



**British
Geological Survey**
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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New £17m research centre to be set up for earth and marine science & technology

The British Geological Survey (BGS) and Heriot-Watt University are joining forces to create a new centre for earth and marine science and technology.

Based in Edinburgh, the Sir Charles Lyell Centre will be one of Europe's leading centres for research and expertise in the earth and marine sciences.

Jointly funded by UK and Scottish funders, Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Heriot-Watt University, The Sir Charles Lyell Centre will promote innovative research at the core of geoscience, marine ecology, computing, mathematics and engineering.

The Lyell Centre will create a world-leading research cluster bringing science and technology together to tackle major issues of natural resource and energy supply in a responsible and sustainable way.

The new fusion of pure and applied expertise between Heriot-Watt and BGS allows us to use innovative methods to create real-world solutions in areas including global change and ecosystems; seafloor-mapping using advanced robotic vehicles; earthquake and volcanic risk and monitoring; and energy security.

The new centre will collaborate and leverage existing NERC investments and innovations at the National Oceanography Centre.

BGS is relocating its Edinburgh office to the £17m, purpose-built complex which is scheduled to open by 2015 at Heriot-Watt University's Edinburgh campus. Incubator space for spin-out and spin-in companies looking to work with Heriot-Watt and BGS staff will sit alongside the Centre's office, research and communal space.

Professor John Ludden, Executive Director of the British Geological Survey, said "I view the creation of the new Centre as an extraordinary opportunity to broaden our science base by partnering in key areas with Heriot-Watt University, in particular in geology and geophysics related to energy, urban renewal and the sea-floor."

Professor Steve Chapman, Principal of Heriot-Watt University, said the venture was based on a strong scientific synergy. He said "The Centre represents a tremendous opportunity, unifying our respective strengths in earth and marine sciences, creating an innovation hub in subsurface geosciences and generating greatly enhanced interaction between academic groups."

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Michael Russell, said:

"The creation of a European centre of excellence for earth and marine technology at Heriot-Watt University is great news for both industry and Scotland as a whole as it enhances our already strong reputation for world-leading scientific research and innovation. I'm proud that the Scottish Government has invested in this centre via the Funding Council, allowing the delivery of a unique postgraduate student experience based on cutting-edge collaboration between industry and universities. This will help to ensure better educated, more skilled and more successful individuals and help increase sustainable economic growth."

David Willetts, Minister for Universities and Science said “The creation of the Sir Charles Lyell Centre assembles world-leading expertise from the British Geological Survey and Heriot-Watt University in a common enterprise bringing together investment and skills from the UK Research Council and University sectors to support future UK innovation and growth”

Professor Duncan Wingham, Chief Executive of NERC said “NERC Council has been extremely impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of both British Geological Survey and Heriot-Watt University to a shared vision for a national centre of innovation. We are very happy to have reached agreement with Heriot-Watt and the Scottish Funding Council to realise this vision.”

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Notes for Editors

1. The following are available for interview:
Professor John Ludden/ Dr Mike Patterson, British Geological Survey
Professor Steve Chapman, Heriot-Watt University
Professor J Murray Roberts, Heriot-Watt University (marine science enquiries)
Professor John Underhill, Heriot-Watt University (geoscience enquiries)
2. **The British Geological Survey (BGS)**, a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at www.bgs.ac.uk.
3. **The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)** is the largest funder of environmental science in the UK. We invest £330m in cutting-edge research, training and knowledge transfer in the environmental sciences. Our scientists study and monitor the whole planet, from pole to pole, and from the deep Earth and oceans to the edge of space. We address and respond to critical issues such as environmental hazards, resource security and environmental change. Through collaboration with other science disciplines, with UK business and with policy-makers, we make sure our knowledge and skills support sustainable economic growth and public wellbeing - reducing risks to health, infrastructure, supply chains and our changing environment. www.nerc.ac.uk
4. **Heriot-Watt University (HWU)** specialises in science, technology, engineering, business and design, with a particular focus on developing solutions to critical global issues, such as climate change and energy. Established in 1821, the university has campuses in Edinburgh, the Scottish Borders, Orkney and Dubai, and is investing £35 million in a new campus in Malaysia.

In The Sunday Times 2013 University Guide: Number 4 in Scotland; Top in Scotland for Chemical Engineering, Building and Civil Engineering; In the UK Top 10 for Mathematics, Chemical Engineering, Building, Town & Country Planning and Landscape, and Food Science. In the National Student Survey 2013: No 1 in Scotland and No 4 in UK (based on responses to all questions from FT degree students); In the Top 10 for graduate employment in the UK (over 94% of graduates are in employment or further study within six months of graduation).

5. **Sir Charles Lyell** (b. 1797 d. 1875), was a Scottish geologist largely responsible for widespread acceptance of the view that all the features of the Earth's surface are produced by the action of physical, chemical, and biological processes through long periods of geological time. Lyell's achievements laid the foundations for evolutionary biology as well as for an understanding of the Earth's development.