

AN EVEN BIGGER BANG IN 2011



Around 29,000 people flocked to the UK's largest single celebration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics for young people at London's ExCeL Centre from 10-12 March.

The Big Bang UK Young Scientists & Engineers Fair 2011 brought together 150 different organisations with the shared aim of inspiring the next generation of scientists and engineers, and represented an unparalleled partnership between Government, education, industry and the wider science and engineering communities. Demonstrating the Government's support for the programme, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vince Cable, was among a number of constituency MPs and senior civil servants to visit The Fair.



Mr Cable said: "The Big Bang is a terrific example of what can be achieved through the collaborative efforts of the STEM community. It is heartening to see so many businesses and organisations, from the UK and from right across the world, coming together to encourage our future scientists and engineers. We are proud to

support The Big Bang as an effective and exciting way of inspiring the scientists and engineers of tomorrow."

A SERIOUS MESSAGE BEHIND A SERIOUSLY FUN DAY OUT

Behind the fun of The Fair, The Big Bang has a vital mission to promote STEM careers to



young people and address related skills gaps across the UK. Although research shows that parents would like their children to go into science and engineering careers, lack of knowledge about the diverse and rewarding jobs available in these areas stops them from encouraging their children to pursue these routes. The Big Bang explodes outdated perceptions by bringing the reality of science and engineering careers to life.

"The Big Bang exists to give young people and their parents a better understanding of how just fun and inspiring science and engineering can be," said Professor Brian Cox OBE

NATIONAL SCIENCE & ENGINEERING COMPETITION

The Fair plays host to the finals of the National Science & Engineering Competition, which this year saw several hundred young people compete for a range of prizes, including the UK Young Scientist and UK Young Engineer of the Year. The Awards Ceremony was presented by Professor Brian Cox and Dr Kate Bellingham, who were among an impressive list of celebrity Competition judges, including Professor Jim Al-Khalili, Professor Colin Blakemore, Professor Marcus du Sautoy, Vivienne Parry, Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, Dr Chris Elliot and Rear Admiral Al Rymer.

The UK Young Scientist and UK Young Engineer of the Year received their prizes from Government Chief Scientific Adviser Sir John Beddington.

He said: "The next generation of scientists and engineers will play a fundamental role in tackling the global challenges we face in the 21st century. These include the issues of climate

change and the management of essential natural resources, and dealing with the threats to our world from diseases, floods, volcanoes and earthquakes. That's why this competition is so important – it inspires the scientists and engineers of tomorrow and is a great example of the exceptional young talent we have in the UK."

Hannah Eastwood from Loreto College in Coleraine was awarded UK Young Scientist of the Year and is the first girl to be awarded a senior title in the Competition. Her project explores how chromium can be removed from drinking water in order to purify tap water and reclaim it for the steel industry where it is a valuable resource.

Andrew Cowan from Sutton Grammar School for Boys is the only competitor to have won a prize in each age category across three years of the Competition. Following his previous successes in the Junior and Intermediate categories, this year Andrew was awarded the accolade of UK Young Engineer of the Year for his Search and Rescue Robot.

Paul Jackson, Chief Executive of EngineeringUK, said: "The Big Bang goes from strength to strength and its third year has



been the biggest and best yet. The Fair is all about inspiring young people to consider a career in science or engineering, and it works. Not only do the young people who visit have a great time but our early evaluation of the 2011 event backs the results we found last year, that young people who attend the Fair are more likely to choose a career that will require a qualification in science, technology, engineering or maths and view careers in science and engineering more positively as a result of their visit. Without a doubt, The Big Bang is winning hearts and changing minds!"

The Big Bang is much more than a one-off event; it's a year-round conversation with young

people, their parents and teachers. Big Bang Regional Fairs take place around the country in the summer and provide an opportunity for more young people to experience close to home the excitement and opportunities available through science, technology, engineering and maths, and ongoing communication using traditional and new media, including Facebook and Twitter, means that more young people than ever can feel part of it.

Some comments from those who visited The Fair:

"The Big Bang was absolutely outstanding, fantastic... words can't explain."
A pupil from Ferry Lane Primary School, Tottenham, London

"There are really big stands from a lot of big, famous companies that we wouldn't normally get a chance to see."
Edward Breakenridge, Student Teacher, Sydenham School, London.

The Big Bang 2012 will take place from 15-17 March at the NEC in Birmingham and promises to be bigger again. To find out more about The Big Bang and how to take part in a Fair near you go to www.thebigbangfair.co.uk

