

£13m EU funding for Institute for Compound Semiconductors

A £13m EU funding boost to help put Cardiff University's Institute for Compound Semiconductors at the forefront of 21st Century technologies has been announced by Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford.

Saturday 28 January 2017

The EU funding will help build, equip and run a state-of-the-art cleanroom at the new Institute for Compound Semiconductors (ICS), based at Cardiff University's Innovation Campus.

ICS will turn its laboratory research into products and services by working with commercial partners to lead in developing one of the world's key enabling technologies – Compound Semiconductors.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“Investing in world leading facilities so that academia and industry can collaborate and drive forward research in this sector will be an important boost to the Welsh economy.

“This EU funding will encourage high quality well-paid employment in the participating companies and the creation of spin-out companies, new start-ups as well as attracting innovative compound semiconductor companies from across the UK and Europe, all adding to increased growth and prosperity in the region.”

Compound Semiconductor technologies underpin the internet and have enabled new emerging megatrends such as Smart Phones, tablets, and satellite communications. These semiconductors are created by combining elements to produce materials with physical and chemical properties that have wide-ranging technological applications.

Professor Colin Riordan, Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University, said:

“This EU funding is a vital component in our bid to generate prosperity in South Wales through industrial innovation. By investing in high quality facilities and talented researchers, and by building long-standing commercial partnerships, Cardiff University's Innovation System will help deliver prosperity for Wales.”

The funding award builds on long-running work between the University, IQE, Welsh and UK Government to develop a hub of compound semiconductor expertise

in South Wales, including £12m from the Welsh Government to support the development of the wider ICS facility in 2015.

Dr Drew Nelson, CEO, IQE plc, said:

“The role of compound semiconductors as an enabling technology for a wide range of next generation applications from high-speed communications to autonomous vehicles is widely acknowledged worldwide, with major initiatives underway by blue-chip organisations, academic institutions and government agencies, particularly in Asia and the USA.

“In Europe, Wales is uniquely positioned with a critical mass of compound semiconductor expertise to exploit the enormous commercial opportunities that will doubtlessly be generated. Today’s announcement of £13m EU funding through the Welsh Government significantly adds weight and credibility to Wales becoming a global hub in this key enabling technology that will drive innovation over the coming years and decades.”

Primary schools encouraged to make ‘Daily Mile’ a runaway success

The initiative sees primary school children run, walk or jog for 15 minutes every day. It is inclusive, simple and free, with no equipment or set up required.

Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans and Education Secretary Kirsty Williams have sent a joint letter to head teachers to encourage them to consider simple and innovative approaches to improve the health and wellbeing of children during the school day.

Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans, said:

“We want to ensure children across Wales have good physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing. This is why we are encouraging to schools to take part in innovative schemes to help children be more active, such as The Daily Mile.

“The initiative builds upon the good work already taking place throughout Wales, such as the Welsh Network of Health Schools Scheme.”

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams, said:

“Creating more fun opportunities for young people to get moving is key to ensuring they achieve the recommended 60 minutes a day of physical activity.

“Engaging with The Daily Mile will support primary schools to implement the new curriculum, which puts a focus on making physical activity a more routine part of the school day.”

“Bovine TB at ten year low, but we must work together to eliminate disease” – Wales’ Chief Veterinary Officer

Speaking at NFU Cymru’s Pembrokeshire Annual General Meeting last night, the Chief Vet highlighted the progress made, with over 95% of Wales’ herds now TB free.

The Chief Vet also pointed to the increase in cattle slaughtered and stressed that although still a cause for concern, it did not reflect a worsening situation as is often reported.

Instead, the rise is due to an increase in the use of the more sensitive gamma interferon blood test and more severe interpretation of the skin test, both of which are flagging infected cattle in herds with a history of bovine TB at an earlier stage.

This increased sensitivity of testing helps to identify infection sooner and reduces the spread of the disease. The number of cattle slaughtered is expected to fall over time as a result of this approach, and as the number of infected herds continues to reduce.

The Chief Vet also highlighted the Cabinet Secretary’s position on controlling the disease in wildlife, saying an “England-style” cull had been ruled out in Wales.

The Randomised Badger Culling Trial in England showed a net reduction of 16% of new incidents of bovine TB over nine years. In Wales, the number of new incidents recorded has reduced by 47% in eight years through application of increased testing frequency, improved biosecurity and other cattle control measures alone. However, it is recognised that in a number of long term TB breakdowns the disease picture points towards a wildlife reservoir of infection.

As a result the Cabinet Secretary has proposed a measured response to controlling the disease in wildlife in Wales. Focussing on these persistent TB breakdowns, where it can be objectively proven badgers are infected, it is proposed the infected groups of badgers are trapped and humanely killed.

The Chief Veterinary Officer reported that work has already started to develop bespoke action plans for each herd, including addressing any wildlife contribution to the problem.

