

North East manufacturer Cummins to lead £14.6m pioneering engine project

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A North East manufacturer will develop a new zero-emissions engine after receiving £14.6m of government and industry funding to drive forward the project.

Four projects around the UK have been awarded a cash pot of £91.7m through the Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC) Collaborative Research and Development competition, which supports the development of innovative low carbon automotive technology.

Together they could save almost 32 million tonnes of carbon emissions, equivalent to the lifetime emissions of 1.3 million cars, and secure over 2,700 jobs across the country.

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The successful schemes include the Brunel Project, led by Darlington engine maker Cummins, which will develop a hydrogen engine to replace existing, large diesel engines used in road haulage.

Potentially revolutionising how goods are transported, the project will also safeguard up to 640 jobs in Darlington and,

once successful, could prevent over 11m tons of carbon a year going into the atmosphere.

Headquartered in the US, Cummins designs, manufactures and supplies a broad range of power solutions including diesel and natural gas engines to hybrid and electric platforms.

Its bases in 190 countries includes its Darlington plant in Yarm Road, which is home to their research facility in the UK.

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"This project will significantly accelerate the pace of hydrogen engine development, ensuring that the UK is in the vanguard of this exciting new technology which will play a significant part in de-carbonising the global commercial vehicle fleet.

"The APC18 project will maintain and upskill many hundreds of key technical jobs, not just at Cummins and our consortium partners but across our total supply base. In the mid-to-long term it offers major potential to expand our high-value export business, supplying hydrogen engines and sub-systems manufactured in the UK to customers around the world."

The project follows the Government's consultation on phasing out the scale of new diesel and petrol heavy goods vehicles by 2040, and this marks the 18th round of funding coordinated by the Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC) to back the development of low carbon emission technologies for cars, buses, heavy goods vehicles, and vans.

Minister for Investment Lord Grimstone said: “The Brunel Project is carrying on Darlington’s long tradition of skilled engineering which will continue to grow for many years to come.

“We are working to build back better and greener after the pandemic and government investment in this scheme will help secure a better future for the next generation.

“The project provides further proof that the UK is leading the world in the cutting-edge, green technology that will help us leave petrol and diesel behind and achieve net zero by 2050.”

Other projects to receive funding include Project Celeritas in Birmingham, which receives £9.7m to create ultra-fast charging batteries for electric and fuel cell hybrid vehicles that can charge in as little as 12 minutes, and REEcorner in Nuneaton, which has secured £41.2m to redesign light and medium-sized commercial electric vehicles in Nuneaton.

The list is completed by BMW-UK-BEV in Oxford, a £26.2m project to develop an electric battery that will rival the driving range of internal combustion engines.

Ian Constance, chief executive at the APC, said: “These projects tackle some really important challenges in the journey to net-zero road transport.

“They address range anxiety and cost which can be barriers to people making the switch to electric vehicles and they also provide potential solutions to the challenge of how we decarbonise public transport and the movement of goods.”

Unite assistant general secretary for manufacturing Steve Turner, hailed the Brunel Project, saying: “This is an incredible development, an important step forward in the battle against the climate crisis.

“It’s also a huge tribute to Cummins, one of our most

innovative and groundbreaking companies in this field, and this tremendous, world-class workforce.

“I have been exceptionally proud to support Cummins and delighted that their dedication has paid off. This project provides secure, decent, unionised jobs for this community.

“The climate crisis is very real and it is already upon us but the UK manufacturing workforce is determined to play its part in creating the vehicles and products that can help heal our planet. Hydrogen fuel has the genuine potential to be a game-changer, to deliver the fuel and infrastructure needed to power cleaner vehicles.

“But while this development is an important step forward I urge the government to get behind all the UK manufacturers that are working at pace to produce green alternatives by rolling up its sleeves and investing in the infrastructure needed to get these innovations to the consumer.”

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