Science Park visionary gets top academy award

One of the people behind the creation of the Northern Ireland Science Park is to be recognised for his outstanding contribution to engineering by the Royal Irish Academy.

Professor John McCanny, Director of the Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT) at Queen's University Belfast, will receive the Royal Irish Academy's Cunningham Medal, the Academy's premier award at a special ceremony later today.

The medal, which is presented every three years, recognises the outstanding contribution to scholarship and the objectives of the Academy by a member. Previous recipients of the award include Sir William Rowan Hamilton, Sir William Wilde, Sir Bernard Crossland and most recently Seamus Heaney in 2008.

President of the Royal Irish Academy, Professor Luke Drury said: "Professor McCanny is one of the world-leading authorities in the field of Microelectronics Systems design, to which he has made many pioneering and ground breaking contributions. Today, silicon chips based on his research are used in a wide range of everyday devices, which we take for granted, including mobile phones, digital televisions, video cameras and DVD recorders.

"It is only right and proper then, that the Royal Irish Academy bestows its highest and most prestigious honour – the Cunningham Medal - on Professor McCanny, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to scholarship. As a Cunningham Medallist, Professor McCanny joins a distinguished list of world famous recipients, stretching right back to 1789."

Professor John McCanny said: "I am very deeply honoured to be awarded the Royal Irish Academy's Cunningham Medal. As those who know me are aware, one of my core passions is coupling university research with economic impact. This is now on the agenda of many western nations, not least the UK and Ireland. I am therefore very pleased that the Academy has decided to recognise this aspect of my work.

"Success in this area is difficult to achieve and requires a strong team contribution rather than that of a single individual. In accepting this medal, I do so on behalf of the teams of people I have had the pleasure of working with over many years.

"One of the recent recipients of the Cunningham medal was the late Professor Sir Bernard Crossland, a true gentleman and probably one if not the most influential engineers to have lived in these islands. Sir Bernard was a great inspiration to those that knew him. To receive this most prestigious honour so soon after his passing is therefore a very proud and humbling experience."

Within Queen's Professor McCanny was heavily involved in developing the vision

that led to the creation of the Northern Ireland Science Park, its £37M ECIT research flagship and more recently the £30M UK Centre for Secure Information Technology. Prior to ECIT opening in 2003, the Science Park, located on the former Harland and Wolff shipyard, was a derelict “brown field” site. Today it hosts over 100 advanced technology companies employing over 1800 people and generating an estimated £75M per annum, in salaries alone, for the local economy.

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