiring a highly skilled workforce.
- **Priority Three - Urban Enterprise -** aims to stimulate enterprise in deprived urban areas.

How is the Programme Managed?

The Managing Authority is the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Local Management Committee is the partnership body which provides strategic leadership to the Programme. It sets direction, helps drive the Programme to achieve its targets and monitors performance and compliance. Membership includes representatives from local authorities, the private sector, voluntary sector, trades unions, skills, environment and equalities interests.

The new Committee was set up in November 2011, replacing the former Joint Programme Monitoring Committee after the delivery arrangements for all European Programmes in England were changed. The terms of reference and agreed minutes of meetings are published on the DCLG website.

Colin Skellett

The Committee is chaired by the Department for Communities & Local Government and its deputy chair is Colin Skellett, Chairman of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, representing the Local Enterprise Partnerships in the South West Competitiveness area.

To find out more, visit the South West Competitiveness section of the DCLG website - **www.communities.gov.uk/erdf**

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Programme position at 1 March 2012

The South West Competitiveness Programme for 2007-13 has contracted over half its allocation and has a healthy pipeline of commissioned projects in development, giving confidence that it will spend its full allocation. It is making good progress against its delivery targets.

Through the Local Management Committee, the Programme continues to work with partners across all three axes to ensure that projects of the right quality are developed which make a real difference to the businesses and individuals in the South West Competitiveness area.

All calls for expressions of interest are promoted on the South West Competitiveness pages of the DCLG website at www.communities.gov.uk/erdf

Department of Communities and Local Government South West Programme Delivery Team

All figures are £ million at 1 March exchange rate	ERDF
Programme allocation	105.7m
Value of investments contracted	52.99m
Actual project spend to date	31.9m
Cumulative spend target by end 2012	51.3m

SOUTH WEST ERDF COMPETITIVENESS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

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For general enquiries, email **SWcomp.ERDFenquiries@communities.gsi.gov.uk**