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RAUTOMEAD PUTS THE BENEFITS OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Continuous casting technology specialist Rautomead Limited of Dundee, Scotland has revealed the latest initiative for the company's new 'Advancing Metals Technology' division: a Government grant-sponsored 'Knowledge Transfer Partnership' with its academic neighbour, the University of Dundee, driven by the University's unrivalled expertise in the field of analysis techniques and specifically its specialist knowledge of nano technology.

As an organization, Rautomead is constantly seeking ways to improve its continuous casting processes, and the relationship has already begun to bear fruit in terms of delivering learnings about the ways in which metals behave differently at a nano (or, almost, atomic) level. The University's state-of-the-art analysis equipment, specifically its microscope technology, is helping Rautomead to improve its overall analytical capability, and therefore the quality of its casting process, by examining grain patterns and crystal structures in more detail to detect micro cracks and eliminate any stress points.

For the University, meanwhile, the relationship with Rautomead has delivered a number of advantages in terms of the potential to base new academic papers upon the project to generate a valuable information stream with 'real world' applications, while the closer relationship with industry that the partnership provides is also designed to markedly improve the employability of the University's graduates. The bond between the company and the University has also been further strengthened through the retention of a highly qualified young engineer, employed by the University on the two and a half year programme, with Rautomead providing significant financial support to the costs of the project.

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KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PARTNERSHIPS

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) support UK businesses ambitious to improve their competitiveness, productivity and performance by accessing the knowledge and expertise available within UK universities and colleges to which business currently has no access.

These Partnerships are designed to facilitate the transfer and sharing of knowledge through projects undertaken by high calibre personnel under the joint supervision of an industry specialist and an academic institution. The scheme is dedicated to increasing interactivity levels between business and academia and building awareness of the influence academia can exert upon business development, vision and growth.

ADVANCING METALS TECHNOLOGY

'Advancing Metals Technology' is a new and scientifically-based metals research and development division within Rautomead with a specific focus on the scientific exploration and development of non-ferrous metals and processes to drive improvements in metallurgical efficiency in a wide range of global production processes and end-user applications.

In addition to pursuing in-house research projects, the new division's mandate covers the involvement in a wide range of individual projects with universities and research groups in the UK and overseas, of which the ongoing collaboration with Dundee University and Brunel's BCAST (Brunel Centre for Advanced Solidification Technology) unit are high profile and highly successful examples. Further collaborations will be sought with both existing and prospective customers, with the goal of providing new and innovative processes and products within the non-ferrous metals technology market.

Through harnessing its market-leading expertise in the field of graphite technology and transferring the skills it has developed in continuous casting as the basis for these collaborations, the division's objectives consist of developing imaginative and economical technological solutions with operating systems that will offer the end user significant application improvements in the next generation of Rautomead machines. Specific objectives consist of innovating technologies which are clean, safe and environmentally-friendly, shorten the manufacturing process, provide economies on the small to medium scale, recycle materials, reduce operating costs and enhance product quality.

CASTING AROUND FOR THE RIGHT PARTNERS

The selection of Dundee University as a suitable partner represents, for Rautomead, the result of a long and exhaustive search for a research partner whose vision and specialist expertise in the field of academic research would prove to be the perfect complement for the company's practical experience of the commercial world of molten metal technology. Meanwhile, the 'Advancing Metals Technology' division's search for further suitable partners, both in academia and industry, continues. As Rautomead Managing Director Brian Frame says: 'It really is a remarkable coincidence that one of the global leaders in academic research into nano technology should prove to be right on our doorstep here in Dundee. For us, the relationship will have a very practical application in enabling us to continue to improve the quality of processes which already deliver market-leading results'.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN CONTINUOUS CASTING TECHNOLOGY

For over 30 years, Rautomead Limited has established a reputation as a global innovator and specialist in the design, manufacture and provision of continuous casting equipment for copper, copper alloys and precious metals and as a valued partner on turnkey projects for specialist upstream and downstream product manufacturers. There are currently over 330 Rautomead machines in operation in over 48 different countries all around the world.

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