

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE ON SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) is the main UK government agency for funding research and training in engineering and the physical sciences – from mathematics to materials science and from information technology to structural engineering. Working with UK universities, **it invests around £740 million a year in world class research and training to promote future economic development and improved quality of life.**

Engineering and the physical sciences has a huge impact on the world around us – fighting crime and terrorism, improving transport and healthcare, and developing solutions to challenges such as climate change and energy production. Some of the technology we take for granted – the internet, mobile phones, and MRI scanners – exist because of fundamental research undertaken by scientists in the past.

EPSRC funds research that tackles some of the most difficult issues facing the world today and is helping to build a better future for everyone. The impact of that research can be seen across many aspects of our lives including the economy, healthcare, security, transport, energy, culture, knowledge and public policy.

In order to help demonstrate the impact of this research EPSRC launched its national IMPACT! campaign earlier this year at the Cheltenham Science Festival. Science Minister, Lord Drayson, joined young

technology entrepreneurs to discuss how science can help build a better future at the IMPACT! debate and an IMPACT! trail of exploration around EPSRC funded research exhibits within the Discover Zone was followed by 2,500 school children.

The campaign aims to reach out to new audiences to communicate the impact that research has on the economy, quality of life, culture and knowledge, public policy and much more.

EPSRC Chief Executive Dave Delpy said:

“Science and engineering research is the key to our prosperity, one of the driving forces of our economy, and it creates thousands of jobs that keep Britain at the leading edge. This campaign shows what science is doing for us now and how it is going to result in a better future for us all with new technologies to stimulate economic growth, improve our quality of life and help us to meet the challenges of the 21st century.”

As part of the IMPACT! campaign EPSRC launches its IMPACT! world website at the end of September which is a fun and informative site enabling visitors to explore the “world” by reading case studies and watching films about the research being funded by EPSRC. Examples of the impact case studies include:

- The £2 light bulb that lasts 60 years. Installed in every home and office *could cut the*



proportion of UK electricity used for lights from 20 per cent to 5 per cent.

- Downloadable software for your mobile phone *could help doctors monitor asthma, diabetes, and other chronic conditions remotely.*
- The world's first fully sustainable racing car, *which is paving the way for “green motorsport” and showcasing cutting-edge materials technologies.*
- Cutting edge spectroscopy technology *helping conservationists preserve our heritage buildings and pinpoint many of the problems facing irreplaceable collections and artefacts.*
- Sheets of carbon just a single atom thick that *could herald a new generation of electronics.* The new material could be used to make next generation transistors that are a fraction of the size of current devices to miniaturise microelectronics.

To explore IMPACT! world visit www.impactworld.org.uk

EPSRC is attending a number of events over the next few months including Innovate 09, Science and Innovation 09 and UK Trade & Investment's

Technology World 09 where you can hear about the impact of the research we fund – details of these events and EPSRC's involvement can be found on the IMPACT! world website.

In February 2010 EPSRC will be holding a mixed-media exhibition of original works of art which will explore the relationship between science and society, looking at the different types of impact that engineering and the physical sciences have on the world. The exhibition is a joint venture with the Royal College of Art and is also sponsored by NESTA. Artists and researchers will be blogging about their experiences in the run up to the month-long exhibition at the Royal College of Art – you can follow this blog by visiting <http://impact-art.ning.com>.

To find out more and keep in touch with the IMPACT! campaign you can sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter by emailing ImpactNews@epsrc.ac.uk.

