

Environmentally-friendly energy industry gets £8.3m project boost

AN £8.3m project has been launched to support the green energy industry in Wales.

Cardiff University's Seren project aims to help businesses in West Wales and the Valleys lead the way in developing new technologies and products, creating up to 150 jobs in the low carbon economy.

Renewable energy company WDS Environmental is one of the first to benefit from the programme which is backed with £4.6m from the European

Regional Development Fund through the Welsh Assembly Government. It 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 to commercialise research to develop the next generation of low carbon technologies is vital to position Wales as a world leader in this area and help meet our energy targets."

Through Seren collaborative research is under way with WDS into ground source heating, which uses geosolar energy from the ground to provide

heating and hot water for domestic and commercial premises.

The company, which has offices in Swansea, Brecon and Cardiff, designs, supplies, installs and maintains heating pumps, which extract and utilise low temperature heat from the ground.

Director Dr Aled Davies says Seren's support is invaluable in helping WDS carry out research which will develop its place in the renewable energy market-

place as well as advance the industry as a whole.

Dr Davies said: "We can gather data and develop a better informed design for ground source heating systems.

"It will provide us with a far better insight into the mechanics and saleability of this kind of energy.

"The experimental and monitoring work will give us quite a leap forward in how we design these systems.

"This will result in an increased market place which we hope will increase turnover and profitability."

WDS currently employs 11 staff from across South and West Wales, but Dr Davies said Seren's involvement could help increase his workforce by almost 50%.

Dr Davies added: "For us, directly, it could mean creating anything between two and five new posts. We would hope turnover will increase by about 20%."