**PRESS RELEASE**

**RGU and Dutch aircraft firm secure funding for sustainable seaplane project**

**Aberdeen, Scotland, & Hilversum, the Netherlands, 31 January 2023** Robert Gordon University and Dutch aircraft manufacturer Cormorant SEAplanes BV have secured almost £10,000 in funding to look into the use of lightweight sustainable materials for an innovative electric aircraft.

The University’s School of Engineering is working alongside [Cormorant SEAplanes BV](https://cormorant.aero/strategy/) after receiving an award of £9,978 from the Scottish Inward Investment Catalyst Fund in December 2022.

The fund was set up in 2021 by Interface and Scottish Government to support businesses not yet located in Scotland to work with Scottish academic institutions.

RGU and Cormorant SEAplanes BV will investigate the possibility of using wood for the construction of the seven-seat aircraft, operating from land or water.

Researchers from RGU will help provide vital expertise on the materials and stress, strain as well as fatigue and deterioration issues arising out of the use of laminated wood materials or alternative composite materials.

It is hoped that the results of the project will have a positive impact on aircraft design where weight and strength play major roles, as should material sustainability.

Initial research through this project will be seeking investment for prototype development and for establishing the feasibility of the introduction of naturally derived materials into amphibious aircraft construction.

This will be achieved through demonstrator-level development, manufacturing, and testing of the real-scale systems, covering a wide span of processes, addressing extended types of products, and demonstrating applicability to aircraft sectors and markets.

The RGU team will be led by Dr Ketan Pancholi who is an acknowledged expert in material development and design, composite and material characterisation

Dr Pancholi said: “It is fantastic that we have managed to secure funding for the project concerning sustainability for the aircraft industry and working alongside innovative company, Cormorant SEAplanes BV, is a great opportunity for the team at RGU.

“We would look to thank the Scottish Inward Investment Catalyst Fund for this grant.

“The potential to regularly use sustainable materials to build aircraft is something we are keen to harness.

“Our focus at RGU as part of this project is to find out if the wooden composite materials can withstand the rigours of what is required from aircraft in the 21st Century.”

Chris Rijff, Head of Design at Cormorant SEAplanes BV, commented: “We look forward to working with Dr Pancholi and his colleagues in RGU’s School of Engineering.

“This was made possible through grant funding provided through the Catalyst Fund.

“It provides an invaluable opportunity to investigate the potential for wood as a sustainable material for aircraft in a modern context and building on its significant, now largely neglected, contribution to the aviation sector in the past.”

The RGU / Cormorant SEAplanes BV research project is one of five which have been awarded almost £45,000 in funding from the Scottish Inward Investment Catalyst Fund.

The fund is part of the Scottish Government’s Inward Investment Plan. Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise, Ivan McKee, said:

“It is excellent to see the success of the Inward Investment Catalyst Fund in attracting high-quality and innovative projects, aligned with the key areas of the Inward Investment Plan and our ambitions set out in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

“This funding highlights the strengths and expertise of our internationally recognised universities, encouraging potential investors to grow their businesses here in Scotland.

“These partnerships are also helping to lay the foundations that will support economic growth in Scotland resulting in the potential for creating high-skilled jobs.”

Howell Davies, Sector and Business Engagement Manager, Interface, said: “The catalyst funding is a valuable way to kickstart relationships. We see examples of projects from last year leading on to funded PhD Studentships and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships which deepen the business-academic relationship and help to create opportunities for inward investment in Scotland.”

All the funded projects will support a net zero, health and wellbeing economy with the principles of fair work and sustainable, inclusive growth, and are part of the Scottish Government’s Inward Investment Plan, which articulates the important role that inward investment can play in Scotland’s economic growth and in delivering net zero ambitions.

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**Note for editors**

**Robert Gordon University**

An innovative, inclusive, and professionally-focused University that has a positive impact on those it serves: Robert Gordon University (RGU) delivers high-quality educational experiences that provide learners with the skills to thrive throughout their careers. RGU’s mission is to transform people and communities by providing excellent teaching, research, and enterprise opportunities that contribute to economic, social, and cultural development and environmental sustainability. Named ‘Scottish University of the Year’ in The Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021, RGU places students at the heart of both the design and delivery of its teaching and learning. This is reflected in the way the University collaborates with students to continually enhance support services and curricula in response to students’ needs. RGU's reputation for delivering high-quality learning experiences is consistently recognised through the National Student Survey, with 2022 seeing RGU ranked among the top three universities in Scotland for overall student experience and in the UK’s top ten.

For more information about RGU, please visit [www.rgu.ac.uk](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CDP11495%5CDownloads%5Cwww.rgu.ac.uk)

**Cormorant**

Cormorant SEAplanes BV is developing a practical, adaptable, 7-seat, amphibious aircraft with a focus on sustainability. Sustainability is viewed holistically, beyond zero emissions, to consider: construction materials; the supply chain; and, as a minimal / low infrastructure requirement transport solution, the enhancement of socioeconomic viability for its target markets.

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**Interface**

Interface connects businesses from all sectors to Scotland’s universities, research institutes and colleges. Funded by the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise, Interface is a free and impartial service which aims to stimulate demand for innovation and help companies to collaborate with academics to solve business challenges.

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