

Press release: Welsh Secretary: UK Government is investing in Swansea's infrastructure for the long term

- Alun Cairns calls for swift progress in the delivery of Swansea Bay Region City Deal during keynote speech in the city
- UK Government announces £800,000 new investment in Swansea University's SPECIFIC centre for UK's first energy positive office
- Welsh Secretary to visit city centre gallery as part of fact-finding visit for the race for the UK City of Culture 2021 title

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will call on all partners to "pull together and make the Swansea Bay Region City Deal vision a reality" when he addresses delegates at the Policy Forum for Wales event in Swansea today (26 October).

Mr Cairns' speech forms part of a wider visit to Swansea where he will also announce a £800,000 UK Government backed investment in Swansea University's SPECIFIC Innovation and Knowledge Centre.

The funding, delivered by Innovate UK, will be used to construct the world's first energy positive office, capable of generating more energy than it uses.

In March this year, the Secretary of State stood alongside the Prime Minister and local partners to sign the Swansea Bay Region City Deal.

It is a deal which is expected to deliver more than 9,000 jobs and £1.3 billion of investment through 11 targeted projects which will see Wales placed front and centre of global science and innovation.

Seven months on since the signing of the agreement, Mr Cairns will take to the stage at the Marriott Hotel to urge partners to now "push forward to delivery" so that the people of Swansea can start to "see the tangible benefits and investment being made."

During the speech, he will outline how Swansea is benefitting from the UK Government's prioritising of its infrastructure investment. The recent introduction of the innovative bi-mode Intercity Express trains will benefit passengers travelling across South Wales and the Government is also looking at making station improvements in Swansea and at ways to deliver direct services from London through to Pembroke Dock.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

These are exciting times for the Swansea region – not only because the dynamism of the projects that will be delivered through the City Deal, but also through the other investments that are being made in infrastructure that will stand the test of time.

The UK Government is ambitious for Swansea. That is why we are empowering the area to make the decisions to support the city's own economic growth, boost employment and attract investment.

We need to seize the opportunities that are coming Swansea's way. The potential the region has is immense but it is crucial that all levels of government, private and public sectors work together to drive it forward and make the region the powerhouse of innovation it deserves to be.

The energy positive office will be manufactured using cutting edge off-site manufacturing techniques and incorporate cutting edge, innovative energy harvest, storage and release technologies. The building will be completed by April 2018 and will be occupied immediately by up to 40 members of staff.

SPECIFIC is led by Swansea University and works with more than 50 partners from academia, industry and government to deliver its vision for buildings as power stations.

The Active Office will be linked to the Active Classroom – an existing space which provides teaching space and a laboratory for Swansea University students, as well as a building-scale development facility for SPECIFIC and its industry partners.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The UK Government is committed to leading the world in delivering clean energy technology and today's investment shows that we are prepared to support innovation in this critical area.

Research and innovation has a proven track record of helping drive our economy. Swansea University is making a huge contribution in this area, making great strides in science and research which is receiving plaudits all over the world. I look forward to seeing this new investment come to life and hope it will provide another boost to the ground-breaking research being taken forward by the University.

Ruth McKernan, Chief Executive of Innovate UK, said:

Building the UK's first office that creates more power than it uses is a significant step, and I'm proud that it is Innovate UK funding that is making it happen. The Active Office heralds the future for building design and is a testimony to the fantastic work being done at Swansea University by the SPECIFIC team. This flagship demonstration of the 'buildings as power stations' concept will draw visitors from around the world and give us a glimpse of the future.

Professor Richard Davies, Vice Chancellor of Swansea University, said:

It is exciting to see SPECIFIC's innovative 'buildings as power stations' concept becoming a practical reality. The Active Office at our magnificent Bay Campus follows closely on the heels of the ground-breaking Active Classroom. As well as demonstrating what is now possible off the grid, the new building will share energy with the Active Classroom, showing how buildings can work together to create energy resilient communities.

While in the city, the Secretary of State will also take the opportunity to find out more about the case being put forward by Swansea in the race for the UK City of Culture title in 2021.

He will visit the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery where curator Jenni Spencer-Davies will escort him on a tour of the gallery and provide an overview of the recent multi-million pound redevelopment of the space.

The Grade II listed gallery, which was founded in 1911, benefitted from a Thanks in part to a £576,500 Heritage Lottery Fund cash injection to help transform it into a destination art gallery of international significance, featuring new spaces for touring exhibitions, displays and lectures as well as a fully accessible entrance, café and shop.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Innovate UK is the UK's innovation agency. Innovate UK drives productivity and growth by supporting businesses to realise the potential of new technologies, develop ideas and make them a commercial success.
- The Swansea Bay City Region includes the local authority areas of Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot, joined by Abertawe Bro Morgannwg and Hywel Dda University Health Boards, Swansea University and the University of Wales Trinity St David's, and private sector partners.
- Innovation and Knowledge Centres (IKCs) were co-funded by the Engineering Physical Research Council (EPSRC) and Innovate UK as a key component of the UK's approach to the commercialisation of emerging technologies through creating early stage critical mass in an area of disruptive technology. They are able to achieve this through their international quality research capability and access to companion technologies needed to commercialise research.
- IKC SPECIFIC was set up in 2011 with 5-year grant commitments from

EPSRC, Innovate UK and Welsh Government, with phase II commitment in April 2016. There has been further investment across both phases from Swansea University, strategic industrial partners (BASF, NSG Pilkington and Tata Steel) and additional support from Cardiff University. IKC Specific has generated more than £40m of funding for allied R&D projects such as Sêr Solar and Swansea University's Materials and Manufacturing Academy. The centre has developed research links with a number of other universities working in complementary research areas