

Technology Strategy Board Statement 06 October 2009

Strategic review of micro and nano technology facilities

The Technology Strategy Board has recently carried out a strategic review of the UK's publicly-funded Micro and Nano Technology (MNT) facilities.

The MNT facilities were established between 2003 and 2007, as part of the Government's Micro and Nano Technology Manufacturing Initiative. They are a joint investment by the Government, the Regional Development Agencies and the Devolved Administrations of Wales and Scotland and, in time, are due to become self-financing.

The Technology Strategy Board took over responsibility for the MNT facilities from the former Department of Trade and Industry when the Board was established in July 2007. The review, of the key technical capabilities and services offered and being developed by the facilities, was carried out for the Technology Strategy Board in conjunction with relevant Regional Development Agencies and Devolved Administrations, and was conducted by independent expert consultants.

Generally built on existing university or business expertise, the twenty-four facilities are targeted at addressing a broad range of key application areas where micro/nano scale activity was considered key to future UK industry capability and where the UK had some strength.

The review concluded that most of the MNT facilities are on track to become sustainable technology suppliers. The facilities have made technology commercially available to UK industry that would not otherwise be readily accessible.

The review stressed there are still a number of challenges to be overcome if the UK is to both stimulate the exploitation of micro and nanotechnology to the extent that was envisaged when the MNT Manufacturing Initiative was launched, and to develop the kind of demand that could lead to high-volume and high-value-added manufacture in the UK. The Technology Strategy Board is consulting with the MNT facilities and other interested parties about the best way to address these challenges.

The review also concluded that micro and nano technology will deliver significant opportunities for the UK economy and that the Technology Strategy Board should continue to invest in the development of these technologies. The Technology Strategy Board expects to arrange for the majority of any future funding to be directed through collaborative research and development projects, focused on the development of applications and addressing the key challenges facing the UK.

The review also highlighted the need to consider further investment in the application of nanotechnology to the medical and biotechnology arena, often referred to as Nanomedicine. The Technology Strategy Board will be consulting on whether it should foster the UK's capability in this area, to build on undoubted academic and business strengths.

The review will help to inform the development of the Technology Strategy Board's Nano Scale Technology Strategy.