

News Release



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New Awards for Innovation Presented by Royal Society of Chemistry

New awards for innovation were presented by the Royal Society of Chemistry at a ceremony which took place in Burlington House last night, Thursday 16 January.

Two *Teamwork in Innovation Awards* went to teams from Avecia, Huddersfield and Thomas Swan & Co., Consett for *Development of Catalytic Asymmetric Transfer Hydrogenation Technology Catalysts* and *Production-scale Chemistry in Supercritical Carbon Dioxide* respectively.

The *Entrepreneur of the Year Award* went to Dr. Victor Christou, Opsys Ltd., for *Invention and Commercialisation of New Materials and Device Structures for the Development of Small to Medium Sized Custom Displays for the Portable Electronics Industry*.

Avecia Process Technology is an expert in Speciality Chemicals including particular pharmaceutical manufacturing and process development. Analysis of customer requirements indicated a strong need for chiral alcohols and amines and a team of around 12, led by Dr. John Blacker, initiated a project to develop the technology required to enable transfer hydrogenation in the development of these products in 1998.

The project was managed by concurrently developing the technology and commercialising it by applying it to pharmaceuticals in development. It has

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The Royal Society of Chemistry is the Professional Body and Learned Society for chemistry in the UK with 46,000 members world-wide. It is a major international publisher of chemical information, supports the teaching of chemistry at all levels and is a leader in bringing science to the public.

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received world-wide acclaim from the pharmaceutical process community and Avecia are confident that application of the technology will lead to substantial growth of their Fine Chemicals business.

Thomas Swan & Co. Ltd. developed a continuous plant for supercritical reaction chemistry in carbon dioxide. Supercritical carbon dioxide is an attractive medium for the cleaner synthesis of Fine Chemicals, and the chemistry represented a new area for both the company and the University of Nottingham with whom it collaborated, and has resulted in the filing of 7 patents and a similar number of publications in major journals including *Nature* and *Science*.

The project was managed jointly by Dr. Stephen K. Ross at Consett and Professor Martyn Poliakoff from the University of Nottingham. The team comprised 5 researchers from each institution and has culminated in the opening of a unique full size plant by Lord Sainsbury, Secretary of State for Science on July 12, 2002.

Highly commended in this category was a team from PiezOptic Ltd., Ashford, Kent for a project entitled *Research Development and Commercialisation of a Novel Piezo-optical Styrene Sensor Incorporating a Solid-phase Tribromide Reagent*.

Occupational exposure to styrene monomer is widespread and poses serious health risks to employees in a variety of industries, particularly in the glass-fibre reinforced plastics industry. The team of 6, led by Dr. Steve Ross, fulfilled a proven market requirement for an effective personal monitor for styrene.

Dr. Victor Christou, winner of the Entrepreneur of the year Award, initiated Opsys in August 1997. Opsys develops a diverse portfolio of Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) technologies with a strong emphasis on innovative new materials. OLEDs constitute a new kind of flat panel display technology, which produces bright and sharp full colour images in a display which is thin and lightweight.

The company, spun out from Oxford University, has since its birth expanded from 4 people to around 70 and has raised over \$35 million. With corporate headquarters and a research facility in Oxford and an office in Tokyo, Opsys has the only European license to Kodak display technology and are selling prototype area colour displays to mobile phone, pda and automotive display industries with a view to commercialisation in off the shelf products within a year.

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Notes for Editors

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- 1) The Royal Society of Chemistry is the UK Professional Body for chemical scientists and an international Learned Society for the chemical sciences with 46,000 members worldwide. It is a major international publisher of chemical information, supports the teaching of the chemical sciences at all levels and is a leader in bringing science to the public.
- 2) Photographs from the awards dinner will be available on request from Claire McLoughlin (details above).
- 3) Applications were invited for the Teamwork in Innovation award from industrial companies, academic/industrial partnerships, research institutes and associations that have made significant innovations in applied chemistry.
Two awards of £4000 were available, one each for a team from a large company and one from an SME.
The work must be focused on industrial innovation and have been carried out by a team but any aspect of application of chemistry is welcomed. Demonstrable innovation and clear indications of commercial promise are key criteria.
- 4) The Chemistry Entrepreneur of the Year prize recognises an individual's contribution to the commercialisation of research in chemistry. Applications and nominations were invited for **one award of £4000**.