

Press release

Date: 28 November 2006

Title: £5 million a prime number for new research institute

Four Welsh universities are to receive a share of £5 million for a collaborative venture to develop a new research institute.

The Wales Institute of Mathematical and Computational Sciences is designed to improve the competitiveness of Welsh research in these areas both in the UK and internationally.

The Institute, which will involve departments in: the University of Wales, Aberystwyth; the University of Wales, Bangor; Cardiff University; and the University of Wales Swansea is set to increase income for research, particularly from sources outside Wales, and should also play an important role in working with industry to encourage research which will benefit Wales's 'knowledge economy'.

The Institute will also play a part in taking forward the aims of the Welsh Assembly Government's Science Policy and will work closely with schools to encourage the next generation of mathematical scientists.

The funding has been awarded as part of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales's Reconfiguration and Collaboration fund. The funding is provided by the Welsh Assembly Government under its 'Reaching Higher' agenda to support higher education institutions in Wales make the types of landscape-changing developments that can improve their performance and enhance competitiveness.

Professor Noel Lloyd, Vice-chancellor of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth said "I warmly welcome the establishment of the Wales Institute of Mathematical and Computational Sciences. Mathematics underpins large areas of science, and research in the subject leads to important contributions to the knowledge economy. The Institute will lead to further strengthening of the research base in Wales and enhanced

competitiveness internationally. The outreach programme and the involvement with a range of applications will be especially valuable."

Professor Merfyn Jones, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wales, Bangor said "The University of Wales, Bangor's Schools of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering are eager to participate in another important collaboration between universities in Wales. We are delighted that our expertise in nonlinear dynamics and computational modelling is recognised and look forward to sharing that expertise in constructive collaboration."

Cardiff University's representative on the Institute's co-ordinating committee, Professor Des Evans from the School of Mathematics, said: "The importance of co-ordinating mathematical and computational expertise, in response to some spectacular advances, has been recognised throughout the world for some time, and this has led to the establishment of a number of prestigious centres and institutes of mathematical research. The new Institute will join this select group: it will take the profile of research in the mathematical and computational sciences in Wales into the world's premier division."

Swansea University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Nigel Weatherill, said: "Swansea is delighted to be playing a key role in this new Institute. The development comes at an exciting time, following last week's announcement of the Science Policy for Wales by the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan. Welsh universities have many long-standing research strengths that are widely recognised, and working closely with our colleagues at Cardiff, Aberystwyth and Bangor, we look forward to strengthening Wales's position as a world leader in research in the areas of mathematical and computational sciences."

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Contacts for further information

For further information contact:

HEFCW: Emma Raczka, Communications Manager, 02920 682225
emma.raczka@hefcw.ac.uk

Welsh Assembly Government: Janis Pickwick, Senior Communications Officer, 02920 898556

University of Wales, Aberystwyth: Arthur Dafis, Press & PR, 01970 621763

University of Wales, Bangor: Elinor Ellis-Williams, External Affairs, 01248 383298

Cardiff University: Emma Darling, PR Office, 029 2087 4499

University of Wales Swansea: Bethan Evans, PR Office, 01792 295050

WALES INSTITUTE OF MATHEMATICAL AND COMPUTATIONAL SCIENCES

The research activity of the Institute will also directly contribute to several of the priority areas in the Welsh Assembly Government's Science Policy, including health (e.g. modelling of healthcare provision); and sustained economic and social renewal.

The mathematical and computational sciences have a huge range of practical applications including in, amongst others, the Aerospace, Automotive, ICT, Financial and Public Service Sectors. The Institute will increase interaction with industry in order to encourage participation, both in research and in the exploitation of research developments to the benefit of the knowledge economy in Wales.

The Institute will coordinate research effort through a joint management structure and common research strategy, with targeted investment in key subject clusters including Analysis; Stochastic Processes and Stochastic Analysis; Mathematical Physics; Computational Modelling; and Statistics and Operational Research. A number of new appointments will be made within these clusters in order to further increase the pool of expertise within the Institute. As a result of the resulting enhancement in competitiveness, a significant increase in research income will be delivered by the Institute. It is expected that much of this growth in research income will be from funding sources outside of Wales.

The plans for the Institute have been developed against the background of the findings of the International Review of UK Research in Mathematics, undertaken on behalf of

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Council for the Mathematical Sciences (CMS) in 2004. This Review identified the need to avoid the concentration of mathematical research in a small number of universities, with regional cooperation among universities, such as that in Wales, being encouraged instead.

The Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund

The Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund was launched in July 2002 to support the reshaping of the Welsh Higher Education Sector in the interests of achieving major performance gains and enhanced competitiveness. Several partnerships were supported in this first phase of the fund including the merger of Cardiff University and the University of Wales College of Medicine.

In June 2004, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning reiterated the Welsh Assembly Government's continuing commitment to pursuing reconfiguration and collaboration as a means of securing a robust, dynamic and competitive higher education sector in Wales. HEFCW launched a second phase of the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund in July 2004 with the aim of encouraging proposals for well-found mergers, clusters and networks of excellence and the rationalisation of provision between institutions.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body, established in May 1992, which assumed responsibility for funding higher education in Wales on 1 April 1993.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Council is responsible for the administration of funds made available by the Assembly in support of the provision of education, the undertaking of research by higher education institutions, and the provision of prescribed courses of higher education at further education institutions.

Under the Education Act 1994, the Council is responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, the Council provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.

