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Inspiring future scientists and engineers by revealing an array of 'If Only's

High profile figures contribute their thinking to stimulate the next generation of UK scientists and engineers

From Lord Winston to Gary Lineker, leading figures from the worlds of entertainment, science, and business have come up with a plethora of „If Onlys? – their one inspiration, discovery or invention that they wish existed – to capture the public’s imagination and encourage the UK’s budding young scientists and engineers to come up with their own inventions or creations for the National Science and Engineering Competition, by 30 October.

In providing their 'If Only' ideas, more than 50 of these high profile figures hope to make young people recognise that it is their imaginations that will enable them make what seems impossible now, possible in the future. Entering the Competition is a chance for young people to celebrate their science and engineering achievements and could be the first step to making their own „If Only? a reality.

John Humphrys, Journalist and Radio and TV presenter:

“If Only” I could invent a gadget attached to the chair on which politicians sit when I interview them which would give me an instant evaluation of their answers: “totally honest”, “partly honest but mostly disingenuous”; “self-serving claptrap”; “downright lies.” But on reflection it would probably make my role redundant!”

Lord Winston:

"If Only" there was such a thing as a breakthrough in science, think of the credit in which an individual scientist like myself could legitimately wallow. But nearly every important piece of scientific progress is made incrementally and we mostly explore the ideas of others or rediscover what other scientists have already found, and sometimes which others have forgotten."

Gary Lineker, ex-England footballer and BBC commentator:

“If Only” I had a time machine so I could go back and play one extra game for England to become England’s all time highest ever scorer.”

All the contributions are available to view on www.thebigbangfair.co.uk/ifonly

Sir Roland Jackson, Chief Executive of the British Science Association, which leads the National Science and Engineering Competition in partnership with Young Engineers, commented: “How

often do we hear people say „If Only?? It is amazing to think that many of the wishes made by people years ago are now a reality. Young people, who have the skills to match their imaginations, will be the UK’s future scientists and engineers. They will be the ones making the fantastic inventions and discoveries that are sure to come – things we may currently think are only impossible dreams.”

Stu Ellins, Chief Executive of Young Engineers, said “This Competition is an excellent vehicle to highlight the many and varied projects being undertaken by school students, as well as a great way to highlight the possibilities that engaging with science and engineering can bring young people. Although „If Only? is a fun exercise, the reality is that the world faces serious issues such as

pollution, climate change, disease, food supply and even caring for an ageing population, all of which need creativity and innovation in science and engineering to find solutions. It's essential that we as a nation support the young people who will make vital discoveries and inventions a reality and the National Science and Engineering Competition does just that."

The National Science and Engineering Competition together with The Big Bang: UK Young Scientists? and Engineers? Fair, the UK's biggest celebration of science and engineering where the winners will be announced, celebrate the fantastic success young people are already achieving using their skills to make their ideas happen. 11-18 year-olds can visit www.nationalsciencecompetition.org before 30th October to nominate the projects they are proud of for the chance to win some of the £50,000 worth of prizes available. The culmination of the Competition at The Big Bang takes place in Manchester in March 2010. There, they will get the chance to compete for the title of the next UK Young Scientist of the Year and UK Young Engineer of the Year, and many remarkable accomplishments will be on display.

The public are also encouraged to get involved and think of something that would make their lives better. They can make their own "If Only" wish at www.thebigbangfair.co.uk/ifonly

Ends

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Notes to editors

About the National Science & Engineering Competition

The National Science & Engineering Competition is an initiative of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills as a response to a recommendation in Lord Sainsbury's report „The Race to the Top?. It is coordinated by the British Science Association in partnership with Young Engineers and The Big Bang. The Competition, open to all 11-18 year olds, accepts projects from all areas of science, technology, engineering and maths. The finals of the National Science and Engineering Competition will be held at The Big Bang. For more information and a full list of sponsors go to www.nationalsciencecompetition.org.

About The Big Bang

The Big Bang: UK Young Scientists? and Engineers? Fair at Manchester Central Convention Complex, 11-13 March 2010 will celebrate and raise the profile of young people's achievement in science and engineering and encourage more young people to take part in STEM initiatives with support from their parents and teachers. School groups will be invited to The Fair, which will take place over three days and include the 300 student projects showcasing innovation and creativity competing in the National Science & Engineering Competition for national and international awards. The Fair, which kicks off National Science and Engineering Week 2010, will also be open to the public on the Saturday.

The Competition entries, including British Science Association's CREST awards and projects supported by Young Engineers? form the centre piece of The Fair. The event, with an expected 13,000 visitors, is being organised by an extensive partnership from across the science, technology, engineering and mathematics communities, with support from the ETB (Engineering and Technology Board).

The Fair will represent the best the UK has to offer, with entries from students (both individuals and teams) aged 11 to 18. Projects chosen will cover all aspects of science, technology, engineering and maths (including computing) - and range from hands-on or practical, to research and test based. Judging will start on day one of The Big Bang - with finalists shortlisted for judging again the next day. Day two will end with a glitzy and prestigious awards ceremony where winners of the National Science and Engineering Competition will be announced - the winners of the senior category will be crowned the UK Young Scientist and UK Young Engineer of the Year. For more information on The Big Bang visit www.thebigbangfair.co.uk.

About CREST

CREST (Creativity in Science and Technology) is the nationwide curriculum enrichment award scheme for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), run by the British Science Association and established over 23 years ago. Through CREST, young people aged 11-19 explore the real nature of STEM by doing their own creative project work.

A key strength of the scheme is that it encourages projects with strong industry or academia links. For the student, the award itself is a tangible recognition of success, which can be included in their personal record of achievement and helps with applications to universities, colleges and potential employers. For more information visit; www.britishscienceassociation.org/crest/

About Young Engineers

Participation in Young Engineers stimulates interest, appreciation and engagement in the practical application of engineering and technology by young people in primary and secondary education. It enables volunteer teachers and their supporters to provide exciting, challenging and creative activities that enrich the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) curriculum.

Central to Young Engineers' operations is its growing nationwide network of after school engineering clubs, which form a core constituent of the Royal Academy of Engineering's Best Programme. The network is funded and supported entirely by industry and professional institutions and is endorsed by Government. Patron is HRH The Duke of York, KG, KCVO, ADC.

The Young Engineers website: www.youngeng.org provides a virtual community for teachers engaged in STEM education and offers them an invaluable resource, loaded with information and hands-on engineering activities designed both to inspire students' minds and develop their know-how.