



MEDIA RELEASE

26 MAY 2010

THE BIG BANG AS CATALYST: WHO'S INFLUENCING WHO?

At the Science Communication Conference in London this week, a panel consisting of Ken Mannion, Centre for Science Education, Paul Jackson, EngineeringUK, Kevin Burke, STEMNET, and Becky Parker, Simon Langton Grammar School, discussed the importance of engaging young people in science and engineering drawing on experience at The Big Bang UK Young Scientists and Engineers Fair in Manchester earlier this year. Following the success of The Fair, which hosts the National Science & Engineering Competition, three quarters of secondary pupils felt they gained an increased understanding of science careers. The panel exchanged ideas and tactics for continuing this success year on year.

Speaking on the theme 'The Big Bang as Catalyst: Who's influencing Who?', the panel took a closer look at what works and what does not work when using major events such as The Big Bang to engage young people in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Paul Jackson discussed the opportunities and challenges of communicating science and engineering to the public using the media, direct communication with schools and social media, stressing the importance of making science popular without losing its substance.

Ken Mannion gave an overview of engagement levels overall whilst Kevin Burke discussed the importance of making events such as The Big Bang accessible throughout the nation by holding regional fairs and working within the different regions of the UK, as well as alternating the location for the main event every year.

Becky Parker finished the session by giving firsthand testimony to the buzz of the fair and how the experience affected both teachers and students, drawing attention to the

boost in confidence the competitors in the National Science & Engineering Competition get from speaking about their projects.

Becky Parker said:

“The Big Bang Fair gives both teachers and students an incredible boost and insight in science and engineering. Not only does The Big Bang inspire the students who acutely attend but the whole school gets to share the enthusiasm from the students talking about their experiences on their return. For teachers this is a great opportunity to get the latest information on science and engineering careers and gain insight in what their students can achieve”.

Paul Jackson said:

“It is vital that we catch children and young people before they start making crucial decisions about science and engineering subjects. All research shows that the best way to this is through a year-round conversation about the subjects surrounding these issues “.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About EngineeringUK

EngineeringUK, formerly the ETB, is an independent organisation that promotes the vital contribution of engineers, engineering and technology in our society. EngineeringUK 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 EngineeringUK please visit www.EngineeringUK.com,

About The Big Bang www.thebigbangfair.co.uk

The Big Bang: UK Young Scientists and Engineers Fair 2011 will take place at the International Convention Centre, London ExCel from 10 - 12 March. The Fair is a free event for all 7-19 year olds, their teachers and families - with school and college groups invited on Thursday 10th and Friday 11th March - and the public welcomed on Saturday 12th.

Following the incredibly successful Manchester event in 2010 - which attracted more than 22,500 people - The Big Bang 2011 will again provide an excellent opportunity for the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) community to come together to enthuse and inspire young people about careers in STEM. The Fair will also celebrate the achievement of young people by featuring the finals of the National Science & Engineering Competition and its awards ceremony - where the UK Young Scientist of the Year and UK Young Engineer of the Year will be crowned.

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 & Engineering Competition will be held at The Big Bang. For more information and a full list of sponsors go to www.nationalsciencecompetition.org.

For further information please contact:

Ylva Sandring, Communications Executive

Tel: 020 3206 0426

Email: ysandring@engineeringuk.com

Or Laura Marsh, PR and Communications Manager

Tel: 020 3206 0444 or (m) 07887 943 017

Email: lmars@engineeringuk.com