

National recognition for outstanding partnership between Bombardier and Plymouth University

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Summary

A strategic project between Plymouth University and rail technology giants Bombardier Transportation, which led to the creation of a revolutionary new safety system, has been recognised with a prestigious national award by the Technology Strategy Board.

Further detail

The Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) between the organisations has won the 'Best Business Impact Award 2011', reflecting the huge benefits created through working together. The two year project was important to Bombardier because they identified a gap in the market for a new generation of train detection system but recognised that its development would require a unique approach.

Through forging a partnership with academics from the Centre for Security, Communications and Network Research at Plymouth University and a graduate engineering associate, the Partnership produced EBITrack 400, an innovative train detection system that since its launch in 2008 has had projected annual worldwide sales of £6m across international markets.

EBITrack 400 detects the position of trains to ensure that the signals behind them are set to red. It has already been recognised by the industry as offering significant safety and reliability advantages over the EBITrack 200 system which has been manufactured on the Plymouth site since the 1980s.

Network Rail is now trialling the system, and its success has ensured the long term survival of the Bombardier site in Plymouth, securing 60 jobs in the research, design, development and manufacturing functions.

Andy Millar, Engineering Design Manager, said: "With the EBITrack 400 development, and the major advantages it offers over our competitors' products, Bombardier is now in a prime position to deliver a UK product into major overseas markets such as Spain, India and Russia.

"Network Rail is also investing in the product as it sees major potential for improving the safety and reliability of the railways. The partnership with the University was key to this successful development, and we look forward to building on this relationship in future."

The University has continued to work with Bombardier, undertaking a highly complex safety case assessment for the EBITrack 400, which is an essential stage before any system can be adopted.

Emma Hewitt, Head of Knowledge Transfer and External Business Development, said: "This is the most prestigious recognition for KTP because it demonstrates the real value that universities can bring to businesses through injecting academic and graduate knowledge. Plymouth has an outstanding track record for KTP and this complements our two wins for Best KTP Partnership in the South-West of England for 2009 and 2010.

"We aspire to be enterprising and a catalyst to innovation in all that we do, and we are delighted that our work with Bombardier has generated fantastic opportunities and helped secure the future for their Plymouth team. We welcome the opportunity to engage with more businesses and attract funding to support 6 months to 36 month

strategic projects”

The award was presented at Innovate 2011, which took place at the Business Design Centre, in London last night.

The academic team involved in the KTP, Dr Marcel Ambroze and Dr Mohammed Zaki Ahmed, added: "This project has enabled us to apply our theoretical research to a new area. The cooperation between research centres and industry is seen as a key indicator in measuring research excellence, and we are proud that our expertise has had a real impact in the South West."