

New £4.2m EU-backed veterinary facility at Aberystwyth

Aberystwyth University will lead the Vet Hub 1 project, backed with £3m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Welsh Government, to construct a fully-equipped, high-specification laboratory and office spaces.

The Environment Secretary told a packed audience at Aberystwyth University's education pavilion at the Royal Welsh Show that the cutting-edge development would benefit the farming industry in Wales and the wider world.

She said:

“This EU-backed investment will help tackle some of the great challenges of our time, food security, climate change as well as the Welsh Government and Aberystwyth University's long term focus on supporting animal health and veterinary science.

“It will also unlock a range of opportunities over the coming years for businesses throughout the livestock supply chain, and in associated industries which will benefit from the new facility and collaborative research opportunities leading to the development of new products and services for the global market.”

Through Vet Hub 1 researchers will work with industry to develop tests and vaccines that will help reduce losses in the livestock industry and improve animal health.

The researchers will particularly be looking at developing solutions for animal borne diseases that could pass to humans.

The facility will also lead to the further development of veterinary practices and other animal health care as well as biotechnology, animal food manufacture and other allied industries.

Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, Professor Elizabeth Treasure, said:

“Universities have an important role to play in developing research which has an impact on the communities they serve. Vet Hub 1 will make a valuable contribution to the rural economy and to the livestock industry here in Wales and farther afield. We are proud to be working in collaboration on this project with the Growing Mid Wales Partnership, the Wales Veterinary Science Centre and other partners.

“The facility also heralds another step forward in the development of Aberystwyth as a centre for veterinary expertise. Our discussions with the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) are progressing on proposals to offer a joint programme whereby veterinary science students at Aberystwyth can spend some of their time studying at the RVC and students from the RVC can come here to undertake aspects of their training, particularly large animal practice.”

Aberystwyth-based veterinarian Phil Thomas and Director of Iechyd Da, a consortium of independent veterinary practices based in Wales together with Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers Ltd and Aberystwyth University, said:

“Vet Hub1 is an exciting development for animal veterinary services in Aberystwyth and Mid Wales. Following the launch of the Wales Veterinary Science Centre by Iechyd Da and Aberystwyth University in 2015, these new laboratory facilities will give an integrated approach to disease diagnosis and elimination for the benefit of both livestock producers and consumers alike. The development could also provide a focus for businesses to develop new products and services, as well as the potential to create new high quality jobs in the area.”

Aberystwyth University has secured a further £650k investment from CIEL (Centre of Innovation Excellence in Livestock) for an animal sciences facility working alongside Vet Hub 1.

The university is one of the 13 elite research institutions within the CIEL framework across the UK to provide a focussed gateway to world-class research institutes to develop new industry-needed solutions in partnership with 19 commercial companies.

The involvement with CIEL will strengthen the commercial partnership within Vet Hub 1 and ensure that it retains its focus on bringing new products to market.