



**MEDIA RELEASE FINAL
23 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**LIB DEMS PARTY CONFERENCE IS TOLD: ENGINEERING SKILLS ARE VITAL TO UK'S
FUTURE**

At a Lib Dem Party conference fringe event organised by the professional engineering community, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, Vince Cable MP emphasised the importance of engineering skills to meet the challenges of the future.

Speaking to a packed audience on the theme of "Picking winners: can engineering succeed where finance has failed?" Mr Cable endorsed a rebalancing of the UK economy and called for a debate on how government should promote and prioritise industry and engineering

"The role of government should be to do those things that the private sector does not do, such as ensuring that there are enough young people studying maths and science, and enough qualified professionals at all levels to teach them all they need to know to secure the future of science and engineering," he said.

Professor Dame Wendy Hall, a leading academic and IT innovator, called for a "new kind of climate change" in attitudes to skills. "The UK needs a shift towards a climate of can-do, enterprise and success" she said, in order to make the most of the huge opportunities for UK business in such technologies of the future as the Web of linked data, or Semantic Web. "There need to be incentives for women and under-represented communities to enter and stay in engineering," she pointed out.

The debate also featured a contribution from IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year 2008, Dr Hanna Sykulska-Lawrence, who said: "It excites me that what I do is real – a chance to change our world and be in control of our future."

Welcoming the lively debate at the event, David Brown, Chair of the ETB's Professional Panel and Chief Executive of IChemE, said:

"The organisations supporting this event under the banner "Engineering the future" are all delighted at the response to our debate and to our " mini-manifesto", which we have launched today with a five point plan that sets out how government can support engineering. Vince Cable's comments have reinforced the argument for an engineering led recovery. It is therefore essential that current levels of investment in engineering education and research are maintained in order to strengthen the skills base in readiness for the upturn".

We are looking forward to our fringe events at the Labour and Conservative party conferences over the coming weeks which we hope will also raise the profile of engineering and encourage engineers to engage in the national debate."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Professor Dame Wendy Hall DBE FRS FREng

Wendy Hall is Professor of Computer Science at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom and was Head of the School of Electronics and Computer Science (ECS) from 2002-2007. She was the founding Head of the Intelligence, Agents, Multimedia (IAM) Research Group in ECS.

She has published over 350 papers in areas such as hypermedia, multimedia, digital libraries, and web technologies.

Her current research includes applications of the Semantic Web and exploring the interface between the life sciences and the physical sciences. She is a Founding Director, along with Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Professor Nigel Shadbolt and Daniel J. Weitzner, of the Web Science Research Initiative.

She became a Dame Commander of the British Empire in the 2008 UK New Year's Honours list, and was recently elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

She was elected as President of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) in July 2008, and is the first person from outside North America to hold this position.

She was Senior Vice President of the Royal Academy of Engineering (2005-2008) and is a Past President of the British Computer Society (2003-2004). She is a member of the Prime Minister's Council for Science and Technology, is the Chair of the Advisory Board of Garlik Limited, and is a founding member of the Scientific Council of the European Research Council.

Dr Hanna Sykulska-Lawrence

Hanna Sykulska studied engineering at Oxford University before moving to the Electrical Engineering Department at Imperial College. In 2008 she began work on the Phoenix NASA mission, responsible for designing and manufacturing mission hardware, monitoring instruments, making decisions on engineering parameters and advising on long term planning. Away from work Hanna competes in ballroom dancing and frequently speaks at workshops and events to stimulate interest in engineering.

Engineering The Future

Engineering the future is an alliance an alliance of the engineering community including the Engineering Council UK (EC^{UK}), the Engineering and Technology Board (ETB), the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), the Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE), the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE), the Institute of Physics (IOP) and the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng.) – in association with the think tank Reform. We are working jointly to raise the profile of engineering by strengthening national policy and also promoting the contribution of engineering to the UK's economic recovery and beyond

The Engineering and Technology Board (ETB)

The Engineering and Technology Board (ETB) is an independent organisation that promotes the vital role of engineers, engineering and technology in our society. The ETB partners business and industry, government and the wider science and engineering community: producing evidence on the state of engineering, sharing knowledge within engineering and inspiring young people to

choose a career in engineering, matching employers' demand for skills. For more information about the ETB please visit www.eteqb.co.uk.

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