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Norfolk engineering company wins UKTI Asia competition

Cutting-edge British-designed equipment used in the energy industry could find a big new market, helping turn wind and wave power into electricity – if a business from Norwich gets its way. Now the export plans of PPI Engineering have been given a boost with the company winning a competition to promote trade with Asia.

UK Trade & Investment launched its East Meets East initiative to highlight the huge growth of Far Eastern economies, the opportunities for companies from the East of England, and the help UKTI commercial teams at British embassies around the world can provide to make a breakthrough.

Exporters were challenged to come up with fresh ideas on how to make an impact in Asia, predicted to become the world's top economic powerhouse within two decades, and to show how UKTI's flagship Overseas Market Introduction Service could help them.

PPI Engineering entered and won first prize and £3,000 of market research support from UKTI to investigate how it could trade with the fast-growing renewable energy sector in Asian nations such as China, India and South Korea.

The company, founded in 2005, employs 30 staff at Rose Lane in Norwich, with exports making up over 80 per cent of its business. It made its name in the oil and gas industries, designing, supplying and servicing electric motors and generators, before branching out into wind and tidal energy in Europe and the North America.

Director Mike Robinson says he is convinced the company can fill a niche in Asia, working with big wind turbine manufacturers based there.

“We already do a lot of work in China, for instance, selling our engineering skills and the components we design. We’ve got a solid track record in wind and wave power and we are sure there is a gap in the market.

“Winning the East Meets East competition has been a big boost to PPI. We’ll be using UKTI’s market research know-how to focus on supply chains, servicing, and research and development, looking for the right contacts to talk to, showcasing what we do and building relationships that can be turned into contracts,” he says.

Liz Basing, International Trade Director for UKTI in the East of England, said:

“Running this competition has brought home to me the tremendous variety and creativity among the East of England's businesses. After making some really difficult decisions, along with the judging panel, I am delighted that UKTI will be providing expert advice and support to PPI Engineering as it seeks to make a breakthrough into the huge and increasingly important Asian renewable energy market.

“UKTI, as always, stands ready to help businesses from across the East of England reach new markets in new countries. I wish success to the winners and to all the companies who entered our East Meets East competition.”

Electronic and mechanical instrument makers IMC Group and its Lamerholm subsidiary, based at Letchworth in Hertfordshire, was one of two runners-up in the competition. It won £1,000 of marketing support to pursue its plans to find a specialist distributor in China for the shock recorders it manufactures. These are used in the oil and gas industry to spot ‘invisible’ damage to expensive parts, for instance while in transit – but which is not visible to the human eye.

Anglia Ruskin University, based in Chelmsford and Cambridge, has also won £1,000 of marketing support from UKTI to sell its unique keyhole surgery training programme to hospitals in Asia.

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Notes to Editors:

1, Mike Robinson and Liz Basing are available for interview. If you would like an interview or want further information, please contact John Evans at COI East on 01223 370783.

2. UKTI's Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) provides a bespoke and flexible package of services to help businesses seeking to break into new markets. An OMIS gives access to local expertise in UKTI trade teams located in British embassies, high commissions and consulates across the world, and includes services such as market and sector advice, analysis of market entry strategies, support during overseas visits and identification of possible business partners. You can find more information about this UKTI service at <http://tiny.cc/OMIS>

3. The International Monetary Fund predicts that the Asia-Pacific economy will be the world's largest by 2030 and larger than that of the Group of 7 major industrialised nations combined.

4. Exports from the East of England to Asia-Pacific countries in 2010 amounted to £2.8bn, with four Asian countries or territories among the top 20 markets. These were China (9th, with exports of £542m, almost £100m up on 2009), Japan (11th, £503m), Hong Kong (13th, £351m), and India (18th, £251m).

5. UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) is the Government department that helps UK-based companies succeed in the global economy. We also help overseas companies bring their high quality investment to the UK's economy – acknowledged as Europe's best place from which to succeed in global business. UKTI offers expertise and contacts through its extensive network of specialists in the UK, and in British embassies and other diplomatic offices around the world. We provide companies with the tools they require to be competitive on the world stage. For more information on UKTI, visit www.ukti.gov.uk or telephone +44 (0)20 7215 8000.

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