

Photonics worth £12.9B to the UK economy

New figures show substantial value of light-based technology

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LONDON – The Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN) and the Photonics Leadership Group (PLG) today report that companies manufacturing light-based technology (photonics) in the UK contribute £12.9 billion to the country's economy.

This updated analysis of the UK photonics industry shows a rise of £2.4 bn since the last report in 2013, recording an average growth rate of >5.3%, which finds UK photonics to be growing at twice the speed of the rest of the UK economy.

This growth reflects the increasingly critical role that light plays in next-generation products and manufacturing. From the lasers used in automotive production to make cars lighter and safer, to the cameras that help to keep our streets safer, to the optics used to both diagnose and increasingly treat patients in hospitals, and from the LED lighting reducing our electricity bills; to the fibre optics powering the internet, light technology is everywhere and increasingly essential to our modern lives, albeit often hidden inside key services, goods and processes.

The UK's global reputation for outstanding innovation in photonics is reflected in the country's exports of over 75% of its manufactured output, one of the highest export fractions of any UK manufacturing industry. Over 65,000 people are employed in some 1,500 photonics companies across the country. The UK photonics workforce contributes £62,000 Gross Value Add per employee to the economy, which as a measure of productivity is almost three times the national average.

The methodology, developed by KTN in conjunction with the PLG and the Future Photonics Hub, utilises a fully revised company list and expert industry input on apportionment of revenues of diversified companies to enable UK photonics industry figures to be updated on an annual basis.

The data will also provide the basis foundations for of a new online map of the UK photonics landscape. The map, to be published by the KTN later this summer, will allow visualisation of the industry by sub-sector and region, which confirms to demonstrate the broad wide geographical reach of this key enabling technology.

KTN and PLG acknowledge the support of the Future Photonics Hub and Cobalt60 in the preparation of this data.

Notes for Editors

About KTN

The Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN) helps businesses get the best out of creativity, ideas and the latest discoveries, to strengthen the UK economy and improve people's lives.

As a network partner of Innovate UK, KTN links new ideas and opportunities with expertise, markets and finance through our network of businesses, universities, funders and investors. From agri-food to autonomous systems and from energy to design, KTN combines in-depth knowledge in all sectors with the ability to cross boundaries. Connecting with KTN can lead to potential partners, horizon-expanding events, bespoke support and innovation insights.

About the Photonics Leadership Group (PLG)

The Photonics Leadership Group takes voluntary input from over 60 industrial and academic leaders in UK photonics providing a voice and interface for UK photonics to foster strategic dialogue between industry, academia and government to strengthen and grow the industry.

About The Future Photonics Hub

Launched in January 2016, the Future Photonics Hub is an EPSRC Future Manufacturing Research Hub led by the University of Southampton, partnered with the University of Sheffield. The Hub focuses on developing new industry-ready manufacturing processes by understanding, adapting and integrating photonics in four critical technology areas: light generation and delivery, high-performance silica fibres, silicon photonics and the manufacturing of 2D and metamaterials. The aim is to improve cross-platform capability, reliability, yield and to reduce costs, working with partners and end-users across a wide range of industry sectors, including oil and gas, imaging, aerospace, defence and security, energy, ICT, manufacturing and healthcare. www.photonicshubuk.org

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