

STEM investment brings state-of-the-art college labs to Anglesey

Brand new laboratories have been unveiled at Coleg Menai's campus in Llangefni, as part of a £1.9m project to improve science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) facilities for college students.

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai has secured over £1.2 million pounds from Welsh Government's '21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme' towards an ambitious project to upgrade 10 laboratories across three of its campuses.

£386,000 has also been invested by Magnox and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) in the LabSTEM project to modernise facilities at Llangefni, Dolgellau, Pwllheli. The remainder of the funding package has been provided by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai.

Three science laboratories at the campus in Llangefni have been refurbished and upgraded with the latest technology. This is in addition to the three laboratories already completed at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor's campuses, and a further laboratory will also be created on the Marian Mawr campus in Dolgellau to accommodate robotics and electrical engineering facilities.

The aim of LabSTEM is to enhance the learning environment and improve the learner experience, attract a greater number of 16 year-olds – in particular girls – to study Science and Engineering, and extend the curriculum offer in STEM subjects such as Mechanical/Electrical Engineering and Robotics/Electronics.

As well as providing college learners with the world-class facilities, the project will also form part of the STEM development landscape in North West Wales by providing locations for activities arranged by other organisations and contributing to a co-ordinated sub-regional STEM initiative.

Speaking at the official opening of the Llangefni laboratories, Aled Jones-Griffith, Coleg Menai and Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor Principal, explained why the project is so important,

“LabSTEM will provide our learners with sector-leading learning environments and opportunities that will enhance their learning. This will bring huge benefits to learners, employers and the wider economy.

“The demand for young people who have studied STEM subjects at Level 3 and above, be that academic or vocational, is growing and expected to grow further. It's been quoted that 75% of all jobs in the UK over the next decade will require STEM knowledge and skills.”

He added, “The requirement for STEM employees is just as strong here in North Wales, and while planned large scale developments at Wylfa Newydd have

stalled, a significant number of other energy-related developments are progressing or are in the planning stages within the region.

“This modernisation project will ensure that all our STEM learners have the latest, high quality, facilities to support their studies and equip them with the skills they need to develop successful careers in the region.”

“We are extremely grateful to the Welsh Government, Magnox and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) for their significant investments in the project, and to all our partners in the sector for supporting our vision.”

Jeremy Miles, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, said,

“It’s important we invest in training for local people which leads to high-quality job opportunities, while producing a skilled workforce for north Wales’s key industries.”

“I’m really pleased to support the development of this new facility, which will enable more local people to study science and technology subjects in their local community here in north Wales.”

Jamie Reed, NDA Director of Socio-Economics said,

“The NDA Group invests around £15m per year in those communities where we are progressing our nuclear decommissioning mission, leveraging millions more in the process.

“To date our work has seen the delivery of new schools, jobs, skills, and training facilities in the communities in which we operate. NDA and Magnox are committed to encouraging and developing education and skills, and creating opportunities for sustainable employment.

“This fantastic development aims to make STEM subjects attractive to all and encourage greater diversity across the workforce. As part of a range of initiatives in North Wales aiming for high value employment, this is an important contribution towards ensuring future generations can continue to access secure jobs in the region.”