riversimple

Press Release

September 15, 2016

Hydrogen car-maker Riversimple awarded grants worth £325,000 – development of flax bio-carbon and potential for 7,000 new jobs

Riversimple – makers of the Rasa, a car that emits just a spoonful of water – has been awarded two grants worth £350,000, which could lead to the creation of 7,000 jobs in the UK. The grants were announced yesterday (Wednesday, September 14) at the UK's premiere low carbon vehicle event, LCV2016, in association with Cenex, held at Millbrook, Milton Keynes.

A grant of £200,000, to work in collaboration with engineering company Presreg and the University of South Wales, will be used to develop a hydrogen container manifold and regulators for use in niche hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. This means that hydrogen components can be made in the UK – rather than overseas, helping to create jobs and set up a national supply chain.

The innovative car marker is also part of a consortium with NetComposites and KS Composites that has been awarded funding worth £125,000 to develop a bio-carbon fibre made from flax, helping to reduce noise vibration and cost. If adopted by niche and mainstream car makers this new technology could lead to the creation of 7,000 jobs and generate revenues of £520 million a year.

Mr Spowers said: "The two grants will enable us to further refine our components and ensure that we can make more of the parts in the UK in the future, which is great news for local communities and for creating jobs."

Riversimple were also runners up for the national award for Low Carbon Innovation by an SME at the Low Carbon Champions Awards last night, an event set up to celebrate achievement and innovation in low carbon road transport.

It was a far cry from its appearance at last year's show, where Riversimple unveiled the chassis of the Rasa car, now believed to be the greenest car currently on the road and weighing just 580kg.

The Rasa spent 15 years in development by a team that includes ex-F1 and aerospace engineers and former Fiat design chief, and was launched in the spring to huge acclaim. The company has since started crowdfunding to build 20 cars for a public trial in 2017, before starting commercial production in 2018.

The two-seater has a range of 300 miles and refills in a few minutes. It will be offered on a total service arrangement, similar to the cost of a family hatchback, with the cost of fuel included making it an affordable alternative.

Note to editors:

As part of the collaboration with Presreg and the University of South Wales, Riversimple identified the need for improvements in hydrogen components and a UK hydrogen supply chain. Presreg are experts in the design and manufacture of pressure equipment and are currently developing an integrated container manifold for the automotive hydrogen market. University of South Wales complete the consortium by providing capabilities required for safe hydrogen design, testing and operation.

The consortium with NetComposites Group and KS Composites to produce the bio-carbon fibre will generate £2.7million a year and create 34 jobs. The technology will be suitable for a wide range of niche and mainstream vehicles, and if widely adopted could generate £520 million a year and create 7,000 jobs. Flax is a natural fibre which is sustainable and has excellent vibration damping properties. It has been shown to work well when combined with carbon fibre. Use of a flax-based product also has the benefit of reduced environmental impact.

In June, the Powys-based car maker agreed the first trial of its hydrogen-powered cars in the UK. It is partnering with Monmouthshire County Council, to run a 12-month trial of the Rasa. The disruptive technology firm is currently raising funds to hand-build 20 hydrogen fuel cell cars to be driven by 60-80 residents in the county for three or six-month contracts, starting in 2017.

It marks the start of the company's ambitious plans to kick-start hydrogen infrastructure in the UK by developing a community of users around a single hydrogen refuelling station. As part of the initiative, a self-service, mobile refuelling point is planned for one of the council car parks at Abergavenny or Monmouth.

Over the next 20 years, Riversimple plans to build a distributed network of compact and efficient manufacturing plants that will regenerate communities and create thousands of jobs.

The Welsh company launched the Rasa this spring, and started crowdfunding in April to match a €2m EU grant. It also received £2 million from the Welsh Government in 2015. The concept vehicles will be developed at a later stage, following initial roll out.

The Rasa is believed to be the most efficient car in the world designed for ordinary road-going use (40gCO_2/km well-to-wheel) and has no tailpipe emissions – just water. The car is powered by a hydrogen fuel cell as well as energy recaptured from braking.

Riversimple's €2m grant from the European Union is part of an existing project that is not affected by the UK referendum result to leave the EU. It is a consortium member of SWARM (Demonstration of Small 4-wheel fuel cell passenger vehicle Applications in Regional and Municipal transport). For the next two years, during the process of leaving the EU, the UK will continue to have the same level of participation in ongoing European programmes.

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Media Contacts: Catherine Kelly +44 (0)7704 130226 and Lyndall King, skype: lyndalltking or +44 (0)7546 912301. lyndall.king@googlemail.com / ckellypr@gmail.com

Visit Riversimple.com to find out more. The latest video here introduces the team and the business. Further images can be accessed here. Follow and like us at Twitter @riversimple, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram

Riversimple is a consortium member of SWARM (Demonstration of Small 4-wheel fuel cell passenger vehicle Applications in Regional and Municipal transport). SWARM has received FCH-JU (Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking) research funding from the European Union.