

Professor Glyn Hewinson to lead cutting edge Bovine TB Centre of Excellence in Aberystwyth

A new Centre of Excellence for Bovine Tuberculosis for Wales will open at Aberystwyth University later this year, bringing international expertise together with the aim of eradicating the cattle disease.

Professor Glyn Hewinson, a world renowned expert on Bovine Tuberculosis, will lead the centre's work. Prof Hewinson is Lead Scientist for Bovine TB at the Animal and Plant Health Agency and has led research into the disease for more than 20 years.

The centre will cost £3.6m and is backed by Sêr Cymru II, a Welsh Government, EU and University funded programme to grow and develop academic research expertise in Wales.

The new Centre of Excellence will be a hub for national and international research into bovine TB. The programme also aims to commercialise the products it develops, collaborating with industry on products such as new diagnostic tests and vaccines.

Bovine TB has a significant financial and social impact on farm businesses and the wider rural community. The cost of fighting the disease is estimated to cost around £26m a year in Wales alone, through the TB control programme and compensation to keepers whose animals are slaughtered.

Sêr Cymru II aims to build on current research strengths and bring new research expertise to Wales. The programme is funded by Welsh Government, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, participating Welsh Higher Education institutions and the European Regional Development Fund.

Announcing the programme, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

“Bovine TB is the most pressing animal health challenge for Wales today. It's had a devastating impact on the national cattle herd and the farming community, while being a significant burden on public finances.

“The Centre of Excellence could be a real ‘game changer’ in the fight against bovine TB and is part of our long-term aim of eradicating the disease for good.”

Dr Christianne Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, added:

“Professor Hewinson is a pioneer in the field of research into Bovine TB and will bring with him World-class expertise and leadership. He is held in the highest regard among his peers internationally and his appointment is a real statement of intent in our determination to tackle this disease.”

Speaking about his appointment, Professor Hewinson said:

“I am delighted and honoured to be appointed to a Ser Cymru Research Chair at Aberystwyth University, leading a new Centre of Excellence for Bovine TB. The centre will explore fundamental aspects of Bovine TB science, supporting efforts to tackle this devastating disease, in collaboration with both Government and industry organisations.”

Professor Peter Halligan, Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales, commented:

“Attracting new international talent to Wales to increase our already impressive scientific research and development capabilities is essential for Wales’ future economic prosperity and our ability to compete effectively across global marketplaces. I am very pleased to welcome Professor Hewinson, who will be the 12th world class research Chair brought to Wales as part of the Sêr Cymru programme.”

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

“We are delighted to be establishing a Centre of Excellence for Bovine TB in Aberystwyth University with the support of Welsh Government. The economic and emotional cost of bovine TB to rural communities can be devastating and the appointment of Professor Hewinson, with his wealth of experience working in disease control, represents a highly significant investment as we seek new approaches to tackling this long-standing problem.”