

Funding boost for schemes that cut carbon

aim is to create 150 jobs

A MULTI-MILLION-POUND cash boost was announced yesterday to improve the development of low-carbon technologies in South Wales.

The £8.3m project, dubbed Seren and spearheaded by Cardiff University, aims to help businesses in the Valleys and West Wales develop new technologies and products, creating up to 150 jobs in the low carbon economy.

The project will also pioneer research into areas such as burning coal underground to generate energy, known as coal gasification, and carbon capture and storage, in a bid to cut greenhouse emissions and fuel costs.

The project is backed with

£4.6m from the European Regional Development Fund through the Assembly Government and is also funded by the British Geological Survey, the private sector and Cardiff University's own funds.

Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones said: "At the heart of the Seren programme is a commitment to foster a climate of innovation which will lead to more highly skilled jobs, enterprise creation and inward investment for the benefit of the whole Convergence area of West Wales and the Valleys.

"Our Economic Renewal

programme highlights our commitment to helping business commercialise research to develop the next generation of low-carbon technologies and is vital to position Wales as a world leader in this area and help meet our energy targets."

It is hoped the project will help bring the Assembly Government closer to achieving its goal of making Wales self-sufficient in energy.

Project's director Dr Robert Francis said: "We are delighted that the Seren project gives us an opportunity to be working with Welsh companies, to de-



velop new and innovative geo-energy technologies, technologies that will bring economic benefits to the convergence areas of Wales, while also contributing to the portfolio of solutions that will help make Wales self-sufficient in energy for the foreseeable future.”

The project will offer a programme of lectures, seminars and workshops to retrain the workforce. A web portal will also be set up to provide a range of online low-carbon tools, such as performance assessments of carbon sequestration technology. These can then be downloaded and used by companies, placing leading-edge technologies at their fingertips.

BACKING FOR A BRIGHT IDEA

ONE of the first companies to benefit from the investment is renewable energy company WDS Environmental.

It is using the funding to undertake collaborative research with Seren into ground source heating, which uses geosolar energy from the ground to provide heating and hot water for domestic and commercial premises.

The company already employs 11 staff in offices in Swansea, Brecon and Cardiff.

Director Dr Aled Davies said the funding would

ensure a 20% increase in turnover.

He said: “For us, directly, it could mean creating anything between two and five new posts. A good level of expertise will be generated from this project and indirectly there is already the possibility of one or two spin-off companies being created in the Convergence area, which could generate another 20 or so jobs.

“It has been valuable to us as a company, but this work will be valuable to Welsh industry as a whole in the long term.”





The £8.3m SEREN project aims to help businesses in South Wales to develop new low-carbon technologies and products

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