



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: National Science Academy

Date: 27 April 2010

By: Lesley Griffiths, Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills

I am pleased to inform Members that a National Science Academy is to be established in Wales to help deliver a stronger, more sustainable and resilient economy for the future.

I gave the go-ahead for the National Science Academy (NSA), a commitment under the One Wales agreement, on 13 April 2010, with support from the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning.

The Academy will promote the take up of science, technology, engineering and mathematics - STEM subjects - at all levels to ensure Wales has a continuous pipeline of people graduating from colleges and universities with the appropriate qualifications and skills.

I believe we need people with these skills to support the industries and technologies of tomorrow, to drive forward innovation in business, to stimulate research and development in universities and attract investment to Wales. The importance of innovation and the role it can play in helping economic growth should not be underestimated. The National Science Academy will have a key role to play in ensuring we have the appropriate skills at the appropriate level to support the development of a vibrant and sustainable knowledge based economy. I am aware that high level skills will play an increasingly important role in the economic renewal programme and none more so than in science and technology based subjects.

The Academy will build on a number of highly successful existing STEM initiatives. It is not a quick fix because individuals take time to acquire high level skills and attract more young people toward these subjects. A study into the current take-up of STEM subjects concluded it was necessary to work on the attitudes and STEM related skills of children from Key Stage 2 or 3, in order to bring about a measurable increase in the number of undergraduates in this field.

The Academy will, therefore, focus on education in STEM subjects from early years education through to further and higher education and also higher-level skills.

The strategic direction of the Academy will be provided by Professor John Harries, the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales who takes up his position in May.

The Academy will cover all Wales with four regional hubs and one central hub based at the Wales Institute of Mathematics and Computational Science in Swansea University that already manages the National Higher Education STEM programme in Wales. Regional hubs will be based at Techniquest Cardiff and Wrexham. The location of the remaining two hubs will be confirmed in due course.

The primary method of communication will be via a comprehensive website with content appropriate for different user groups ranging from key stages 1-3 to Directors of Research Institutes.

Its role will be to co-ordinate current and future initiatives designed to promote the uptake of STEM subjects; influence the STEM agenda in the school curriculum and actively undertake and promote initiatives that span the STEM 'supply chain'.

The aim is to encourage the take up of these subjects from primary school through to university level and overcome any barriers – perceived or real – that discourage learners from studying these key subjects.

A sum of £2million funding has been allocated to deliver the National Science Academy.

The National Science Academy will develop a centralised strategy for creating positive attitudes towards STEM subjects and careers through:

- promoting a positive image of these subjects to the public;
- highlighting Welsh successes and leading edge research capability;
- promoting good practice via case studies; and
- providing a conduit for reliable learning and careers information.

The Academy will help young people pursue STEM subjects into Higher Education and at postgraduate level by:

- providing an advisory service on research careers, and developing collaborative models of research and research employment;
- highlighting exchanges between researchers within Wales and beyond - in universities and with business; and
- launching a new STEM mentor service to ensure interested individuals receive regular and relevant information on STEM initiatives and provide a link to any help or advice needed.

Regional hubs will promote and market the work of the National Science Academy and the STEM Ambassador scheme to schools and colleges and operate the Crest Award Scheme to all primary, secondary schools and colleges across Wales.