

[New sites in Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone can apply for latest round of Business Rates Scheme](#)

The Ebbw Vale Zone was recently expanded to include three additional sites – Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate, Waun Y pound Industrial Estate and Victoria/Festival Park.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“The Enterprise Zone Rates Scheme has helped make a real difference to businesses and I am pleased to announce additional funding so eligible businesses within the newly expanded areas of Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone can apply and potentially benefit.”

The scheme focuses on small and medium sized enterprises that are demonstrating business growth, new starts or businesses that are increasing the size of their full time workforce. Consideration is also given to other business activity related to sectors, increased productivity and innovation/R&D.

The Enterprise Zone Business Rates Scheme is available to businesses within all eight Welsh Enterprise Zones and could deliver significant reductions to their annual business rates payments for 2016-17.

Applications for the 2016/17 financial year can be made until **Friday, 31 March 2017**.

For more information about the Scheme, businesses can ring the Business Wales helpline on freephone 03000 6 03000 or contact the EZBRS team at EZBRS@wales.gsi.gov.uk for an application form.

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Below is a statement by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson on Nicola Sturgeon's plan for a repeat independence referendum.

"Thank-you.

On Monday this week, the First Minister chose the wrong course for Scotland.

I profoundly regret the course of action she took.

And on behalf of the many, many Scots who do not want to go back to a second referendum – people who voted both No and Yes to independence – I tell her, it is not too late to change course.

The fact is that there are so many other urgent issues that require our attention

...from managing the Scottish Parliament's important new powers over tax and welfare, to the future of our NHS.

The First Minister herself has said that that improving the quality of Scottish schooling would be her number one priority.

In our view, an all-consuming referendum campaign over the next 18 months would show this promise to be worthless.

So I ask the First Minister to act – and act now – to show she is prepared to deliver on those pledges she made.

Unfortunately, all the signs are that the Scottish Government will not take that step.

In addition to Monday's statement, a website for its referendum campaign was set up at the start of this month, and fundraising has already commenced.

That is why the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and myself have decided today to make clear to the Scottish people what response we will adopt.

As David has already said, we reject conclusively the timetable for a referendum set out by the Scottish Government.

For a key reason – because it is unfair to Scottish voters.

We have just come through a referendum campaign when a key complaint among many people was that they did not have the necessary information to help them make an informed decision.

If we were to keep to the First Minister's timetable, this is exactly what would happen in Scotland, too.

On the most important political decision a country can make, we would be voting blind.

I believe that it is only right that people have the opportunity to examine the UK's new relationship with the European Union once it is up and running.

People should only be asked to make a judgement about whether to leave or remain within a 300-year old Union of nations when they have seen for themselves how that Union is functioning, following Brexit.

They should also know what the alternative entails, and we have seen no clarity from the SNP on even the basic questions of their proposition.

But I believe there is another fundamental reason why now is not the right time to take Scotland back to the precipice.

And that is because there is no clear political or public consent for this to take place.

The country – and our Parliament – is divided not over just the question of independence, but over whether we should even hold a referendum or not.

Prior to 2014, this was not the case.

We all accepted – Unionist, Nationalist and those who sat on the fence – that it was right and proper for the question to be asked.

Today, however, that consent is simply not there.

In Scotland, we know to our cost that referenda are divisive.

At an absolute minimum, therefore, I believe there should be agreement across political parties and from the public at large, that it is right and fair for such a referendum to proceed.

And I say:

just three years after the last one

when the SNP promised to respect the previous vote

and when the Scottish public are weary and divided over the prospect of an immediate second vote

that the SNP must earn the right to ask the question again.

They cannot simply claim it. And through that claim, pretend it is true.

In short, I oppose a referendum on independence.

But if the SNP insists on pressing ahead, we will argue that a referendum cannot happen when the Scottish people have not been given the opportunity to see how our new relationship with the European Union is working.

And until there is clarity over the alternative.

And we will maintain that it should not take place when there is no clear

public or political consent for it to happen.

Our country does not want to go back to the divisions and uncertainty of the last few years.

Another referendum campaign will not solve the challenges this country will face.

It is my deep regret that the SNP has chosen the path of trying to divide Scotland yet further. It would be irresponsible not to do all I can, to ensure that does not happen.”

[Tory disarray: a government agenda unravelling](#)

Andrew

Gwynne MP, Labour’s Campaigns and Elections Chair, commenting on the unravelling of the Tory Budget, said:

“The Tories are in a mess, riven by infighting and failure and disarray.

“They have embarrassed themselves over the Budget, they still have no answers on Brexit and they’re fighting between themselves rather than fixing the problems.

“Theresa May says she has a plan and is sticking to it, but almost every day we see another promise broken or another change of heart. Flagship policies are being delayed or abandoned altogether while working people across this country bear the brunt of the Tories’ incompetence.

“It is now clearer than ever that Theresa May cannot give Britain the change we need. Working people deserve better than Tory failure – only a Labour Government will stand up for them and their families.”

Ends

[Rebecca Long-Bailey responds to reports Toyota is to invest £240m in a UK plant at Burnaston](#)

Rebecca Long-Bailey

MP, Labour's Shadow Business Secretary,

commenting on reports that Toyota is to invest in a UK plant at Burnaston, said:

“The decision by Toyota to invest £240 million to upgrade its Burnaston plant is very welcome news. It is testament to the world-class workforce there whose excellence, hard work, and efficiency makes the UK car industry so strong.

“However, we should not be complacent. As the chief executive of Toyota Motor Europe warned; continued, predictable and uncomplicated tariff and impediment-free access will be important for future success. This is why the Government needs to secure tariff and impediment free access to the Single Market and Customs Union and re-enforce this with a coherent industrial strategy, which invests in the supply chain, R&D, infrastructure and skills. Only by doing this will the Government protect jobs in the UK car industry and ensure the continued success of this sector.”

[Sports Minister Vijay Goel Urges J& K Chief Minister to Provide adequate sporting infrastructure for athletes in the field of Kickboxing in J & K.](#)

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF LETTER WRITTEN TO J&K CHIEF MINISTER Ms MEHBOOBA MUFTI SAEED BY MINISTER OF STATE (I/C) FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS SHRI VIJAY GOEL: