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George Osborne backs Papworth Hospital's move to Cambridge as he announces £200m polar research ship for city's British Antarctic Survey

Written by CHRIS HAVERGAL



Chancellor George Osborne during a visit to MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge. PRESS ASSOCIATION Photo Picture date Friday April 25th 2014. Photo credit should read: Chris Radburn/PA Wire

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George Osborne backed Papworth Hospital's move to Cambridge as he announced a science funding jackpot for the city, including a £200 million polar research ship.

Speaking at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Francis Crick Avenue today, the Chancellor said he could see a "very strong" case for Papworth's relocation to the Addenbrooke's site.

This has been mired in uncertainty in recent months amid reports the Treasury wanted Papworth to move to Peterborough instead, to make the city's hospital more sustainable in the wake of a costly private finance initiative.

Addressing researchers and business leaders, Mr Osborne gave the strongest indication yet that he would sign off on the Cambridge move.

He said: "Papworth is working closely to make sure that its plans are affordable.

"But I can see myself a very strong case in bringing these two great institutions more closely together, creating a hub of leading-edge medicine, research and pharmaceutical development."

Mr Osborne added he felt Papworth's move to Cambridge now had "real momentum", concluding: "Let's try to make it happen."

The Chancellor said the Papworth relocation would be the sort of backing for research 'clusters' which he argued would be key to economic growth.

And he said Cambridge as a whole would be a key cluster, arguing its scientific achievements were "one of Britain's greatest and most exciting success stories".

Backing for this came in the form of the announcement of a £200 million research ship for the Madingley Road-based British Antarctic Survey, which will replace two ageing vessels.

The new boat will have on-board laboratories and carry robotic submarines and underwater 'gliders' to gather data on marine biology and ocean conditions.

Mr Osborne said the ship would be the "most advanced oceanographic research vessel in the world", allowing scientists to work for more of the year and reach areas they had never been able to reach before.

Mr Osborne also said the 'Cambridge phenomenon' of recent decades showed what could be achieved when scientific ingenuity was turned into commercial success.

Saying he wanted to put "rocket boosters under the city's economy, Mr Osborne announced £6 million of funding for a new 'bioincubator' housing growing research companies at the Babraham Research Campus.

He said a ground-breaking ceremony held yesterday for a £17 million centre on the West Cambridge site which will explore everyday uses for the new 'super-material' graphene was another positive sign.

Mr Osborne said: "I'm here to tell you – we will continue to back Cambridge."

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Redimp45

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