Speaking at the conference, Christianne Glossop said:

“We all recognise bovine TB has a significant financial and social impact on farm businesses and the wider rural economy. While it is encouraging to see the number of new herd incidents falling, even in our highest incidence areas, I recognise this is of little comfort to the farms currently suffering a TB breakdown. This is why we are focusing our efforts on eliminating the disease in affected herds.”

“The public consultation on our proposed Refreshed Approach to TB eradication is now closed and we welcome the responses we have received. We are committed to eradicating the disease in Wales, but we cannot do this alone. It’s encouraging NFU Cymru has welcomed the plans for a regionalised approach, as this is aimed at protecting the low incidence area while bearing down on the disease elsewhere. This will help us to build on the progress made so far as we progress towards our ambition of a TB free Wales.”

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, is considering all response to the consultation on the Welsh Government’s refreshed Bovine TB Eradication Programme. The refreshed programme is expected to be published in the spring.

[Welsh Government accepts all Talented Women for a Successful Wales report recommendations and marks the occasion with planned Royal visit](#)

To mark the announcement the Minister has also confirmed she will be hosting a special WISE (Women in Science, Technology and Engineering) event in the

Senedd, Cardiff, on 13 March, which is being attended by WISE's patron, HRH The Princess Royal.

The event will celebrate and promote the value of women in STEM in Wales and build momentum around the report's recommendations.

Talented Women for a Successful Wales is an independent report which the Welsh Government commissioned and published last year.

Led by Wales' Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Julie Williams, the report aims to tackle the critical shortage of women in STEM roles in Wales, and across the rest of the UK. It identifies the need for a sea change of attitude across society to break down existing barriers and create the skilled workforce needed to support the future economic growth of Wales.

It includes 33 recommendations on dealing with the underrepresentation and poor retention of women in STEM in Wales through four major themes of education, recruitment, retention and promotion – all of which have been accepted by the Welsh Government.

While the majority of the recommendations are for schools, universities and STEM businesses in Wales to action with the Welsh Government advising, encouraging and facilitating where appropriate, there are two actions which are specifically for the Welsh Government to take forward:

1. The Welsh Government should make improved gender balance in STEM a theme in educational policies and programmes for teacher training, curriculum reform, careers advice, apprenticeships and further & higher education funding.
2. The Welsh Government should review its support for childcare and consider how it can further support a wider range of parents with the costs of childcare – with the long-term aim of developing an offer of high-quality early childhood care and education.

It is estimated that increasing the number of women in science across the UK could be worth £2bn to the national economy.

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James, is keen to point out that work is already underway to meet these recommendations and over recent year's the Welsh Government has increased its investment into this important area, saying:

"Science underpins innovation and technology developments and is essential for economic growth and creating high quality jobs. That is why we have already invested more than £100m in recent years to increase Wales' research capacity and why we are supporting all of the recommendations in this report to encourage more women and girls to pursue STEM skill opportunities.

"Our 'STEM in Education and Training: A Delivery Plan for Wales' (2016) already outlines our commitment to improving the participation of girls in STEM and our Education Directorate has

made prioritising girls' progression in maths, physics and computing, and made gender balance in STEM education a condition of grant funding."

The Minister added:

"While these are all positive developments we recognise more can be done to understand the issues affecting girls' progression in STEM and how practice in schools can have a positive impact and our programme of education reform aims to address this."

Plans are also being progressed by the Welsh Government to provide 30 hours of free early education and childcare to working parents of three and four year-olds across Wales for 48 weeks of the year. This is the most generous childcare offer in the UK, giving parents – in particular, women – more choice and a greater ability to have both a family and a career.

The Talented Women for a Successful Wales report can be found [here](#).

Over £5million investment for Morriston redevelopment work

Vaughan Gething said:

Some of the oldest parts of the hospital date from the WW2 era and others are over 30 years old. The accommodation to be demolished no longer meets modern building standards and guidance.

This funding is in addition to the £142.539m that has already been funded to improve schemes under the HealthVision Swansea programme at Morriston.

Mr Gething made the announcement on a visit to the Haemostasis Biomedical Research Unit on the site.

£5.11 million will be used to demolish obsolete buildings on the site, develop a new on-site crèche and provide new IT infrastructure at the hospital.

"This investment is part of wider modernisation plans for Morriston; it will make the site safer and create space for future healthcare developments as Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board plan for the future of healthcare on the site."

Sian Harrop-Griffiths, Director of Strategy at Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board said:

“We are extremely pleased that Welsh Government has provided funding to support the next phase of the development of the Morriston Hospital site. This funding will enable the demolition of a large number of outdated buildings now that the services previously provided from there have been relocated in modern, fit for purpose accommodation on site.

“This will also enable space to be made available for some temporary car parking whilst the design and development of a new multi-storey car park on the site are being undertaken, and plans for this are well advanced.”