

Press release: Welsh Secretary visits West Wales business success stories

From global denim brands favoured by Royalty to a gas terminal helping to boost the UK's energy security, Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns has visited the west Wales coast today to meet members of the region's workforce helping to drive the nation's rural economy forward. (14 June).

The Secretary of State visited premium denim brand Hiut Denim Co – a label recently propelled into the global spotlight when the Duchess of Sussex wore one of their designs during a visit to Cardiff in January.

The Cardigan based family owned firm has since been flooded with worldwide attention and orders, sparking an imminent move to larger premises in the Ceredigion town later this year and a global order waiting list of three months.

The Secretary of State – who supported Hiut when they co-exhibited at London Craft Week with Danish furniture designers Carl Hansen & Son, was welcomed to the company's HQ by David Hieatt. David founded the brand with his wife, Clare in 2011. Fiercely proud of their Welsh roots, the couple moved from London back to Cardigan and set about breathing life back into the town's denim manufacturing history when it was home to clothing manufacturer, Dewhirst.

Mr Hieatt introduced Mr Cairns to the team of Grandmasters, so called due to their decades of denim experience at Dewhirst. Each are living examples of the company's motto of "do one thing well" by singlehandedly crafting each pair of jeans for customers all over the world.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Hiut is a company that prides itself on doing one thing well – setting itself apart from the highly mechanised industry giants and helping to propel the 'Made in Wales' stamp around the world.

With its expansion plans and continued investment in the local economy, Hiut Denim Co is a shining example of a company looking to capitalise on the global demand for their goods – and showing how a little Welsh endeavour can go a long way.

The UK Government is ready to support any Welsh business looking to follow in their footsteps and take advantage of every opportunity available to them to grow and expand into new markets.

David Hieatt, co-founder of 'Hiut Denim Co said:

Over the last six months, we have gone through the biggest growth period in the company's life. We are already over 60% up on 2017. This is mostly thanks to the media coverage we received in December 2017 and, of course, since Meghan Markle was seen wearing our jeans in January.

Since then we have hired four new apprentices in the factory. We have also outgrown our current factory and will be moving to a larger factory in the next few weeks. We will be hiring more Grandmasters to work in the factory once we have the new factory up and running.

Hiut Denim Co. is a global denim company making jeans for the creative man and woman of the world. It's quest is the same as was on day one: To get 400 people their jobs back.

We are fighting for the right to make. This is a maker town. We are passing those skills on to the next generation.

The Secretary of State also highlighted the region's energy rich landscape with a visit to South Hook LNG Terminal in Milford Haven. The Terminal has been importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar since it was fully commissioned in 2010. With capacity to process around 20% of the UK's current natural gas needs, it is one of the largest terminals in Europe.

Alun Cairns added:

South Hook plays a crucial role in the fabric of Wales' energy sector and the facility at Milford Haven is a key element in ensuring UK energy security. Employing just over 200 people in Milford Haven, with the vast majority coming from Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, it is a key employer in the West Wales region.

Qatari investment in London, including the recent introduction of the daily Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Cardiff, shows that the UK is highly attractive to investors abroad, creating jobs and growth at home.

Rob Else, General Manager South Hook LNG Terminal said,

We were delighted to welcome the Secretary of State for Wales to our Terminal, where operational reliability is underpinned by the highest of safety standards.

Mr Cairns rounded off his day with a visit to the studios of Mumf Cartoons near Cardigan. While Wales' reputation as a hotbed of creative and animation talent has been growing worldwide over recent years, Mal Humphreys has plied his trade as a full-time cartoonist since 1991 with his work gracing the

pages of the broadsheets and S4C television screens.