

THE INSIDE TRACK TO WINNING DESIGN

A new DTI initiative, aimed at helping UK electronics companies improve their approach to designing new products, was announced today at the Electronic Design Solutions event.

The Electronics Design Programme, launched today at the NEC, Birmingham, is targeted at the thousands of smaller and medium sized UK companies that could improve their competitive position through adopting more systematic and more powerful design techniques. DTI is investing over £3.6 million over the next four years to help these companies.

Welcoming the programme, the Minister for Small Firms, Michael Wills, said:

“Product design is a key element of company competition, and UK companies need to ensure that they keep abreast of the latest techniques. Our findings indicate that while large companies and some smaller companies have got to grips with many of the new electronics design methodologies that have emerged in recent years, the majority of smaller companies have yet to adopt them to any significant degree. Failure to do so could seriously damage their competitive edge in years to come.

“I am very pleased therefore to launch our new Electronics Design Programme which will help smaller companies become more aware of the potential benefits of a structured design approach and will provide the support and independent advice they need. I want to ensure that the UK continues to produce world leading products and confirm its reputation as the ‘Electronics Centre for Europe’”

The Electronics Design programme will provide practical help to SME’s, including management briefing seminars, user-friendly support documentation, and provide support at a network of eight local Support Centres. Participants will benefit from free and independent consultancy, product design support and practical “hands-on” training, plus signposting to funding and further help.

The Programme will provide management guidance and practical help over the entire design process. It will assist companies in: establishing product specifications; issues relating to costing; the choice of product route; design for manufacture and test; structured design methods and tools; IP and its re-use; the role of R&D; and Quality Assurance issues.

The programme is the latest to be announced under the Government's Information Society Initiative.

For further information about the programme or to register for a management seminar, telephone the Electronics Design Hot-line on **0171-215-1909**, or visit **www.e-design.org.uk**

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1. Ten national management seminars are scheduled for this year beginning on 6 May. Aimed at decision makers in UK companies that design electronics products, the day-long programme offers an overview of the business benefits of using new design methodologies, with real-life examples of how to save costs and a technology briefing. The seminar will be supported by supply-side tutorials by and an exhibition featuring demonstrations by Support Centre and expert suppliers of tools and techniques. The complete management seminar schedule is as follows:-

Manchester (6 May); **Newbury** (20 May); **Brighton** (3 June); **Coventry** (16 June); **Cardiff** (1 July); **Portsmouth** (30 September); **Shepperton** (14 October); **Livingston** (21 October); **Harrogate** (4 November); **Cambridge** (24 November).

2 The Department of Trade and Industry is providing £3.6 million to support this programme.

3 Eight local Electronics Design Support Centres, backed by independent business advisers, form the core delivery mechanism of the programme. Companies will be able to secure up to eight days of free practical help on design issues at the support centres. These are:

East: University of Hertfordshire; **Midlands:** Staffordshire University; **North:** Bolton Institute; **North East:** University of Northumbria at Newcastle; **Scotland:** Napier University; **South East:** University of Kent at Canterbury; **South West:** Bournemouth University; **Wales:** University of Glamorgan

4 Awareness documents include a programme overview brochure containing general programme information and case histories, introductory primers on "Electronics Design" and on "Intellectual property", and a CD-ROM Industry Directory providing sources of products, training and consultancy.

5 The Government's Information Society Initiative aims to promote the effective use of information and communications technologies to bring a range of business, social and economic benefits. Enquires about ISI may be made to **0345 15 2000** or e-mail **info@isi.gov.uk**. The ISI web site is located at **www.isi.gov.uk**

6 The programme has already received the support and sponsorship of the industry's leading trade associations including SBA (Semiconductor Businesses Association), PCIF (Printed Circuit Industries Federation), FEI (Federation of Electronic Industries) and AFDEC (Associated Franchise of Distributors of Electronic Components).