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One to watch: IIT

Gateshead-based International Innovative Technologies (IIT) is a North East success story. A specialist in the design, precision engineering and manufacture of high output mills, classifiers and cyclones, the company has recently pioneered new technology for the grinding of bulk raw materials into fine powders.

The m-series is thought to have the potential to bring significant cost and production benefits for a wide range of global industries.

The new vertical milling system combines low energy consumption with a compact size to provide a highly efficient and versatile grinding system for a wide range of minerals processing applications. It can also convert what might currently be regarded as waste material into a commercial product.

The machines are suitable for the milling of a wide range of natural raw materials and other industrial products. Tom Wilkinson, chairman of IIT, said: "It has significant potential in traditional materials processing markets and also has new and unique recycling applications, for example, by turning materials such as glass reinforced plastic scrap into a reusable product."



One to watch: GT Group

The GT Group, based in Peterlee, County Durham, specialises in environmental engineering, exporting products and services to over 60 countries worldwide. With its head office in the North East, the group covers a diverse range of engineering activities including automotive products, project engineering and fabrication, composite mouldings, seals, process controls and coatings.

GT has recently secured a £50m contract with Russia's leading automotive manufacturer, GAZ Group, to which it will supply exhaust gas control systems for a new range of heavy duty diesel engines. The deal, which will comprise 100,000 systems a year at full production, might allow GT to achieve its programme of growth and bring its workforce level to 500 (it's now 300).

Geoff Turnbull, GT group chairman, said: "This prestigious contract with Russia's leading manufacturer will further cement GT Group's rapid growth and its reputation as one of the principal suppliers of engine brakes and exhaust gas control systems for the heavy duty diesel engine markets." Having worked for the last four years with GAZ on Euro 3 standard engines, the new engines will meet the latest Euro 4 and Euro 5 emissions standards.

If the North East wants to reap the benefits of its investment in innovation, sustainability and renewable energies, the need for a highly skilled workforce must be addressed. Thousands of middle and high level jobs in engineering will be required to meet future demand. Growing sectors like plastic electronics and industrial biotechnologies are promising, but will need a highly trained workforce if they are to bring benefits to the regional, and national, economy.

Low carbon industries have the opportunity to create over 16,000 new jobs in the region. By 2019, however, the off-shore wind industry will need 3,000 skilled engineers: to meet this requirement, one in three engineering graduates should enter this sector.

Just like the rest of the UK, North East England faces a widening skills gap as new support for manufacturing and engineering apprenticeships struggle to plug the skills shortfall. Unless this problem is addressed, the region won't be able to fully exploit the opportunities that new, lucrative sectors have to offer. EEF's Tony Sarginson says: "If we are serious



about rebalancing the economy, we have to do something about the small proportion of engineering-related apprenticeships offered in the North East." I-IND