

Welsh innovation receives global recognition for helping to save and improve lives

Backed by over £3m Welsh Government funding and run in collaboration with Innovate UK, the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) has gained interest from other UK devolved nations as well as attracting attention from Ireland, Sweden and Australia.

Launched in Wales in 2013, the SBRI offers businesses – many of which are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) – the opportunity to bid for research and development (R&D) funding to develop technology-driven solutions for specific challenges facing the public sector.

Run as competitions each challenge focusses on an area of public service where solutions either do not yet exist or where partial solutions might be improved.

Areas where solutions are already being progressed include the improvement of health and patient care, medical treatments, road safety, renewable energy generation and environmental management.

To date, 14 SBRI competitions have been run in Wales, resulting in 66 contracts valued at approximately £5m being awarded to companies to develop Welsh public sector solutions: 44 contracts at Phase 1 (developing the proposal) and 22 contracts at Phase 2 (creating a prototype with a view to bringing it to market).

One of the first SBRI challenges run in Wales was by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (UHB) which wanted to develop a solution to improve patient care by helping nurses and carers reduce administration duties so they could spend more time with patients.

The target of this challenge was for nurses to spend 10% more time with patients. After two years of practical collaboration between the UHB's nurses and a small Bangor start up company, Elidir Health, a software solution has been developed which promises to increase nurses' time with patients not just by 10% but potentially up to 23%. Indeed this challenge has been so successful that Elidir Health is now working with Cwm Taf UHB as well as Betsi Cadwaladr UHB to explore how this software can be adopted across both health boards' paediatric units.

The Welsh Government's own Transport department has also made use of SBRI challenges to develop solutions to identified issues, for example improving road safety and reducing the number of motorcyclists killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads.

Of the bids submitted to this challenge two projects were selected, with the

first example already complete.

Armourgel Ltd has developed a motorcycle helmet liner that will significantly reduce the impact to a rider's head during a collision. This can make the difference between a serious brain injury and a minor one.

The second project has developed a junction alert system which will soon be trialed on Welsh roads. The project will be able to test the system in peak motorcycling season and by September the company will have fully tested the system in all weather conditions and will report on its market potential.

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James is keen to point out that both these projects have the potential to save the lives of motorcyclists not just on Welsh roads but across the world, saying:

"The Small Business Research Initiative is a great example of how the public and private sector can work together to tackle societal challenges in innovative ways and deliver benefits to both public sector bodies and industry as well as the people they serve.

"My aim now is for our SBRI programme to become a mainstream tool in the Welsh public sector, promoting innovation and driving forward out technological potential.

"SBRI can open up huge opportunities for Welsh businesses and help solve some of the toughest challenges we will all face in the future and we plan to use it."

Historic Swansea Bay City Region deal secures 10,000 jobs and £1.3bn investment for South West Wales

Backed by £125.4m of Welsh Government funding, the deal is the biggest single investment in the region and is expected to create 10,000 new jobs over the next 15 years.

The Swansea Bay City Region deal brings together Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire councils and includes £115.6m of UK Government funding, £396m of other public sector money and £637m private sector investment.

Eleven major projects are planned across the region in energy, smart manufacturing, innovation and life science.

The First Minister will be joined by the Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Mark Drakeford, the four leaders of the local authorities and the Secretary of State for Wales to sign the city deal document at a ceremony in Swansea's Liberty Stadium this morning.

Speaking ahead of the signing the First Minister said:

"We have pushed long and hard for this city deal to be signed and have given it our strongest possible backing with £125m of Welsh Government investment.

"This is a package which will deliver jobs and economic growth for all of South West Wales, with clear benefits for all the areas involved.

"Today's announcement is a transformative deal that will drive the regional economy in a new direction, supported by high-quality jobs and a digital infrastructure.

"I want to thank our partners – particularly the leaders of all the local authorities and Sir Terry Matthews – for their leadership and vision in bringing this historic deal to fruition.

"This again shows the viability of city deals for different parts of Wales and we want to see this replicated in North Wales. We welcome the UK Government's commitment in the recent budget to the North Wales Growth Deal and will be pressing ahead with discussions on proposals."

Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government Mark Drakeford added:

"Today marks the culmination of many months of negotiations and I'm pleased to see this deal now becoming a reality.

"It has taken a lot of hard work to get us to this point but each of these 11 major projects have both the financial backing and potential to deliver for the people of South West Wales, creating high-quality jobs and opportunities that we need to see right across the country."

Carmarthenshire

Of the eleven major projects within the Swansea Bay City Region City deal there are two specific projects in Carmarthenshire – a Wellness and Life Science Village in Llanelli and a creative industry project at Yr Egin in Carmarthen.

The wellness village and life sciences village at Delta Lakes, Llanelli, is being led by Carmarthen Council, as part of the ARCH (A Regional

Collaboration for Health) programme, which is a partnership between Hywel Dda and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg university health boards and Swansea University. The £200m project aims to create 1,800 high-quality jobs and boost the economy by £467m over 15 years.

The proposals include an Institute of Life Sciences with laboratory and clinic space and an incubation facility for business start-up, research and development; a wellness hub incorporating a state-of-the-art sports and leisure centre, a wellbeing centre, a wellness hotel and an assisted living village set within a green eco-park.

The Yr Egin project involves the construction of a creative and digital hub and the development of a creative industry sector cluster. It will create around 200 jobs and help the local economy and support the Welsh language.

Swansea

In Swansea, the £169m Swansea City and Waterfront digital district project aims to generate more than 1,300 jobs. It will create 100,000 square feet of flexible and affordable new office space on Kingsway in the city centre for tech businesses and to support local enterprise and entrepreneurial talent.

This project will also create a box village development on the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's under-construction Waterfront Innovation Quarter in SA1. Built from shipping containers, this will provide affordable space for start-up firms with links to the university's academic programme.

This project will also enable the digitalisation of the 5,000 to 6,000-seat indoor arena planned for Swansea's St David's development site, and the development of a digital square with digital screens and digital artworks.

The Life Science & Well-being Campus project will build upon an 'open access-open innovation' philosophy. This project will expand research and innovation infrastructure at the Morrison campus alongside world-leading clinical delivery. In addition, a reconfiguration in real estate will see an expansion of the Singleton Campus where a growing cluster of medical and health technology businesses currently operate and collaborate.

The Factory of the Future project, based in Swansea, aims to support and continue to build the region's strong manufacturing base, by creating a network of smart manufacturing innovation centres to provide small and medium businesses with an opportunity to invest in leading edge manufacturing and digital technologies. This project aims to put the region and its enterprises at the forefront of digital and data based manufacturing.

Pembrokeshire

In Pembrokeshire the Pembroke Dock Marine is a £76m project to establish a marine energy centre around the Port of Milford Haven. It will become the centre for marine energy development, fabrication, testing and deployment.

Neath Port Talbot

Within Neath Port Talbot a new development will establish a hub for innovation, commercialising research and development and supporting start up companies. The Centre of Excellence for Next Generation Digital Services (CENGS) aims to bridge the gap between research and innovation and the ability to launch develop and grow commercial opportunities.

The Steel Science Centre project, based in Neath Port Talbot, will provide a Centre focusing on providing commercial R&D to address the current and future challenges of sustaining steel-making capacity in the region and the UK. It will work with industry to reduce its carbon impact and place the region at the cutting edge of low carbon production. It will also provide support for the developments in the steel supply chain and downstream operations.

Projects for the whole region

The remaining three projects will provide benefits across the whole region –

- Led by Pembrokeshire, the Digital infrastructure project aims to improve broadband and mobile continuity underpinning all projects within the Deal.
- A Homes as Power Stations project will target both new build housing projects and retrofit of existing housing. Led by Neath Port Talbot Council, this project will deliver innovative low carbon homes, supporting carbon reduction targets. The project aims to provide security of housing supply in the region and support a reduction of demand on electricity and gas grid systems. A major aim will be to reduce fuel poverty and its impact on health, together with a focus on digital connectivity and smart metering.
- Led by Carmarthenshire a skills and talent initiative will support skills development for all 11 of the city deal projects spread across the Swansea Bay Region. This initiative seeks to ensure the creation, attraction and retention of a workforce equipped to deliver each of the City Deal projects.

