

HRH The Duke of York brings Pitch@Palace On Tour to Wales

Pitch@Palace offers entrepreneurs the chance to get their Tech business idea in front of a global audience of influencers who can catapult it to the next level.

Pitch@Palace was founded by The Duke of York in 2014 to support entrepreneurs with the amplification and acceleration of their business ideas by connecting them with potential supporters including CEOs, investors, elevators and key business partners.

Pitch@Palace On Tour comes to Cardiff's Tramshed on Friday Feb 24 at the invitation of Cardiff Start, a community support hub for technology start-ups and business professionals, based in or around Cardiff. The Welsh Government is principal sponsor of the first Pitch@Palace event in Wales which is also supported by Innovation Point.

Selected entrepreneurs will pitch their business ideas to His Royal Highness and invited guests and compete to progress to the next stage Pitch@Palace Boot Camp with the most successful then pitching at St James Palace to an audience from the world of entrepreneurship, tech, media and investment.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Technology driven businesses with bright ideas have the potential to create a real positive impact on our lives and on the economy. They operate in a highly competitive environment and young start ups particularly can benefit significantly from high level support and expertise to move to the next level.

"The Welsh Government provides a wide range of business support for these enterprises and our sponsorship of Pitch@Palace opens up potentially new opportunities and experiences for Wales based tech companies and I wish all participants the very best of luck."

Supporting the Economy Secretary's views, Cardiff Start Co-Founder and Pitch@Palace host, Robert Lo Bue, said:

"The tech start up scene in and around the Welsh Capital has exploded in recent years. Our community alone has over 2100 members sharing opportunities and experiences every single day.

"We are very fortunate in Wales to have a supportive Government and a collaborative environment where individual enterprises actively work together to create the ideal ecosystem for budding entrepreneurs.

“Attracting Pitch@Palace to Wales is quite an accolade and an acknowledgement of the rapid growth and success of the sector in Wales.”

There are two main Pitch@Palace events held in the UK every year, each with a different theme, focusing on various areas of the UK Tech industry. The current theme is Human Tech and the potential impact of technology in our everyday lives – focusing on three areas:

- Tech supporting our everyday needs – Health, Education, Environment
- Tech making our lives more efficient – Connecting up homes via the Internet Of Things, Improving Communications, Wearable Tech and Robotics
- Tech augmenting our experience of the world – through Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence.

Pitch@Palace has to date:

- helped over 247 businesses grow and create 643 jobs;
- 66% of start ups have increased employment;
- 65% of competing start ups subsequently raised funds;
- £247m+ of economic activity has been recorded.

The judging panel at Cardiff Pitch@Palace includes: David Buttress, CEO, of Just Eat, Yasmin Crawford, owner of Tramorgan and James Henderson, Fund manager of Inspire Wales.

The selected companies pitching are:

- Kraydel
- Salubrious Ltd
- Helpfulpeeps
- BrainWaveBank Limited
- Learnium
- Harness
- Paperclip
- Alkosens
- Medivation Limited
- Vision Game Labs Ltd
- Volunteer Space
- Recall Alert CIC.

[Welsh Government investing £2.5m to build new facility for Qioptiq in](#)

support of its new £82m contract

Work will now commence immediately on the new 24,900 sq. ft. facility that the Welsh Government will construct on land it owns adjacent to Qioptiq's premises on St Asaph Business Park. It will provide secure warehousing and manufacturing space to enable Qioptiq to achieve full operating capacity to deliver the MoD contract within the required timescale. Qioptiq will be investing c£2m in fit out and IT systems.

Ken Skates said:

"Winning this major contract is hugely significant for Qioptiq and for North Wales. Qioptiq is one of our key Anchor companies working in a priority sector and is one of the most dynamic and innovative companies in Wales.

"I am delighted the Welsh Government was able to support the company's successful bid from the early pre qualification stage through to the development of a purpose designed facility that is vital to deliver the contract.

"This new contract secures the long term future of the company in St Asaph where it has a significant economic impact on the local economy through expenditure by employees and through local supply chains. It is another high value manufacturing company whose future has been secured by the work of Welsh Government."

Peter White, Managing Director at Qioptiq said

"We are delighted to have received this major contract from UK MOD to support equipment vital to the safety of our soldiers in front line operations. The support from Welsh Government and the hard work, capability and commitment of our employees were the key factors in our success. We look forward to continuing the successful relationship we have with UK MoD and supporting our troops with this important contract."

Under the new six year contract Qioptiq will supply and maintain a large range of Surveillance and Target Acquisition equipment for the MoD. The company specialises in the design and manufacture of optical and photonic products and solutions that serve a wide range of markets and applications in areas of defence, aerospace, medial and life sciences and industrial manufacturing.

It is a recognised, first-tier supplier to many of the defence and aerospace sector's leading companies with a product range that includes some of the most sophisticated advanced optical technologies ranging from Night Vision

Sights, to Head Up Display Optical modules, through to Space Components

Qioptiq is part of the US owned Excelitas Group which has a worldwide presence with locations throughout Europe, Asia and the USA employing more than 5000 people. It employs over 500 people in North Wales on two sites at St Asaph and Bodelwyddan.

