**PRESS RELEASE** - Embargoed until: 7am (GMT) on 18 March 2018:

***For the first time in 150 years, and 25 Prime Ministers later, a new Whitworth letter is being sent to 10 Downing Street…***

On 18 March 2018, a special letter will be sent to Prime Minister Theresa May by the Whitworth Society. The letter marks, to the day, 150 years since Sir Joseph Whitworth, a legendary 19th century toolmaker and “unsung hero of the industrial revolution”, took the bold step of writing to then Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, proposing a new engineering scholarship.

Whitworth, a Victorian visionary and entrepreneur - the Elon Musk of his era - built a machine capable of measuring a millionth of an inch, introducing it to a world that was yet to meet the humble telephone. He standardised the common screw thread (altering the path of modern manufacturing), devised a new method to find a perfectly flat surface and created such an accurate rifle, some consider it to be one of the world’s earliest sniper weapons.

Having started his career as an apprentice at a cotton-spinning mill at the age of 14, Whitworth believed in combining practical experience with academic studies. In 1868, he donated £100,000 (the equivalent of over £10-million today) to fund the Whitworth Scholarship, which has been supported by the Whitworth Society since 1923. The scholarship has benefited over 2,400 engineers, men and women from all walks of life. It has brought science and industry closer together, as Whitworth envisaged.

A century and a half later, the new Whitworth letter is being written by Dr Howard Stone, president of the Whitworth Society. It serves as a reminder of Sir Joseph’s indomitable spirit and the power engineers have to change the world “not for an age, but for all time”. It comes during a new global revolution, this time digital, and at a time of historic change for the United Kingdom, where billions are being invested into science by government.

“One hundred and fifty years ago, one man, Sir Joseph Whitworth, had the foresight to support the advancement of engineering through engineers with practical experience and theoretical knowledge,” Stone says. “Today, this combination of skills is just as relevant for the greater good of the nation.”

Whitworth scholars are business leaders and owners, recent graduates and professors, who continue to advance academic knowledge and shape the engineering industry, working to solve some of its greatest challenges.

“Parallel to Sir Joseph Whitworth’s concerns in 1868, we also see the United Kingdom has fallen behind the United States, France, Italy and Germany in our productivity,” Stone writes in his letter to Prime Minister May. He calls on government to help promote and advertise the Whitworth Scholarship and to include it in its *Apprenticeship Reform Programme*.

Whitworth lived in a golden age of engineering. In today’s digital, connected world, where presidents tweet to millions across the globe, the Whitworth Society (a “modern bunch of people”) is emailing its #Whitworth150 letter to Downing Street and using social media to spread the word.

Follow: @WhitworthSoc on Twitter or find @WhitworthSociety on Facebook.

*- Ends -*

To arrange interviews, contact Howard Stone at +447712 343844 / howard.stone@ecolite.co.uk

To explore the lives of Whitworth Scholars and their impact, go to: [www.whitworthsociety.org](http://www.whitworthsociety.org)

For more detailed information, please see attached “background information” document.