Have your say on the future of health and social care in Wales – Vaughan Gething

Last year, the Welsh Government announced a major review to identify important issues facing the health and care services in Wales. The review will consider ways of meeting rising need for health and social care as well as public expectations about the services.

Today, the review group has launched a new [website](#) giving the public the opportunity to give their honest and frank opinions on the health and care

services in Wales.

There are ten questions for the public to answer, ranging from:

To:

- What problems are there in the current systems, and how do they show through in the services people get?

Chair of the Review, Dr Ruth Hussey CB, OBE said:

“We want our review to be founded on evidence and on the experiences and understanding of those people who use health and social care services in Wales, as well as those who deliver services.

“Public involvement is central to that process and I, along with rest of the panel members, look forward to hearing their views.”

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“The topic of health and social care is always a major point of discussion for everyone. It touches all of our lives at some point and most people have opinions about the care they’ve received – what went well and what could be done better.

“It’s not often that there is such a wide-ranging review of health and social care, that’s why it’s really important that if you want your say on how to develop the services for the future you get online and let the review group hear what you have to say.”

New Transport for Wales Headquarters part of wider work to unleash the potential of Welsh regions

The news comes ahead of a major speech by Ken Skates in which he will say that Wales must grow its regional economies and unleash their potential to drive balanced economic growth across the country.

The Economy Secretary will be addressing a business audience at Coleg y Cymoedd later today and will set out his vision for a prosperous and secure Wales.

Speaking ahead of his speech, Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I’m incredibly proud that during the last Assembly term the Welsh Government directly supported almost 150,000 jobs across the country, with many more in local supply chains.

“That has helped us secure a lower unemployment rate than England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and a faster rate of employment growth than the UK average.

“However as an economy we still face major challenges, particularly in addressing the regional differences in our economy and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth fall more fairly across Wales.

“Since 2010 our approach has focussed on developing key sectors of our economy on a national basis. This has resulted in some stunning successes, particularly in advanced manufacturing areas like aerospace and in the creative industries.

“However, the growth of those sectors and the skilled jobs they have created have not fallen equally across Wales and so now is the time to write the next chapter of Wales’ economic story.

“As we approach the challenges of the future I believe we need to take a new approach by developing the competitive edge of each region of Wales more fully. This will mean empowering each region to develop its own specialised sectors and more distinct economic identities.

“Allied to this we need to change our economic development structures in government to work in closer partnership with those regions, utilising drivers, such as skills, transport connectivity, procurement and digital infrastructure to accelerate economic growth in those areas.

“The way to address these regional differences is not to turn one area against another, but to work together to ensure the fruits of growth are shared by everyone. It’s a question of fairness and that’s why I want to grow the regional economies of Wales and unleash their potential to drive more balanced growth across the whole of the country. Only that way can we make real our promise of better jobs closer to home and ensure every area of Wales becomes

more resilient to the economic challenges we face over the next few years.

“Today I am delighted to announce that the new Transport for Wales headquarters will be located in Pontypridd bringing hundreds of high quality jobs to the area.

“This is great news for the town but it needs to be the start of something bigger. We need to work with partners in the local authority, the private sector as well as local colleges and universities to ensure this injection of jobs becomes a spark for wider local regeneration and prosperity.

“Later today I will meet young people training at the rail engineering centre at Coley y Cymoedd, a £3m partnership between Welsh Government and the college and a great example of the partnership working and forward thinking that is key to regional economic success.

“By looking ahead to the opportunities arising from the £1bn plus we will spend on electrification, Metro and rail infrastructure, we must work together to ensure more of the benefits of that spend remain in our local communities and benefit local supply chains.

“We face major economic challenges which will only be increased by our exit from the EU, global instability, welfare cuts and UK Government austerity.

“Our response must be to work together and to develop more resilient regional economies if we are to build a stronger and fairer economy for everyone in every area of Wales.

[New Transport for Wales Headquarters part of wider work to unleash the](#)

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