£95 million investment to train healthcare professionals in Wales

This significant investment will support nurses, physiotherapists, radiographers and a range of health science training opportunities.

It will enable more than 3000 new students to join those already studying healthcare education programmes across Wales.

The funding builds on Welsh Government funding already in place for nursing, providing more than a 13% increase in nursing training places, on top of the 10% increase in 2016/17 and 22% increase in 2015/16. Midwifery training places will increase by 40%.

The support package will also provide an additional £500,000 to support community healthcare such as advanced practice, education and extended skills training to support primary care clusters.

There will also be a significant increase in practice nurse and district nurse education as well as audiology training places within primary and community settings. This will provide vital funding for community services and will ensure many more patients can be cared for closer to home, rather than in hospital.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“We rely on the skills, knowledge and experience of those providing the care in the NHS on a daily basis.

“This includes nurses and paramedics as well as those behind the scenes, who provide vital support services such as laboratory tests to enable diagnoses to be made and “treatment to be provided.

“Education and training is fundamental to ensuring the sustainability of our workforce.

“This £95m investment will ensure that our healthcare professionals are able to provide high quality care now and in the future and that patients’ will be able to receive care closer to home.”

The funding package also includes an additional cohort of physician associate training places available from September 2017 with 12 of these places hosted by Bangor University and 20 hosted by Swansea University.

The funding will also support the integration of hospital and community pharmacy training and education into one programme.

[Ken Skates visits Chongqing and Shanghai to cement Welsh links with China](#)

The Cabinet Secretary is being joined in Shanghai by a trade mission of 18 Welsh companies including Clogau Gold, i2L Research, Timberkits, and Tiny Rebel, all looking to increase their trade relationships with the world's second largest economy.

As part of his visit Ken Skates will host St David's Day events for government, business and cultural leaders in both Chongqing and Shanghai, and will promote Wales as an outward facing and forward looking nation, keen to cement links with its global trading partners.

The Economy Secretary will also meet Chinese companies and Government representatives to discuss how trade and cultural links between the countries can be strengthened and to consider how Wales can work to further increase its exports to the lucrative Chinese market.

A Welsh cultural delegation is also travelling to China. It is hoped this will lead to new partnerships, new learning opportunities, and new exchanges of exhibitions and performers, to and from both countries.

Speaking about his visit to China, Ken Skates said:

"China is a huge global force and one that Wales is keen to cement its already strong links with.

“There are currently 19 Chinese companies based in Wales, between them employing more than 2500 people here. And latest figures put annual Welsh exports to China at nearly £209m.

“These are impressive figures but through my visit and the trade mission we will be seeking to build on this success, to grow our share of exports to China and to attract more Chinese investors to Wales.

“Wales has a huge amount to offer as a trading partner, a tourist destination and cultural partner. Following the decision to leave the EU it is more important than ever that we reach out to China and other international partners and continue to work to build a stronger and fairer Welsh economy for all.”

[New innovation fund launched](#)

The Innovate to Save fund is a unique partnership between the Welsh Government and Y Lab – itself a partnership between Cardiff University and the innovation charity Nesta – and will work closely with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

The new fund will provide repayable and non-repayable funding and non-financial support to Welsh public services and the third sector. Non-repayable funding will support organisations to prototype, test and develop complex and innovative changes to the way services are delivered.

All areas of the Welsh public and third sectors will be able to apply for Innovate to Save funding. Organisations submitting proposals will also be able to draw on the resources and experience of Nesta and Cardiff University to expand the scope of projects.

The new fund will operate alongside the successful Invest to Save fund, which has been operating since 2009 and has supported 160 projects. In addition to the £5m Innovate to Save fund, £15m will be available through Invest to Save in 2017-18.

Professor Drakeford said:

“At a time of reducing budgets, change is a necessity not a choice.

More scarce resources and growing demand means all public services must think and work differently, if we are to continue to provide the level of services people need.

“Our new £5m Innovate to Save fund has been developed in partnership with Y Lab and we hope to see a range of projects coming forward from across the Welsh public and third sectors. The savings generated will not only be re-invested in services but will improve outcomes for people and will be able to be rolled out more widely.”

Professor Adam Fletcher, Y Lab academic director, said:

“Public services staff in Wales are best placed to solve the biggest challenges facing their own services. This new Welsh Government initiative means Y Lab will be able to work with teams from across Wales to help them to develop solutions to persistent problems, put those ideas into practice and trial them.

“Universities have typically been very good at researching public services and recommending what they should do differently but not so good at working with public services teams to help them to innovate.

“By working in partnership with Nesta, Cardiff University is leading the way in the UK by designing, delivering and evaluating major new innovation funds such as this.”

Helen Goulden, executive director, Innovation Lab, Nesta, said:

“Motivation for governments to rethink and re-shape the way that they engage citizens or deliver services is currently riding high, with examples of governments from across the world choosing to finance public sector innovation.

“Our partnership with the Welsh Government is ambitious, seeking to tackle some of the most complex issues currently facing our public services – and generate cashable savings. The Innovate to Save model is new, blending different kinds of finance and intensive support to achieve this goal.

“Over the next two years it will, I hope, provide the evidence to justify it’s replication in many other areas.”