

Press release

Date: 27 November 2009

Title: Universities come together to tackle climate change

A five-year programme to study the impact of climate change on the land, sea and atmosphere has been given the go-ahead by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The £4 million research programme brings together nearly 200 experts in four Welsh universities to improve our understanding of how climate change will affect the Earth's environment and all our lives.

The Climate Change Consortium, comprising Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea Universities, will also consider the effects of climate change on the planet's ice and glaciers, and its social consequences.

Additionally, the Consortium, known as C3W, and funded by the Welsh Assembly Government via HEFCW, will provide information for schools, universities, businesses and the public, and will organise activities including road-shows, briefings and a display at the National Museum of Wales.

Professor Philip Gummett, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: "This is an important investment in the future of climate change research in Wales and the UK, and will help the institutions, and C3W, be recognised internationally as a centre of excellence. It will add to other recent investments in Wales in research into a low-carbon future and environmental sustainability, and will help with developing policies in Wales and beyond.

“The C3W team will develop skilled graduates and research fellows in a range of disciplines, and will actively and authoritatively engage with wider public awareness and debate in Wales on climate change, its effects, and how to mitigate them.”

Jane Hutt, Education Minister, said: “Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today and the Welsh Assembly Government is committed to playing its part in tackling it. This six year project aims to improve our understanding of the causes, nature, timing and consequences of climate change on our environment as well as establishing Wales as a recognisable authority in terms of climate research.”

Professor Noel Lloyd, Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, said: “The rationale for C3W is the recognition that climate change is a major global issue. There is a scientific consensus, notably from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) that human-induced climate warming is a reality and rapidly leading to irreversible consequences, such as more extreme weather events, changing patterns of aridity and rising sea levels.

“It is also recognised that some of the predictions concerning environmental response to climate change are taking place more rapidly than in the IPCC report, while the UK Government’s Stern Report has highlighted the financial consequences of inaction. The research to be conducted by C3W scientists will be of direct benefit to the development of greater sustainability.”

Professor Merfyn Jones, Vice –Chancellor of Bangor University, said: "In recent years Bangor has developed a particularly strong profile in climate change science. The C3W initiative builds on the recognized work of research groups working within the College of Natural Sciences and also in conjunction with our NERC partner, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Environment Centre Wales. This is an all-Wales collaboration that will enhance climate change

science across the country and in the international arena"

Dr David Grant, Cardiff University's Vice-Chancellor said: "The climate change agenda is an extremely pressing one which will affect the basic fundamentals of life for many people around the world. Cardiff University is already involved with some of Wales's leading allied research areas of low-carbon energy and energy-use efficiency. Being a member of C3W will play a major role in the University's further contribution to a more sustainable future for us all, and a more collaborative, multi-disciplinary research programme across Wales to tackle climate change and its consequences."

Professor Richard B Davies, Swansea University's Vice-Chancellor, said: "Climate change research has to address massive challenges and significant progress will require large teams and multidisciplinary approaches. The ambition of the Consortium must be no less than establishing Wales as a world-leading centre for climate change research.

"Bringing together diverse expertise from across Wales will, with the additional funding from WAG, create the necessary critical mass. Researchers will be supporting C3W from across the Swansea campus, including glaciologists, marine biologists, climate modellers, lawyers, engineers, and ageing experts. We are particularly enthusiastic about efforts to reach out to schools, the public, and the business communities across Wales."

Ends

Notes

Contacts for further information

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Climate Change Consortium – C3W

1. The Climate Change Consortium (C3W) will receive £4 million from 2009-10 to 2014-15 (1 October 2009 start).
2. Science-based climate change research is an area of strength in Wales with internationally competitive climate-change research groups at Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea Universities. A more integrated approach will obtain an even better understanding of climate change and help translate uncertain climate forecasts into prediction. Further, an integrated approach will better inform effective policy decisions.
3. C3W will build upon the expertise in a range of climate change research areas at the four universities, aiming to deliver an integrated, internationally-leading research capacity. The scale and complexity of this research area will require a multi-disciplinary approach that is typically beyond the scope of individual institutions.
4. C3W will complement existing investments in Wales in low-carbon energy and energy-use efficiency (Low Carbon Research Institute) and environmental sustainability (Biosciences and Environment Alliance).
5. The work of C3W will look at the interdisciplinary areas of:
 - Earth System Modelling
 - Sea Level Change
 - Hazard Evaluation, Mitigation and Adaptation
 - The Welsh Dimension of Climate Change.
6. C3W will involve nearly 200 academics, and will help the institutions publish papers and apply for further grants.

7. C3W will carry out outreach activities to inform public opinion, through engaging with the school curriculum, further and higher education institutions, and the public. Among other activities, outreach will include road-shows, briefings and a display at the National Museum.
8. C3W will be sustained financially beyond the funding period through the predicted increase in research income, resulting from the enhanced UK and international competitiveness of the partners.
9. Leaders and co-ordinators drawn from senior academics at the four institutions will manage the day-to-day delivery of C3W research activities. As lead institution, Aberystwyth University will be responsible for coordinating the financial and administrative aspects of the C3W.

Funding for the Consortium will be funding through HEFCW's **Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund**. The Fund was launched in July 2002 to support the reshaping of the higher education (HE) sector in Wales in order to achieve major performance gains and enhanced competitiveness.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body responsible for administering funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government in support of:

- education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
- research undertaken by HEIs; and
- higher education courses at further education colleges.

HEFCW is also 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, HEFCW provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.