

Direct Healthcare Services to establish Europe's first specialist research and testing facility to meet new worldwide standards

The investment at its Caerphilly facility is supported by £50,000 from the Welsh Government's Growth and Prosperity Fund and will create ten jobs and safeguard a further 56. The project costs to fit out the facility with machinery and equipment are part of a wider £600K cap ex investment the company is making.

The new ISO standards for the testing of mattresses and overlays used in treatment encompass all mattresses used in hospitals including trolley and theatre mattresses as well as mattresses used in patients' homes.

The global standards are expected to come into operation this year with the only testing facility currently available based in the USA.

Direct Healthcare Services (DHS) will work closely with the Welsh Wound Innovation Centre to create the new facility to ensure all its products comply with the new standards and ensure it retains its market leading position. The independent European testing facility will be available for use by other companies.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"DHS is a Welsh success story, founded in 2009 with just three members of staff it now employs more than 100 people and is the largest volume supplier of mattresses to the NHS and rapidly growing their international exports with an office in Australia.

"Innovation is at the heart of DHS' success and this is a key expansion project that will ensure its continued growth. DHS is a valued member of the growing Welsh cluster of wound care companies – a priority sub sector for life sciences and I am delighted the Welsh Government is supporting this investment."

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James, added:

"Wales' life sciences sector has gone from strength to strength over recent years, punching well above its weight on a global stage, and this success would not be possible without companies such as Direct Healthcare Services continuing to innovate.

"We are committed to supporting growth of this economically

important sector in Wales and today's expansion announcement from DHS is further evidence of this."

Graham Ewart, Managing Director at DHS said,

"DHS have consistently been an early adopter of regulatory and compliance directives so it makes good sense that we open and operate an independent testing facility to assure compliance to the new global ISO standard. As a Welsh business we are delighted to have the support of the Welsh Government and the commitment and expertise of WWIC as an operating partner."

DHS is the fastest growing manufacturer in its field in the UK with a comprehensive range of products and an extensive intellectual property portfolio winning the Queen's Award for Innovation in 2016 and 2017. In collaboration with the Welsh Wound Innovation Centre (WWIC), it has developed a number of revolutionary new products.

The Welsh Wound Innovation Centre is based near DHS's facility, which will enable customers from around the world that visit WWIC to view the research and test facility at the same time.

It would promote Wales as a world leader, not only in pressure ulcer research at WWIC, but also in the associated product testing at DHS.

Laboratory investment is improving patient care across Wales

Mr Gething saw how high-tech molecular diagnostic equipment is being used to test samples, speeding up gastro-intestinal results and identifying genetic markers that help to better tailor care to the individual patient. This should mean more accurate testing with quicker results, improving treatment for patients. The project is receiving £2.5million investment over three years to fund the new system across Wales.

This year, the Welsh Government invested more than £7m through the Efficiency Through Technology Fund, supporting projects using innovative technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare services.

Mr Gething said:

"It is vital that Wales can keep up-to-date with the latest medical technology. The new laboratory offers more accurate testing, which

leads to care tailored to the individual.

“The Efficiency Through Technology Fund has invested in projects across Wales to bring new innovations into our NHS, projects that improve outcomes for patients and deliver more from public funds.

“The team initially received over £144,000 funding so they could rapidly evaluate how well the pilot project was working. We have seen the positive results, which is why this funding is being scaled up so people across Wales will see the benefits.”

Dr. Quentin Sandifer, Executive Director of Public Health Services and Medical Director, Public Health Wales, said:

“Developing molecular capability and capacity in our laboratories will be a major piece of work for us over the next three years, made possible by the funding we have received from the EETF.

“Among our first priorities will be providing a diagnostic service for gastrointestinal illness, which cause very significant morbidity and mortality across Wales. This is an exciting development for the laboratories and, more importantly, for the benefits it will bring to patients in terms of rapid and accurate diagnosis. Patients across Wales will have equitable access to the best tests available allowing healthcare professionals to treat and care for them using prudent evidence based medicine”.

