



NEWS RELEASE

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Progress on £30m project praised by local MP

Progress on a £30m investment in horticultural science facilities and the Growing Kent & Medway initiative were praised during a recent visit to NIAB EMR in East Malling.

The team at NIAB EMR welcomed local MP Tom Tugendhat and Cllr Matt Boughton, Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, for a behind the scenes look at progress on construction of new modern research glasshouses and plant growth facilities using the latest environmental technologies.

The investment in new facilities, which will also include a research winery funded by a further £600,000 loan from the Growing Places Fund, will sustain the continued world-leading horticultural science on site, and deliver the first phase of the Green Tech Hub for Advanced Horticulture.

Tom Tugendhat, MP for Tonbridge & Malling, said: "I am immensely proud of the work being done by NIAB EMR, and was excited to see the progress here in East Malling.

"Thanks to a century of research, Malling is a name synonymous with fruit growing around the world. The new facilities will ensure a positive future for the science being undertaken here in Kent and support fruit growers and horticulturalists in the UK and abroad. The research undertaken here will improve the industry's productivity and mitigate the challenges presented by climate change, to help get more locally-produced fruit into our diets."

The new facilities, home to Growing Kent & Medway, a partnership of leading businesses and the region's universities to help promote the sector's economic growth, have been made possible thanks to £18m secured from the Government's Strength in Places Fund, with a significant matching contribution from the East Malling Trust.

The new industry-standard glasshouses will be used by the scientists to develop commercially-relevant research to help growers improve their profitability. Research will focus on developing new varieties and improving plant health and resistance to disease by undertaking controlled trials in crop production, breeding pathology, entomology and plant health. Phase 2, which is still to be funded, will deliver state-of-the-art laboratories including new science buildings, energy facilities and other science-related infrastructure.

Professor Mario Caccamo, Managing Director of NIAB EMR, added: "Growing Kent & Medway is a vitally important project for us and the industry. It underpins the Government's commitment to invest in high-level scientific research to help strengthen the horticultural industry.

"NIAB EMR is all about sustaining science through partnership, and in our case, this is achieved by working hand-in-glove with industry, academic institutions, and in particular the horticultural research charity East Malling Trust."

During the visit, Growing Kent & Medway's Programme Director Dr Nikki Harrison highlighted the £3m R&D grants scheme that has just opened, with funding earmarked for horticultural, and food and drink projects that support economic growth and environmentally sustainable practices and innovations.

Dr Oliver Doubleday, Chair of East Malling Trust, said: "We have been able to support this project after securing planning permission to develop housing on part of the 500-acre estate that was no longer required for field research. When it opens in April 2022, it will be an industry-leading facility made possible by ourselves, the Government and industry.

"In addition to important research, much of the demonstration work will focus on de-risking innovation for growers, giving them more confidence to continue investing in their production systems"

Recognising that the buildings must also perform well environmentally, NIAB EMR has incorporated solar PV, rainwater harvesting, with heating provided by air source heat pumps.

For more information on the work being undertaken by NIAB EMR or Growing Kent and Medway visit www.emr.ac.uk and www.growingkentandmedway.com.

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