

Moonlink Yorkshire project set for Autumn lift-off

High-flying students from universities, colleges and secondary schools across Yorkshire are to be challenged to launch a mission to the Moon.

The brief in the Google Lunar X Prize (GLXP) is to land a robotic spacecraft on the surface of the Moon in 2012. The first team to do so is to receive \$20 million.

GLXP entrant, Odyssey Moon LTD, a British company with partner companies in the USA and Canada, is working with the International Space School Education Trust (ISSET) and Moonlink Yorkshire to enable a Yorkshire experiment to be flown as part of their mission to the Moon.

Members of the general public across Yorkshire are also being given the opportunity to come on board under the strapline "Finding Britain's Lost Genius."

The county-wide initiative - 'mission control' is in Bradford - is being headed up by newly formed Moonlink Yorkshire Ltd, a private/public sector community interest company partnership.

Moonlink has signed up with the International Space School Educational Trust (ISSET) and Odyssey Moon to include a small experiment on Odyssey Moon's lunar lander.

Moonlink will be heading up the initiative, driving innovation in schools, universities and local industry in the form of a competition to design, build and fly an experiment to the Moon.

Odyssey Moon's US-based partner company, Odyssey Moon Ventures, is being led by Jay Honeycutt, former NASA Director of Kennedy Space Centre, the world's premier space port where the Space Shuttle is launched and lands, who recently visited Yorkshire schools with ISSET.

Chris Barber, director of ISSET, said: "A rocket will be going to the moon from Cape Canaveral, Florida, in December, 2012, and will contain a number of small experiments. The winning entry from Yorkshire will definitely be on board.

"This year is the 40th anniversary of the first manned moon landing and the milestone can act as a springboard to inspire a new generation in Yorkshire to enter this unique competition.

"It is a world-class opportunity to discover the unfound genius of Yorkshire. Also, importantly, the building of a lunar experiment in Yorkshire will increase jobs, together with research and development capabilities in the region."

While co-ordination of the project is Bradford-based, it involves local industries and public sector partners from across Yorkshire, among them Saltaire-based independent communications group Link Telecom, Bradford Council and Yorkshire Forward.

Gary Fawcett, chief executive of Link Telecom, one of the UK's leading private sector sponsors of education-related initiatives, has been appointed MD of Moonlink Yorkshire.

He said: "The project will put Yorkshire at the forefront of technological discovery in the UK and help increase both the prestige and confidence of the region.

"It will provide spin-off technologies and business opportunities, raise the county's technological and innovative profile, boost the self-esteem of the region and help create new employment opportunities.

"In addition, the mission will increase research capabilities among Yorkshire universities and intensify student and pupil interest in STEM partnerships - a series of regional hubs that provide up-to-date information, support and advice to schools about quality science technology engineering and mathematics activities that enhance and enrich the curriculum.

ISSET

International Space School Educational Trust
5 Herbert Terrace, Penarth, CF64 2AH
T: +44 (0)2920 710295 F: +44 (0)2920 706786

"Who knows – given the right result, Yorkshire could well become known as the place that first 'successfully' sent something British to an extra-terrestrial body!"

Thea Stein, Executive Director of Economic Inclusion for Yorkshire Forward, comments: "This competition brings to life what is so exciting about subjects such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

"These subjects are behind every major innovation and invention throughout history, and we encourage our region's educational institutions – from our world-class research facilities within our universities to our colleges and schools in submitting their ideas - to get involved and become part of this extraordinary mission."

The competition - full details regarding participation will be announced after summer – will be open to students from all UK universities, colleges and high schools, with individual entries also invited from the public.

The brief is to design an experiment to be carried out on the moon. It must meet specifications laid down by Odyssey Moon in respect of dimensions, volume, power requirements, communications and data supply and transmission.

While organisers recognise that the Yorkshire challenge will more likely than not be won by a team from higher education, as an incentive to school pupils there are plans to award a special prize for the best entry to attend the Cape Canaveral launch.
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About the International Space School Education Trust - <http://www.isset.org/>

The International Space school Educational Trust is a UK based educational charity that seeks to utilise the inspiration of space exploration to motivate young people and inculcate the 'you can do it' spirit. ISSET aims to bring the message that there are great opportunities for our young people and that these opportunities are increased by study in mathematics, science, engineering and the technologies.

ISSET was founded in 1998 and organised a range of educational programmes for teachers and students that include educational programmes at US Space Centres, teacher professional development programmes in the UK, school improvement programmes and astronaut and space scientist and engineer visits to the UK, the last visit being by the crew of space shuttle mission STS 119 in July 2009.

About Moonlink Yorkshire

Moonlink Yorkshire Ltd is a private/public sector community interest company partnership that has signed up with ISSET. While co-ordination of the moon project is based in Bradford, West Yorkshire, it involves industries and public sector partners from right across the county. Among those taking a leading role in the initiative are independent communications group Link Telecom, of Saltaire, Bradford Council, Yorkshire Forward and Space Connections, a national organisation headquartered in Bradford that acts as a central point of contact for teachers to access information and resources they need for space-related projects

About Odyssey Moon – <http://www.odysseymoon.com>

Odyssey Moon Limited is a multi-national corporation headquartered in the Isle of Man with U.S. and Canadian subsidiaries that was created to capitalize on commercial opportunities created by renewed interests in exploring the Moon. The company is building an experienced world-class team from the space and satellite arena with particular focus on mission planning, system design, contractor supervision, and most importantly, customer service and marketing.

For further info. contact Robin Moule, Moule Media, 01756-794027, mobile 07976-559961, e-mail robin@moulemedia.com
Chris Barber can be contacted on 07725 942513.