

silicon is compatible with complementary metal–oxide–semiconductor processes, the integrated silicon platform allows for the incorporation of electronic components, such as phase locking circuits, on the same chip. This platform therefore offers the potential for the development of a robust, fully integrated electro-optic device with an extremely small overall footprint.

The next step is to design and fabricate a suspended silicon nanowaveguide structure that can achieve this high SBS gain in practice. Suspended silicon structures have been recently fabricated by Michal Lipson's group at Cornell¹², as well as by other

groups working on optomechanics^{13,14}. With continued advances in silicon technology, integrated chip-scale SBS-based electro-optic devices may become a reality in the near future. □

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BUSINESS NEWS

Huawei expands its European research network

Chinese telecommunications firm Huawei has bought the UK-based Centre for Integrated Photonics (CIP), securing 58 jobs as well as the future of this ground-breaking research laboratory.

The future of CIP looked uncertain as it was owned by the soon-to-be-disbanded East of England Development Agency (EEDA). In 2003 the EEDA saved CIP from closure after its owner, US firm Corning, pulled out of the UK. Although this move secured the short-term future of CIP, its future seemed bleak after the UK Government announced that all regional development agencies, such as the EEDA, will close by March 2012.

CIP's CEO, Peter Wharton, told *Nature Photonics*: "Many of the optical components that are now taken for granted in telecommunications systems were pioneered at CIP. It was important for us to find a buyer that didn't just want to acquire our technology and take it home. We were also looking for a buyer who could make a commitment to keeping our facility, as Corning had spent a lot of money refurbishing and updating it. The last six months of working closely with Huawei has more than met our expectations, building the foundations for an excellent working relationship."

The deal, which is worth more than US\$10 million, means CIP will eventually be incorporated into Huawei's extensive European research and development network. However, Huawei has agreed to let CIP continue working for its external customers in the short term. "Huawei has agreed to let us give our current customers time to find alternative suppliers," said Wharton. "Because what we do is so



tailored, some of our customers are finding it difficult to move elsewhere. Huawei has told us to keep supplying these customers and to help them make other arrangements. This process could take several years."

Huawei has also encouraged CIP to continue collaborating with other researchers in pan-European research projects. Wharton admits that Huawei's understanding and friendly attitude was one of the factors that resulted in the company winning the bid to buy CIP. "We have worked with most of the major players in the telecommunications industry in the past, so when we announced we were up for sale, we did expect a certain level of interest. But we were surprised at how much interest was generated. In the end we had to choose between three serious offers. I decided to let the staff vote and they voted overwhelmingly in favour of Huawei. As a consequence, we have not lost any staff."

Wharton believes that this level of interest is a result of the growing trend of companies wanting to revert back to an integrated business model, where research is done in-house. "In order to be able to innovate in the telecommunications industry, companies need control at the component or device level," said Wharton. "In order to do this, companies need to invest in research. Running a fab is an expensive business and we needed the deep pockets of a growing telecommunications company. We are relishing the opportunity to be part of a large company again."

Despite now focusing mainly on developing Huawei's products, Wharton says CIP's remit will stay largely the same: developing high-speed, low-power, compact photonic components.

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