

How to switch wallpaper – with a switch

■ Professor predicts a plastic future

■ University in new hi-tech revolution

■ STEVEN CUNLIFFE

FAMILIES bored with their wallpaper could one day be able to change the pattern at the touch of a switch, according to scientists at Manchester University.

Engineer professor Aimin Song is looking at new ways of using nanotechnology, controlling matter less than a millionth of a millimetre wide.

He believes changeable wallpaper and computer screens that roll up and go

into your pocket are just two possible applications that may soon be available.

Other products could be electronic tickets for public transport systems or road charging schemes, and electronic stamps for letters.

With a £30,000 award from the Royal Society – one of only eight people to get one – Prof Song will continue with work on plastic electronics technology, which opens up the possibility for very flexible, hi-tech devices being developed.

Prof Song is confident he can develop roll-up information displays, and also changeable electronic wallpaper.

Due to the high level of commercial interest, he has formed a company called Plastic ePrint with support

from The University of Manchester Intellectual Property.

The firm is also working on demonstration versions of plastic radio frequency smart cards and developing plastic components for use in flexible displays.

He said: "I think that plastics will bring a revolution for the second time in history.

"I am confident the development of plastic electronics will lead to a new generation of exciting products coming into our everyday lives."

Dr Richard Price, from UMIP said: "Prof Song's technology has the potential to be at the cornerstone of the plastic electronics revolution – the nanodevices are so simple, yet extremely elegant."