Biorenewables Development Centre

Plants • Processes • Products

Press Release 5th July 2012

Business Secretary opens unique national facility to expand the use of plants by industry

The Business Secretary Vince Cable will open the Biorenewables Development Centre (BDC)[1] at the University of York on 5 July, 2012.

The BDC integrates modern genetics with green chemistry and processing techniques to create renewable chemicals and materials. It will support industry in developing manufacturing technologies that use plants, microbes and biowastes as the raw materials for high value products.

The open-access facilities bridge the gap between the laboratory and industry, providing companies and academia with a way to test, develop and scale up biorefining processes[2]. The unique feature of the BDC is that it can also use molecular breeding to rapidly improve plants and microbes as raw materials for these processes. This creates the potential to source high value chemicals from plants by developing novel crops or improving those already in use.

Expansion of the Centre has been supported with £2.5 million from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)[3].

"This investment by BIS is a reflection of the facility's national significance and unique capability," explains the centre's director Dr Joe Ross. "The Biorenewables Development Centre will greatly expand the opportunities for industry to source its raw materials from plants and microbes."

The BDC has also been supported by investment from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), part of a major infrastructure project led by SCY to extend the assets and strategic potential of York as a leading centre for science and innovation.[4]

The BDC has already initiated a range of projects including work on a project to help a small company turn industrial waste into valuable chemicals, with the help of specially-developed strains of the mould, Aspergillus.[5]

"Our aim in establishing the BDC is to help make the UK a world leader in the production of high value chemicals from plants and microbes by combining academic excellence from the University of York with industry capability", says

Professor Ian Graham, Chair of the BDC board.

Professor Brian Cantor, Vice-Chancellor of the University of York, says: "The BDC illustrates how world class research undertaken at the University can help to generate new and sustainable products, processes, jobs and businesses."

"The new BDC facility will help regional businesses access world-leading research capability and process technology at a scale to accelerate new product discovery and business growth" says Prof Nicola Spence, CEO of SCY.

> "This new centre will strengthen the UK's position as a leader in the exploitation of high-value chemicals from renewable sources. It will also help UK companies to access and capitalise on the global growth potential from these new technologies and products."
>
> Business Secretary Vince Cable

BIS Department for Business Innovation & Skills

The University of York

CNAP Centre for Novel Agricultural Products

Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence

Project Part-Financed by the European Union European Regional Development Fund

Project sponsor

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"The BDC's location in the Bio Centre will maximise its important linkages with the Green Centre of Excellence and the Centre for Novel Agricultural Products, both of which are located next door on the University of York campus," says Tracey Smith, Managing Director, York Science Park.

The BDC is based at the University of York, within the York Science Park Bio Centre, providing access to state-of-the-art facilities and business support services. The BDC builds on internationally-recognised scientific expertise from the University of York in the Centre for Novel Agricultural Products[6] and the Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence[7].

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Notes to Editors:

(1) More on the Biorenewables Development Centre at http://www.biorenewables.org/

(2) Biorefining is sustainable processing of biomass into a spectrum of bio-based products (food, feed, chemicals, materials) and bioenergy (biofuels, power and/or heat).

(3) The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) awarded the Biorenewables Development Centre a £2.5 million capital grant to create an open access pilot scale facility focusing upon the extraction of high value chemicals from plants. The BIS funding enables the BDC to provide a truly unique capability that encompasses state-of-the-art technologies associated with rapid genomics based feedstock development and downstream extraction and processing of the resulting feedstock. More on BIS at http://www.bis.gov.uk.

(4) The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was set up in 1975 to stimulate economic development in less prosperous regions of the European Union (EU) and to act as a significant instrument with which the EU can support its Cohesion Policy. As EU membership has grown, ERDF has developed into a major instrument for helping to redress regional imbalances. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) manages ERDF in England. Further information about the ERDF Programme in Yorkshire and The Humber is available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/yorkshirehumberside/.

(5) A case study of this project is available at: http://www.biorenewables.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/BDC-HighValueChemicals-280612web.pdf

(6) More on the Centre for Novel Agricultural Products at http://www.york.ac.uk/org/cnap/

(7) More on the Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence at http://www.york.ac.uk/res/gcg/

(8) High resolution images, fact sheets, case studies, high resolution images and biographies can be downloaded at: http://www.biorenewables.org/media/