



Jan 31, 2014 00:00 GMT

## Northumbria research shines light on solar technology

Northumbria University, Newcastle has joined forces with Blyth-based Solar Capture Technologies to develop new concepts for using energy from sunlight.

The project, which is part of a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) designed to bring together the best academic minds with industry, has created a graduate employment opportunity that was successfully secured by 23 year-old Pete Hunt.

KTPs are intended to facilitate the transfer of knowledge through projects undertaken by high calibre, recently qualified graduates. The graduate, or KTP Associate, will work under joint supervision from a company and an academic institution – in this case Solar Capture Technologies and Northumbria University respectively. Funded by government agency, the Technology Strategy Board, KTPs also provide the participating graduate with the opportunity to take their first career steps.

Solar Capture Technologies specialises in the research, development and production of photovoltaic systems, harnessing sunlight to provide sustainable energy for a range of end-uses. Under the KTP, Pete, a recently qualified Product Designer, will work with the Solar Capture Technologies team and its photovoltaic technology.

“This technology lends itself to so many applications but the challenge facing the industry is in harnessing the energy in a manner which enables it to be deployed on a commercial scale,” explained Pete.

“I’ve been given this fantastic opportunity to work with the Solar Capture Technologies team and experts from Northumbria University’s Design School on developing product designs to fully exploit this truly sustainable energy source.”

Chief Executive Steve Caseley is delighted to have Pete working with his team, commenting: “Having captured the energy from sunlight, the next challenge is in transferring it to a power source such as a rechargeable battery. With Pete’s help and under the guidance of the University’s Design School, we are looking at product designs that maximise efficiency while at the same time are robust and attractive to customers.”

Pete, who graduated with a 2:1 degree from London’s Brunel University, will start his work at Solar Capture Technologies by looking at potential applications in the transport sector.

“Solar technology is an ideal energy solution for road and rail track signage and remote telecommunications equipment,” he said. “However the technology needs to be available in a form that can withstand all weathers and the usual wear and tear. It’s a great piece of work for me to get started on and I’m really excited by the potential of the project.”

Matthew Lievesley, Reader at Northumbria University said: “Design at Northumbria is well known particularly through our international Alumni, but we also work with many of the great organisations we find here in our own region. In our partnership with Solar Capture Technologies we will be helping to establish design as a key function in the company as well as developing new product ranges for specific markets.”

Dr Stuart English, specialist in design-led innovation and part of the University team supporting the project said: “When we think about Design we are often thinking in terms of well designed products or clothing or promotional literature, but Design is really a process for creating and testing ideas that don’t exist yet. It helps organisations to be original, to innovate new value and set themselves apart from their competitors.”

Through the KTP partnership, Pete, who is originally from Manchester but now lives in Blyth, will work with Solar Capture Technologies for 21 months.

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