

## £2m investment by MicroPharm set to make West Wales key production centre for anti-venoms

MicroPharm Ltd develops immunotherapy products to target infectious diseases and acute toxic conditions and currently produce two anti-venoms for the treatment of snakebites from the European common adder and the carpet viper in West Africa.

Its planned £2m expansion, supported by £150K from the Welsh Government, will see it open new facilities at Cilgerran while retaining its base in Newcastle Emlyn. The investment is expected to create 15 jobs and safeguard a further 14, bringing the total headcount to 51.

It means that MicroPharm will become a leading supplier of high quality anti-venoms to Europe and Africa, like Protherics UK Ltd, a BTG International group company based in Llandysul, who provide antivenin for North American pit viper envenomation in the USA.

The unique West Wales cluster includes Ig-Innovations Ltd, also based near Llandysul, which produces antibodies for supply to the research, diagnostic, biotech and pharmaceutical sector including MicroPharm, as well as direct sales.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“It is a considerable achievement that this small area of rural West Wales is a world leader in what is an extremely specialised, highly competitive and highly valued field. It once again illustrates the breadth of expertise we have in Wales within the life sciences sector.

“MicroPharm is a key contributor to Wales’ expertise and I am delighted Welsh Government support will enable its planned expansion to go ahead immediately. The investment will provide the additional facilities required to meet the growing global demand for its products. It will also enable the company to capitalise on opportunities to increase its product range and support its on-going research to provide treatments for devastating diseases like Clostridium difficile Infection (CDI) and Ebola.

“This very important expansion project will further embed a specialist pharmaceutical R&D and manufacturing company in West Wales and provide opportunities for local people to access high

quality jobs.”

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James added:

“Wales’ life sciences sector has gone from strength to strength over recent years and this latest announcement is welcome news for both the local community, wider Welsh economy and global pharmaceutical marketplace.

“As a relatively small country Wales punches well above its weight when it comes to scientific developments and world-class research and this government remains committed to supporting innovative companies like MicroPharm to ensure this vitally important sector continues to grow in Wales.”

MicroPharm’s CEO, Ian Cameron, commented:

“We have outgrown our existing facilities in Newcastle Emlyn and the new manufacturing facility at Cilgerran will provide a platform for the long term growth of the company. The Welsh Government has supported the growth of MicroPharm since its inception and we are grateful for the continued support”.

MicroPharm’s expertise lies in producing a range of immunotherapeutic products for clinical use – designed to treat acute, life threatening emergencies and required urgently either because no alternative exists or any alternatives are unsafe or ineffective.

In addition to anti-venoms, MicroPharm is also working on developing a ricin antitoxin having been awarded a contract, valued at up to £7m, last year by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). It involves the production of ovine antibodies to ricin and their further processing and manufacture into a product suitable for human use. Ricin is a deadly poison with no antidote currently available.

MicroPharm has a product pipeline of several new immunotherapeutic products for human and veterinary use ranging from early stage opportunities to clinical trials stage which are expected to come into the market from 2018-2021.

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# Tell us about your broadband needs

Businesses, homes and communities have an opportunity to take part in a [consultation on the next stage of fast broadband rollout in Wales](#), Minister for Skills and Science Julie James has said today.

The consultation, published today, outlines the premises that cannot currently access superfast broadband and where telecommunications companies have no plans to reach in the next three years. This follows a detailed Open Market Review and discussions with the industry to establish, premises by premises, where the next stage of the rollout needs to take place.

The Welsh Government's current Superfast Cymru project continues to make good progress. At the end of March 645,000 premises across Wales had been given access to fast fibre as a result of the programme. BT has confirmed it expects to deliver 30Mbps download speeds to around 690,000 premises before the programme closes at the end of December 2017.

The consultation will inform the next stage of the rollout to take place in early 2018 in order to reach the final few hard to reach premises. It has identified a list of over 98,000 premises. The rollout will be backed by a public sector budget of around £80m.

Minister for Skills and Science Julie James said:

"I am keen to hear the views of both the telecoms industry and residents and business owners on whether any further premises should be included or whether any premises currently on the list should be excluded.

"The consultation will help us to further refine the list of unconnected premises. The more responses we receive, the more comprehensive the list will be.

"If there are communities that have an interest in driving their own solutions, I want to hear from them. If there are views on how we should lot the procurement, I want to hear them. If there are views on how we should prioritise or target the funding, I want to hear them.

"We have already transformed the situation in Wales through Superfast Cymru. The most recent Ofcom report showed that Wales has the best superfast broadband availability amongst the devolved nations, with over eight out ten premises with access. This compares with just over half in 2014.

"But the work does not end when Superfast Cymru ends. We want to reach the final few premises. There will be further engagement with the industry and key stakeholders over the summer to refine the procurement approach with a view to invite formal tenders to

deliver the new project in September with the new project beginning in early 2018.

“I am committed to achieving our ambitions in Taking Wales Forward to offer fast reliable broadband to every property in Wales.”

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## **The Prime Minister must not gamble with people's jobs and livelihoods**

The First Minister said the outcome of the General Election means the UK Government has no mandate to put barriers in the way of continued full and unfettered access to the Single Market and has called on the Prime Minister to convene an urgent meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee to agree the UK's Brexit negotiating position.

