

Energy Futures Lab launched



Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks at the launch

A new lab dedicated to tackling the scientific challenges posed by the world's demand for energy was launched at Imperial in November.

The Energy Futures Lab, a focal point for energy research across the College, aims to play a leading role in setting the energy agenda over the next 20 to 50 years. Its goal is to develop new multidisciplinary, cross-faculty research programmes, which will meet the broad energy challenges that we face, and facilitate the transition to a sustainable energy future.

The lab will focus its research at the intersection of diverse technologies, in order to find ways of meeting fundamental energy needs, such as heating, lighting, power and transportation, without contributing to climate change.

The lab, under the direction of Professor Nigel Brandon, will enable Imperial to bring together its existing strengths in developing technologies, such as carbon capture, fossil fuel engineering, renewable energy resources and fuel cells, and its proven track record in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks, speaking at the launch, said: "The major energy issues we face extend far beyond just technical challenges, and social scientists, engineers, business, economists and, dare I say, even politicians, have a key role to play in addressing these. I am happy that Imperial College London is dedicating its considerable technological expertise and its know-how in areas like carbon capture, fuel cells and renewable energy to addressing these problems."

Urban energy use

At the launch of the lab, Imperial and BP announced a £4.5 million project to research the use of energy in cities.

The BP Urban Energy Systems project at Imperial, co-directed by Professor David Fisk, will explore how money and energy could be saved in the future if cities integrated the systems

that supply them with resources. It is the first to try to document and understand, in detail, how energy, people and materials flow through a city.

Keeping the nuclear option open

Increasing the safety and reliability of nuclear power, as a solution for satisfying energy needs, is the challenge addressed by a new initiative announced at the launch of the lab. The £6.1 million Keeping the Nuclear Option Open programme, funded by the research council's Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy initiative, will investigate how nuclear power can become a more appealing option for future energy production. This represents the single largest research council commitment to fission reactor research for more than thirty years. The researchers, led by Professor Robin Grimes, hope that the four-year project will help increase the acceptability of nuclear power as an alternative source of energy and maintain the UK's expertise in nuclear technology.

For further information on these energy announcements go to www.imperial.ac.uk/news.