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London firm cooks up low carbon fuel recipe

A London based company is driving forward the development of bio fuel with the support of the London Development Agency (LDA) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Uptown Oil supplies caterers, schools and restaurants with fresh vegetable oil, collects the used oil afterwards free of charge and then turns it into low carbon biodiesel.

The Southwark based business accessed support through the LDA's Knowledge Connect programme which allowed it to work with experts from London South Bank University to improve the quality of its recycled biodiesel and sharpen its production processes. This, according to Uptown Oil, resulted in immediate cost savings and opportunities for expansion.

Uptown Oil's Stuart Buckingham said: "The Knowledge Connect program was a real enabler, allowing us to make rapid progress in several key technical areas and helping us to achieve the best biodiesel quality available in London. As a result we opened up new opportunities and markets and have even been able to share our new knowledge collaboratively with other London biodiesel companies that are still struggling with these same issues."

Knowledge Connect is delivered in partnership with Angle Plc and Winning Moves Ltd. It supports businesses to develop new products, services or processes with the help of academic experts who in turn realise the practical application of their ideas and build new commercial relationships.

So far, the LDA's Knowledge Connect project has helped more than 1000 businesses and provided more than £1m of subsidised support to assist the transfer of knowledge from universities and research technology organisations to London's innovative business sector. This support has attracted more than £1.6m worth of private sector contributions by the businesses themselves.

Audrey Slade, Director of Business, Jobs and International Promotion at the London Development Agency said: "Through Knowledge Connect we are giving SMEs access to the knowledge and skills they need to grow. London's entrepreneurs have exciting ideas that are waiting to be brought to market and by tapping into the wealth of expertise in the capital's universities, colleges and research and development institutions we are making them a reality."

Assistance is available to businesses anywhere in the Greater London area and is focused primarily on trading organisations that employ between four and 50 employees. Advice is delivered through networking events, master classes and workshops or bespoke specialist support.

Professor Tony Day from the Urban Engineering Department at London South Bank University worked with Uptown Oil and said: "Working with Uptown Oil has been a highly rewarding and enjoyable experience. Their commitment to the success of the project allowed the academic team to try some radical solutions and supply the necessary resources to test the results of the proposed interventions."

Leslie Maruziva from ANGLE said: "The Uptown Oil project is a shining example of how a well thought through initiative can benefit from the abundant talent that exists in London's knowledge bases. Our expectations are that the initial introduction to the university will lead to a life-long relationship between LSBU and Uptown Oil. Clearly the impact from this project will not just be felt by the company in terms of growth and profitability but the community as a whole."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- The London Development Agency aims to improve the quality of life for all Londoners - working to create jobs, develop skills and promote economic growth.
- Knowledge Connect is designed to assist London's diverse small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to undertake grant funded collaborative projects with the wider knowledgebase. This includes universities, further education colleges, RTOs and private sector specialists.
- The London Development Agency and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) have invested £5.4 million in Knowledge Connect.
- Knowledge Connect is the Innovation Vouchers part of the Solutions for Business portfolio.
- The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) runs in seven-year cycles, with the current cycle running until 2015.
- The 2007-13 ERDF programme is administered by the London Development Agency's European Programmes Management Unit (LDA EPMU) on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government. The LDA, in partnership with the Mayor and in consultation with London stakeholders drafted the Operational Programme (OP), which provides the framework for investment of ERDF in London for the 2007-13 period.
- London will receive €181million from ERDF funding over the seven years from 2007 to 2013.
- The programme attracts similar amounts of match funding from individual projects.
- Knowledge Connect is funded under 'Priority 1' of the ERDF programme, which is directed towards projects that develop a culture of innovation throughout London's SMEs.

For more information about ERDF please visit www.lda.gov.uk/erdf

MAYOR OF LONDON