The First Minister has also said the JMC meeting should include the leaders of the Democratic Unionist Party and of Sinn Fein, even if such a meeting takes place before the formation of a new Northern Ireland Executive.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

““It is clear from the election that the UK Government has no mandate for the ‘hard Brexit’ championed by the Prime Minister.

“The Prime Minister has already lost one gamble. I will not allow her to gamble with the Welsh economy and with people's jobs and livelihoods. She must now listen to what we have been saying from the outset; full and unfettered access to the Single Market is central to Wales' – and the UK's – future prosperity and must be our first priority in the forthcoming negotiations.

“The leaders across Great Britain and Northern Ireland must meet face-to-face to jointly consider how to take forward the Brexit process. This is why we urgently need a meeting of the JMC.

“I have made repeatedly clear my Government's willingness to work with the UK Government and the devolved administrations to agree common approaches – through discussion, not diktat – to prevent friction within our own internal market.

“If the Prime Minister accepts this approach, she will find us reliable and constructive partners. If she does not – and, instead, attempts to ride roughshod over devolution and impose a more monolithic and centralised UK upon the devolved nations, we will have no choice but to oppose such steps.

"I have told her bluntly, this is a fight which she does not need.

"Later this week, we will publish a paper on our proposals for responding creatively to the challenges Brexit poses for the devolved nations and the future governance of the UK."

The First Minister also questioned whether the Brexit deal would now be possible during the two year deadline because of the current political situation.

He added::

"Given the uncertainty following the General Election, it will be impossible to both negotiate a withdrawal agreement and put in place the basis for a future relationship with the EU within two years. This means it is essential we agree within the UK now, and seek the agreement of our EU partners early in negotiations, the form of transitional arrangements to come into effect in April 2019."

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## [Economy Secretary congratulates Welsh businesses on export success](#)

The recently published Welsh exports statistics for April 2016 to March 2017 show that exports in Wales were up by 11.9 per cent on the previous year with a rate of growth that was 0.7 per cent above the UK average.

This means the value of Welsh exports in 2016/17 increased by £1,390 million on the previous financial year.

The statistics show that Germany remained Wales' top exporting partner in 2016/17 with total exports valued at £2,978m. It was followed by France (with total Welsh exports of £2,242m) and the USA including Puerto Rico (with total Welsh exports of £1,676m.)

The quarterly statistics also reveal that exporting companies in Wales got off to a strong start to the year with exports for the period from January to March 2017 growing by £150m on the previous quarter.

This equates to an increase of 4.4 per cent on October to December figures and represents a growth rate that is more than two and half times the 1.6 per cent rate of increase experienced in the UK as a whole.

Ken Skates said:

“These latest figures show a really strong performance from our exporting companies, with a growth rate that is well above the UK average.

“Welsh companies are clearly working hard to increase their share of the overseas markets and I would like to congratulate them on their ongoing hard work and success.

“Exporting really does have the potential to transform a business and take it to next level. That is why we are working closely with companies who are looking to build up this area of their operations and offer them the right support for wherever they may be in their journey.

“Indeed in the coming months we will be taking companies from across Wales to a broad range of overseas markets including Singapore, USA, Canada and India so they explore new trading opportunities and agree new deals.

“Increasing the value of exports and the number of exporters in Wales remains a central pillar of our economic strategy. This is more important than ever as we prepare to leave the EU and I would urge companies who would like help in growing their exports to get in touch with the Welsh Government for tailored support.”

View: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-exports/?lang=en> .

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**[Welsh Government look to update 200](#)**

# year old Taxi Licensing

Economy Secretary Ken Skates has urged interested parties to have their say on the proposals, which will seek to address issues raised by drivers, unions, licencing authorities and the Law Commission to better represent modern practices.

Ken Skates said:

“Taxis and private hire vehicles provide a vital public service, connecting people to places when alternative public transport is not always available or viable.

“There are 9200 or so taxi and private hire licenced drivers in Wales, all of which are currently bound by licensing legislation which dates back to the horse drawn hackneys.

“The Law Commission made recommendations in 2014 about how the licensing system can be improved and, as a result of provisions included in the Wales Act 2017, I’m delighted to now be in a position to put to consultation proposals aimed at delivering a simpler, fairer system fit for modern Wales.”

The Law Commission’s review of the law governing taxi and private hire vehicles made 84 recommendations, many of which are reflected in the Welsh Government’s proposals for reform. They include:

- the introduction of national standards for all taxis and private hire vehicles, set by the Welsh Ministers
- Local licensing authorities able to set additional licence conditions where appropriate and remain responsible for issuing licences and enforcement
- Private hire vehicles licencing to include novelty vehicles and stretch limousines, but wedding and funeral cars would continue to be exempt
- providers being able to work across local authority borders more easily with licensing officers provided with new enforcement powers to deal with vehicles and drivers licensed in different areas.
- Tougher penalties on touting are also proposed (actively soliciting customers), including impounding vehicles
- Local licensing authorities retaining the right to limit the number of taxis working in their licensing area
- Improved arrangements for regulating fares

Ken Skates added:

“These progressive proposals will see improvements to the current complicated, outdated and antiquated legislation, reflecting on the needs of twenty first century drivers, licensing authorities and

passengers here in Wales. I'd encourage anyone with an interest in the sector to contribute to this consultation."

View:

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-wales>.