

Beta Bugs are growing at Easter Bush

Agri-food biotechnology company, Beta Bugs, based at Easter Bush Campus has begun a new insect breeding facility creating five new jobs, with support from various organisations, including Business Gateway Midlothian.

The company was founded by entrepreneur Dr Thomas Farrugia. Beta Bugs is at the forefront of driving a sustainable bioeconomy in Scotland. Their plan is to develop and distribute high-performance insect breeds as a source of protein for animal feed.



Dr Thomas Farrugia Beta Bugs

Following the completion of his PhD and his first tasting of insects on a trip to Antwerp, Thomas joined Deep Science Ventures. There he began researching how environmentally friendly and versatile insect-based products could be. He also discovered they could provide a different source of protein which could change the feeding habits of livestock and fish farms.

He launched Beta Bugs, as an insect genetics company in 2017, with the goal of creating high-performance breeds of Black Soldier Fly to accelerate the growth of the insect farming sector, enabling insect protein to compete on price with existing animal and aqua-feed ingredients. As a result, the agricultural supply chain will benefit from a more sustainable and regionally produced source of protein.



Over the last 18 months the company has secured £133,000 of private investment, along with £1.2million in grant funding, including £100,000 from The Scottish Government's Unlocking Ambition programme and £84,000 from the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund to help the company grow its operations during Covid-19 lockdowns.

Business Gateway Midlothian has helped to establish the company's operations within the Science Zone in Midlothian, scaling up their breeding programme at the Easter Bush Campus, which now houses its new dedicated insect breeding facility.

Thomas said: "We are delighted to be in a position to expand our team and build a dedicated insect breeding facility thanks to help from various organisations including Business Gateway Midlothian who have been instrumental in our growth since we started out.

"Having our own adviser to keep us right along the way and signpost us to other available resources has been invaluable and really helped us to carve out a niche for ourselves in the

UK and International genetic insect market.”

Annie Watt, Business Gateway Midlothian Lead, said: “Beta Bugs is an innovative insect-breeding company leading the way in creating genetics for the fast growing ‘insects-as-feed’ industry, which we are delighted to support.

“Our Carbon Charter highlights Midlothian’s dedication to supporting green businesses and seeing a local business with a focus on innovative, sustainable practices flourish in the area is fantastic.

“Our aim is to help businesses become more energy and carbon efficient and realise financial savings, while also celebrating the businesses who are at the forefront of the environmental movement.

“Within a few short years, Beta Bugs has gone from strength to strength and it’s been a pleasure to watch this exciting business grow. The new jobs brought to the area support the continued Economic Development of Midlothian and help to showcase the area’s diverse job prospects and business landscape.”

www.betabugs.uk

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<https://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/midlothian/local-support> or call 0131 516 6944 for Business Gateway information.

