



Tuesday 31st March 2009

SOUTH WALES CELEBRATES THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE

Sir Anthony Cleaver, Chairman of the Engineering and Technology Board (ETB), yesterday called on the engineering community, business and industry, education providers and policy makers to work together to improve the supply of engineers and technicians in South Wales.

Speaking at the Welsh National Convention of Excellence in Engineering and Technology in Newport, Sir Anthony Cleaver praised Austin Matthews, National Director of the Engineering Education Scheme Wales for organising the event and highlighting the need for businesses, industry and education providers in South Wales to grow and nurture innovation and expertise for the future.

The event saw students from schools and Sixth Forms across South Wales come together to celebrate their involvement in the Engineering Education Scheme Wales (EESW), a project involving teams of students working with local engineering firms to develop a solution to an industrial problem. Other major activities designed to pull in the crowds included, the 'Engineers Make It Happen' bridge-building competition, judged by Professor Bob Lark, Chairman of the Institution of Civil Engineers in Wales; the Fforwm Engineering Week Challenge and the Engineering Team Challenge.

There were also a series of presentations to students and teachers about the diversity of careers on offer in engineering from inspiring engineers - an electrical, a chemical, a civil and an energy engineer - taking part in the ETB's Engineering Make it Happen programme.

"Today has demonstrated the wealth of talent and ability present in South Wales, which is both refreshing and exciting. The ETB hopes this event will encourage STEM students (science, technology, engineering and maths) to persevere with their studies and take on a career in engineering," said Tony Plews, Manager of the ETB's 'Engineers Make It Happen' programme in Wales.

Despite the current financial climate, the engineering industry offers considerable employment prospects. Recent research has shown that 20% of all MME (Metals, Mechanical Equipment and Electrical Equipment) businesses in Wales reported experiencing hard to fill vacancies, higher than the UK average, and with an ageing Welsh engineering workforce, with over 40% aged between 45 and retirement, the sector offers plenty of opportunity for ambitious young people.¹

¹ SEMTA Metals, Mechanical Equipment and Electrical Equipment Sector Skills Agreement

Sir Anthony Cleaver commented, "Today's event clearly illustrates the importance of engineering and technology to all sectors of the economy, not just traditional manufacturing and processing. The ETB's own pilot programme, "Engineers Make it Happen" is working with the EESW scheme and other partners to build expertise and transferable skills in Engineering in Wales and the UK."

Further support came from Deputy Minister for Skills, John Griffiths AM who said, "The Engineering Education Scheme Wales is a wonderful advertisement for what can be achieved when education and business work closely together in real partnership towards clearly defined and agreed goals. This fits in well with the recently announced 'Engineers Make it Happen' (EMIH) programme. Both EESW and EMIH stress the importance of learners being provided with opportunities to experience the realities of working life and this is reflected in the Welsh Assembly Government strategy document Skills that Work for Wales."

In addition, Jeff Cuthbert, AM, Enterprise & Learning Committee who attended the event, said, "The 'Engineers Make it Happen' campaign is a welcome drive towards encouraging more young people to become high-quality trained engineers. Its aims and objectives dovetail neatly with the 'Skills that Work for Wales' strategy and the opportunities available to learners through the Welsh Baccalaureate and the 14-19 Pathways. Despite the current difficult economic circumstances, the need for highly-trained, qualified engineers will always be there. As an engineer myself I thoroughly welcome this initiative and it has my whole-hearted support in Wales."

Austin Matthews, National Director, EESW, added, "The 'Engineers Make It Happen' bridge-building challenge perfectly echoes our aim today to bring together government, education and industry in a bid to grow and develop engineering talent in South Wales. Historically, engineering has been our forte but we need to put pressure on all parties concerned to ensure that the already widening skills gap does not become an even greater cavity."

END

Notes to Editors:

Winning schools at the Welsh Convention yesterday were as follows:

- The Engineers Make It Happen Team Challenge: Bishop Gore School, Swansea
- The best innovative idea: Bassaleg School, Newport
- The best appreciation of environmental issues: Morryston Comprehensive School, Swansea
- The project with the most commercial potential: St. Josephs Roman Catholic high school, Newport
- The most effective presentation: Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr, Swansea

- The most effective application of I.T.: Haberdashers Monmouth School
- Best working prototype: Porthcawl Comprehensive School
- The best overall team performance: Fitzalan High School, Cardiff
- The best engineering design: Caerleon Comprehensive school, Newport
- The most effective use of materials: Tasker Milward Comprehensive school, Haverfordwest
- The best appreciation of safety issues: St.David's Catholic College, Cardiff
- The most innovative solution: Treorchy Comprehensive school

About Fforwm Annual Engineering Conference, Powys

Tony Plews, Wales Manager, ETB 'Engineers Make it Happen' programme spoke on Friday, 27th March, on "Staff Development and the use of Motivational speakers" as part of the two-day Fforwm Annual Engineering Conference in Powys entitled "Focus on the Transformation Agenda and maintaining Outstanding Learning and Teaching".

Tony Plews says, "Engineering is vital to the Welsh economy and society at large, but in order to ensure we train the very best young engineers, we must strengthen the relationship between employers and education providers. Engineering lecturers must be given the opportunity to go into the engineering workplace and gain an up to date understanding of practical engineering, which they can pass onto their students."

About the Engineering and Technology Board

The Engineering and Technology Board (ETB) is an independent organisation that promotes the vital contribution that engineers, engineering and technology make to our society and inspires people at all levels to pursue careers in engineering and technology. The ETB partners business and industry, government and the wider STEM community: producing evidence on the state of engineering, and inspiring young people to choose a career in engineering, matching employers' demand for skills. For more information about the ETB please visit www.etechnology.co.uk. The ETB's 'Engineers Make It Happen' programme is co-funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, and is working with further education colleges, employers and skills organisations in Wales to improve the supply of technician-level engineers from further education into engineering industry, and to increase the understanding of engineering careers, at all skill levels, in the student population.

About the Engineering Education Scheme Wales

The Engineering Education Scheme Wales (EESW) operates to show young talented people how valuable a career in engineering can be. EESW also show industry just how talented

our next wave of engineers and technicians are. EESW bring students and industry together for the benefit of all those involved and the future prosperity of the Welsh Economy. EESW is supported by The Welsh Assembly Government through the Education Business Links Programme of Careers Wales. For more information, please visit www.eesw.org.uk .

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