New Transport for Wales Headquarters part of wider work to unleash the potential of Welsh regions

The news comes ahead of a major speech by Ken Skates in which he will say that Wales must grow its regional economies and unleash their potential to drive balanced economic growth across the country.

The Economy Secretary will be addressing a business audience at Coleg y Cymoedd later today and will set out his vision for a prosperous and secure Wales.

Speaking ahead of his speech, Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

> "I'm incredibly proud that during the last Assembly term the Welsh Government directly supported almost 150,000 jobs across the country, with many more in local supply chains.

> "That has helped us secure a lower unemployment rate than England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and a faster rate of employment growth than the UK average.

> "However as an economy we still face major challenges, particularly in addressing the regional differences in our economy and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth fall more fairly across Wales.

> "Since 2010 our approach has focussed on developing key sectors of our economy on a national basis. This has resulted in some stunning successes, particularly in advanced manufacturing areas like aerospace and in the creative industries.
> "However, the growth of those sectors and the skilled jobs they have created have not fallen equally across Wales and so now is the time to write the next chapter of Wales' economic story.

> "As we approach the challenges of the future I believe we need to take a new approach by developing the competitive edge of each region of Wales more fully. This will mean empowering each region to develop its own specialised sectors and more distinct economic identities.

"Allied to this we need to change our economic development structures in government to work in closer partnership with those regions, utilising drivers, such as skills, transport connectivity, procurement and digital infrastructure to accelerate economic growth in those areas.

"The way to address these regional differences is not to turn one area against another, but to work together to ensure the fruits of growth are shared by everyone. It's a question of fairness and that's why I want to grow the regional economies of Wales and unleash their potential to drive more balanced growth across the whole of the country. Only that way can we make real our promise of better jobs closer to home and ensure every area of Wales becomes more resilient to the economic challenges we face over the next few years.

"Today I am delighted to announce that the new Transport for Wales headquarters will be located in Pontypridd bringing hundreds of high quality jobs to the area.
"This is great news for the town but it needs to be the start of something bigger. We need to work with partners in the local authority, the private sector as well as local colleges and universities to ensure this injection of jobs becomes a spark for wider local regeneration and prosperity.

"Later today I will meet young people training at the rail engineering centre at Coley y Cymoedd, a £3m partnership between Welsh Government and the college and a great example of the partnership working and forward thinking that is key to regional economic success.

"By looking ahead to the opportunities arising from the £1bn plus we will spend on electrification, Metro and rail infrastructure, we must work together to ensure more of the benefits of that spend remain in our local communities and benefit local supply chains.

"We face major economic challenges which will only be increased by our exit from the EU, global instability, welfare cuts and UK Government austerity.

"Our response must be to work together and to develop more resilient regional economies if we are to build a stronger and

fairer economy for everyone in every area of Wales.

[Park puts up shutters as pandas look like mating](#)

With female giant panda Ying Ying and male giant panda Le Le thought to be about to mate, Hong Kong Ocean Park has closed its Giant Panda Adventure section until further notice.

Park spokeswoman Suzanne Gendron said both pandas had shown signs of being ready to mate, such as water play and vocalizations by Ying Ying and Le Le's increased interest in sniffing of Ying Ying's scent.

In terms of physical and hormonal changes, the park's veterinary team and experts from the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Wolong confirmed that the two giant pandas are entering this year's breeding season, which, Gendron said, is considered an appropriate timing for experts to prepare for Ying Ying's and Le Le's breeding season and temporarily close the section.

This year, the closure period of the area where Ying Ying and Le Le live will be longer than previous years so that expert teams from Ocean Park and Wolong will be able to closely manage and monitor the pair's breeding behavior from the moment they exhibit early signs of breeding to the time they hit the peak of their breeding cycle.

The gestation period for giant pandas can last from 72 to 324 days and pregnancy confirmation can only be detected by an ultrasound scan some 14 days before birth at the earliest.

Ying Ying and Le Le, who experienced their first mating season in 2011, will be turning 12 years old this August.

The Giant Panda Adventure section will be reopened to the public after Ying Ying successfully gives birth to a panda cub, or after it is confirmed she is not pregnant, the park said.

Ocean Park, which was founded in 1977, has gained widespread recognition for its animal husbandry, research and its relationship with the community.

[Sturgeon admits: an independent Scotland would face barriers to trade with the UK](#)

19 Mar 2017

Nicola Sturgeon has conceded that her plans for independence would drive barriers between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

In an interview on the Robert Peston programme today, the First Minister admitted that, after Brexit,, "divergences" would soon be "opening up between the rules of the UK and the EU."

The First Minister has said she wants an independent Scotland to become a member of the EU, or abide by its rules

According to Nicola Sturgeon, this would mean Scotland would be on the wrong side of a trade barrier to our biggest market in the rest of the UK.

This was also the conclusion of the Scottish Conservatives' own Brexit group, which said that barriers to trade and freedom of movement would open up if Scotland left the UK.

Scottish Conservative spokesman for the constitution, Adam Tomkins MSP, said:

"The First Minister has some explaining to do.

"The rest of the UK is our biggest market, and is four times as important to Scotland as the EU. Yet by her own admission, an independent Scotland abiding by EU rules would soon 'diverge' the UK.

"The question for the First Minister is — why is it in Scotland's self-interest to weaken our links with our biggest market — the rest of the UK.

"The best deal for Scotland is to stay part of the United Kingdom — and to do all we can to support a new free trade agreement with the EU, so we can protect our place in our own integrated domestic market will full access to the EU single market.

"The SNP is prepared to damage Scotland's economy purely to win the prize it has been working for all its life — separating our country in two."

"The logic behind Nicola Sturgeon's separation proposals is falling apart."

[President of India addresses The Closing Ceremony of International Conference on "Buddhism in The 21st Century — Perspectives and Responses to Global Challenges and Crises"](#)

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee addressed the closing ceremony of an International Conference on "Buddhism in the 21st Century

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[Clarification by the Central Vigilance](#)

Commission (CVC) regarding media reports stating crash of hard disc of CVC portal and loss of data stored online

The Central Vigilance Commission has noticed that certain sections of the media have reported that "the hard disc of the CVC portal has crashed and all data stored online till that date has been lost