Other projects which have received Efficiency Through Technology funding include the Welsh Wound Innovation Centre which is developing a digital pressure ulcer reporting system within care homes that will support and educate staff leading to more effective treatment. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board are evaluating a system to help reduce frequent attenders calling for ambulances and attending Accident and Emergency and help them to receive the most appropriate care.

[Consultation on park homes commission rate published](#)

Plans for a formal consultation were announced in March following a review of the economics of the sector commissioned by the Welsh Government which made several recommendations to improve standards in the sector.

Announcing the publication of the consultation [the consultation](#), the Cabinet Secretary said:

“The review into the industry rightly highlights that commission rates are a complex issue with the potential for significant consequences. We know there are strongly held, but conflicting views amongst park owners and residents on this issue.

“As the review I commissioned last year into the economics of the park homes sector did not provide sufficient evidence to determine the future of the commission rate, I wanted to provide a further opportunity for those affected to have their say. The options published for consultation include reducing or even abolishing the commission rate, as well, of course, as retaining the status quo.

“I hope all interested parties will take advantage of the opportunity this consultation provides to submit further information and to provide robust evidence to support their views. In particular, park owners should provide access to detailed financial information if they wish to justify maintaining the current position.”

[Kirsty Williams opens “wonderful” new Panteg Primary](#)

The new site has been made possible thanks to £20.5 million of investment in three schools in the area, with funding of £10.25 million under our 21st Century Schools and Education Programme.

The 21st Century Schools programme represents the largest investment in Welsh schools and colleges since the 1960s, and will see over £1.4 billion being invested in the five years to 2019.

Kirsty Williams said,

“We are committed to provide our students with the best and most inspiring learning environments. From what I’ve seen today I think your wonderful school is a perfect example of this.

“It is fantastic what we can achieve in partnership with local government and our schools, in terms of bringing together resources to deliver new bespoke facilities for our communities.

“Schools like this one are also crucial to achieving our aim of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Learning through the medium of Welsh is pivotal to successful language acquisition and provides a building block to the creation of confident Welsh speakers.”

Ysgol Panteg opened in September 2010 with 36 children – that’s why 36 daffodils encircle the school badge on the school sign, with each child planting a daffodil bulb on that first day.

The original buildings were shared with Griffithstown Infant School after which they amalgamated with Griffithstown Junior School to form a primary school on the site.

They outgrew those buildings in 2014 and work began on the new site in January 2016. The new school, which has a nursery and 420 primary places, opened its doors for the first time to pupils on in February this year.

The Cabinet Secretary also took the opportunity to congratulate and thank all involved in creating new school, including the project managers, the design and construction team, Torfaen Council, Wilmot Dixon Construction, Powell Dobson Architects and the school itself.

Mark Drakeford welcomes Mike Russell MSP to Wales for Brexit discussions

The two ministers will discuss how both countries will continue to work together to get the best Brexit deal for Wales and Scotland as the UK negotiates to leave the European Union.

During the meetings, the Finance Secretary will highlight the importance of EU funds to Wales and the rest of the UK and the need to ensure the devolved administrations do not lose out as a result of Brexit.

The Welsh Government’s European Advisory Group, which brings together individuals with experience and expertise of European issues from across civic society and political sectors, will meet in Cardiff later today. Mr Russell will attend the meeting and will also visit the EU funded Swansea University new Bay campus.

Professor Drakeford said:

“ I’m pleased to welcome Mike Russell to Wales to discuss how we can continue to work together to get the best Brexit deal for Wales and Scotland. It is also an opportunity to show first hand how EU funding has benefitted people, businesses and communities across Wales.

“The new Swansea University Bay campus, which Mike Russell will visit today, demonstrates the difference EU funds have made to our higher education sector – creating state-of-the-art facilities for

students and providing a real boost to the local economy.

“That is why we have always been clear that we must get the best Brexit deal for Wales and ensure we don’t lose a penny as a result of leaving the European Union.”