

Press release: Wales' compound semiconductor tech prowess must go global"

The time has come to promote Wales' pioneering prowess in compound semiconductor technology on a global scale. That will be the message from the UK Government today as the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales gather leaders from Wales' own 'Silicon Valley' for progress talks in Newport (18 June).

Compound semiconductors are at the heart of the high-tech devices we use today. From smartphones to tablets to satellite communications to GPS, the technology will continue to impact the way we live, work and spend our leisure time.

Wales already has a wealth of advanced semiconductor expertise in the form of IQE, SPTS Technologies, Newport Wafer Fab and Microsemi, who, along with academic partners and the UK Government's £50million compound semiconductor applications Catapult, form the world's first Compound Semiconductor cluster, CS-Connected.

The UK Government will host the meeting at Newport Wafer Fab – the UK's largest semiconductor centre and the chip Foundry of the CS Cluster – where the industry experts in Wales will be challenged to explore and to capitalise on international opportunities for the sector. Officials will also seek to find out how the UK Government can work with the cluster to market Wales' expertise in the technology around the globe.

The meeting will be attended by HM Trade Commissioner for China, Richard Burn who is visiting Wales to see first-hand the nation's growing expertise in the sector following his meeting with Secretary of State at the GREAT Festival of Innovation in Hong Kong. As the UK prepares for future trade agreements with countries around the world, the Department of International Trade has appointed Trade Commissioners for nine geographical areas around the world to champion British trade with some of the UK's biggest economic partners.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

If we want Wales to be at the vanguard of the high-tech revolution, we need to up our stakes – and our vision must be global. That is why I'm delighted that the HM Trade Commissioner for China will attend today's meeting in Newport.

During our meeting at the GREAT Festival of Innovation in Hong Kong earlier this year, I had the opportunity to showcase how Wales' reputation for innovation excellence can put the UK on a firm trading footing for a post Brexit future.

But the challenge now is to seize those opportunities and to capitalise on the skills right here in south Wales that sets us apart. The UK Government wants to hear strong ideas today on how we develop this cluster and how we market the expertise we have in abundance on a global stage.

Dr Drew Nelson, President and CEO, IQE plc commented:

Compound Semiconductor technologies are fast becoming a critical part of the entire global semiconductor industry (worth over USD400 billion pa), enabling faster, more power efficient and higher functionality chips to be made, and which also harness the incredible properties of light. The UK has always had a strong position in early stage development of CS technologies, but over recent years we have been building the World's first Compound Semiconductor Cluster (CS-Connected) to fully exploit the commercial potential for the UK.

The CSConnected companies are therefore delighted that the UK Government has recognised the importance of the sector, not only for the future of the UK's new Industrial Strategy, but on a global basis across almost all major industrial, consumer, healthcare and communications industries. The Government's involvement in helping promote the World's first CS Cluster on an International basis is greatly welcomed, demonstrating the major benefits of Industry and Government working hand in hand. The full strategic support of the UK, Welsh and Local Governments, will be a critical enabler for the expansion of the cluster.

We are developing breakthrough IP in technologies which will form the foundation of the fourth industrial revolution. Working as a unique collective we firmly believe we can create many thousands of high tech jobs in Wales and throughout the United Kingdom, driving up GVA significantly, and enabling many of our industrial partner companies to introduce innovative products based on Compound Semiconductors to the global marketplace, thereby accelerating the UK's international competitiveness.

Alun Cairns added:

To realise our global ambitions for the compound semiconductor sector, Government and businesses need to work hand in hand. That is what our Modern Industrial Strategy is all about.

The UK Government will continue to lay the foundations and develop the international relationships – opening doors and taking down barriers.

But it is ultimately our enterprising businesspeople like those around the table today who will make the most of those new opportunities.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About HM Trade Commissioners

All of the new HMTCs will cooperate closely with HM Ambassadors and High Commissioners, the wider diplomatic network, and other HM Government colleagues based in countries in their region, in a joined-up and coordinated government effort overseas to promote UK trade and prosperity.

In total, there will be 9 geographical areas that the HM Trade Commissioners will cover:

- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
- China
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia Network
- Europe
- Latin America
- Middle East
- North America
- South Asia