

CASE STUDY

MAT HANDS OVER NEW LABORATORY SUITE AT ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY'S VETHUB1



Images by Anthony Pugh Photography

Medical Air Technology (MAT) has completed its part of the construction work at Aberystwyth University's soon-to-be-completed new innovation cluster - VetHub1. The company has successfully handed over the high-specification CL3 and CL2 laboratory suite that forms part of the development.

VetHub1 is led by Aberystwyth University and backed with a £3m grant from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Welsh Government. Once completed, it will provide high-specification office space and state-of-the-art biosecure facilities. The site, due to be finished later this year, will confirm the university's position as a centre for veterinary expertise and animal healthcare.

VetHub1 is designed to be a commercially driven research platform, committed to innovation. Researchers there will work with industry to develop tests and vaccines that will help reduce losses in the livestock industry and improve animal health. They will also be looking particularly at developing solutions for animal-borne diseases that could pass to humans. The facility will lead to the further development of veterinary practices and other animal health care, as well as biotechnology, animal food manufacture and other allied industries.



The project is the first of its kind in a Welsh university setting. It aims to utilise the expertise of academic staff to develop world-leading research as well as engaging with local SMEs to boost the regional economy.

The VetHub1 Laboratory Suite

Jackie Sayce, the VetHub1 project manager at Aberystwyth University, commented:

"We are very much looking forward to the opening of VetHub1 once the whole project is completed. MAT has steered the university project team through the design and construction phases by working in partnership to produce state of the art laboratory spaces at both CL3 and CL2 level. We benefited from an open and transparent approach to the construction project, which was facilitated by fortnightly site meetings to discuss progress and developments. The project was kept to schedule and the retention period has also been a satisfactory process, working proactively with MAT to address any post-build concerns.

"Universities have an important role to play in developing research that has an impact on the communities they serve. VetHub1 will make a valuable contribution to the rural economy and to the livestock industry here in Wales and further afield and we are proud to be working in collaboration on this project with the Growing Mid Wales Partnership, the Wales Veterinary Science Centre and other partners.

"VetHub1 is dedicated to developing veterinary research in Wales, and we aim to help establish Wales as a globally recognised centre of expertise in cattle and sheep diseases. The new, state of the art facilities and infrastructure built by MAT will contribute to our ability to lead and promote excellent research into livestock disease."

The VetHub1 laboratory suite features three laboratories, accessed via a lobby and a central anteroom. The design allows for an increased progression of negative pressure, which is essential to create a safe environment to meet the university's research needs. Each of the laboratories can operate individually to allow them to be leased to different clients. To achieve this, MAT developed a complex control system especially for the project.



A Specialist Contractor

All work has been completed to SR4 standards. This refers to the security rating classification as required by Loss Prevention Certification Board Loss Prevention Standard 1175 (LPCB LPS 1175). The suite uses a modular panelling system for the walls and ceilings and has a walk-on ceiling so services can be maintained from above. It features an external plant compound, surrounded by an SR4 security wall and access door. The compound contains the air handling unit, condensers, exhaust fans, an exhaust stack and a back-up generator. All systems have an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) back-up, which is supported by an independent generator. This ensures that negative pressure to the laboratories, and therefore a safe environment, is always maintained.

MAT installed a mixture of class I, II and III microbiological safety cabinets throughout, and each laboratory has an autoclave for sterilising equipment. All furniture is mobile to suit the different layouts required by the various clients.

Written and distributed by:	Medical Air Ltd
Further information:	Will Evans
Call:	+44 (0)844 871 2100
Email:	will.evans@medicalairtechnology.com

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