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Rothamsted opens agritech business hub

Renovation of research institution's Russell Building offers much-needed business space to start-ups in agritech, agrifood and agriscience



Rothamsted's historic Russell Building

Rothamsted Research has refurbished a vacant building on its campus in Harpenden to provide business space for high-growth agritech SMEs.

The historic red-brick Russell Building, which had lain empty since 2014, has been transformed with the help of a £1.7 million Local Growth Fund investment from Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Herts Innovation Quarter, which is boosting agritech growth in the UK.

The investment has provided modern, multi-use spaces, including 22 offices of various sizes, from 200ft² to over 1,200ft²; a hot-desk hub for flexible working; and an open plan innovation space where entrepreneurs can collaborate before prototyping their ideas and testing on site. It can house up to 118 staff.

The Russell Building refurbishment

builds on the success of Rothamsted's Daniel Hall Building, which houses 86 employees working for 12 start-ups, including Gowan Crop Protection, Femtogenix and Timac Agro. The Daniel Hall Building is now at full capacity and Rothamsted said the Russell Building will give these businesses space to expand as well as freeing up incubation space in the Daniel Hall for new start-ups.

Rothamsted added that the increase in capacity will enable a greater number of companies to take advantage of the tax breaks, free business support and collaboration opportunities offered by Herts IQ at Rothamsted Research.

The institute is the world's longest-running agricultural research station, delivering science and innovation for 170 years, with strong links to research institutes in Oxford, Cambridge and London.

A spokesperson from Rothamsted Research said: "Reflecting its proud history as the original birthplace of agricultural science in the UK, the Russell Building will once again provide a home for high-tech businesses specialising in agritech, food-tech and innovation.

"The building is ideally situated on Rothamsted's thriving business campus, enabling tenants to tap into a rich ecosystem of agriscience expertise and benefit from opportunities to work with some of the world's leading scientists."

Professor Angela Karp, director and CEO of Rothamsted Research, commented: "What makes the Rothamsted campus unique is the opportunity that our world-leading scientists have to interact with the growing number of agritech businesses on site. The refurbished Russell Building will not only boost the potential for this creative collaboration, but also bring

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back to life a central part of our heritage.”

The village of Harpenden is well connected to the M1, A1M and M25, and just 10 minutes from London Luton Airport and 25 minutes by train to London St Pancras International.

Businesses in agritech, agrifood, agricultural science and research looking for new office premises in Hertfordshire should contact Claire Wolstencroft on 01582 938500 or email info@rothamstedenterprises.com.

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