

Summit brings bus industry together

Wales' first ever Bus Summit, part of Economy Secretary, Ken Skates' 5 point plan for the industry, will bring all interested parties together to look at how they can work more effectively together to deliver the best, most robust service possible.

Speaking ahead of the summit, the Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

"There is no question that 2016 was a mixed year for the bus industry in Wales. Whilst our bus network accounted for some 101 million passenger journeys – with many routes gaining in popularity – the demise of some service providers left certain communities, services and bus users vulnerable.

"The five point plan I announced last September sought to stabilise and support the industry in the short term but we must look for longer term solutions if we are to deliver a quality service that our thousands of passengers across Wales can have confidence in. I'm particularly keen to hear the views of the industry on how we can encourage young people to increase their bus travel. The MyTravel Pass pilot was a useful starting point and given us some valuable insight, we must now build on that and work with partners to develop an all Wales solution.

"This Bus Summit is an opportunity for us to share ideas to solve the difficulties facing the industry, define what we want our bus services to deliver and understand how we can better work together in order to deliver the quality services communities across Wales expect and deserve.

"In my eyes, that means a top quality and sustainable service, one that can drive forward our economy and our communities to greater prosperity. It means a service which works for both rural and urban areas, young and old and promotes and enables independent living, all whilst ensuring value for money for the tax payer.

"It's a tough task but I'm positive we have the expertise and the will in Wales to deliver it.

"In the meantime, of course, we will continue to support local authorities and communities wherever possible, whether it be through taking on new services like the TIC between Aberystwyth and Cardiff or providing further financial support to areas affected by loss of service providers.

"But longer term I want to ensure we establish a better informed, better designed, long term approach to the planning of our transport system. I'm keen, amongst other things, to explore with

others whether new legislation can play a role in this.

“This Summit will be a catalyst for that and I look forward to working with the industry to inform and deliver the best possible system, together.”

New £36m fund to reduce infant class sizes and raise standards announced by Kirsty Williams

Directed at the frontline and starting with the largest class sizes, it will target classes where teaching and learning needs to improve and where there are high levels of deprivation.

The money, consisting of both revenue and capital funding, will be invested over the next four years up until 2021.

The latest figures show that 7.6% (8,196) of infant pupils in Wales were in classes of over 30.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Our national mission is to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people.

“Time and time again parents and teachers tell me that they are concerned about class sizes. We have listened to these concerns, looked at the international evidence, and are today announcing a new £36m fund to address infant class sizes.

“There is a positive connection between smaller classes and attainment, particularly for pupils from poorer backgrounds. This is most significant for younger children, which is why we are targeting this investment at infant class sizes.

“This announcement, linked to our other reforms, will create the space for teachers to teach and for pupils to learn.”

Press release: PM unveils plans for a Modern Industrial Strategy fit for Global Britain

- New 'Sector deals' and investment in research and development will support the industries of the future where Britain has the potential to lead the world – from electric vehicles to biotech and quantum technologies.
- PM sets out plan to drive growth across the whole country and create more high skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities as part of government's Plan for Britain.

Prime Minister Theresa May will use her first regional Cabinet meeting this morning (23 January) to launch proposals for a modern Industrial Strategy to build on Britain's strengths and tackle its underlying weaknesses to secure a future as a competitive, global nation.

At the heart of the Strategy green paper published today is an offer to businesses to strike new 'Sector Deals', driven by the interests of firms and the people they employ, to address sector-specific challenges and opportunities. As part of the deals government will be prepared to offer a range of support, including addressing regulatory barriers to innovation and growth, looking at how we can use trade and investment deals to increase exports, or supporting the creation of new institutions to provide leadership, support innovation or boost skills.

The Industrial Strategy is a vital part of the Plan for Britain set out by the Prime Minister last week. It will drive growth right across the United Kingdom, using major new investments in infrastructure and research to drive prosperity – creating more high-skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities. The green paper also sets out plans to strengthen institutions in each part of the country to support their specific strengths – whether it's building up local trade bodies, or creating new educational institutions, making it easier for business to access finance outside London or getting a stronger business voice into local government.

The Prime Minister will tell a Cabinet meeting in the North West this morning that a truly modern British Industrial Strategy must make Britain a hive of new industries which will challenge the companies and industries of today.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The Modern Industrial Strategy will back Britain for the long term: creating the conditions where successful businesses can emerge and grow, and backing them to invest in the long-term future of our country.

It will be underpinned by a new approach to government, not just stepping back but stepping up to a new, active role that backs business and ensures more people in all corners of the country share in the benefits of its success.

Business & Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

This is an important step in building a modern, dynamic industrial strategy that will improve living standards and drive economic growth across the whole country. A modern British Industrial Strategy must – build on the UK's strengths and extend excellence into the future; close the gap between the the UK's most productive companies, industries, places and people and the rest; and ensure we are one of the most competitive places in the world to start and grow a business.

We are inviting businesses and workers to contribute to this vision to help us create a high-skilled economy where every place can meet its potential.

The green paper also sets out technologies where Britain has strengths in research and development which could be supported through the government's new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, including: smart energy technologies; robotics and artificial intelligence and 5G mobile network technology. This fund is part of £4.7 billion of additional R&D funding announced by the Prime Minister in November, a bigger increase than in any parliament since 1979.

The approach outlined today builds on what exists already in sectors like automotive and aerospace – with individual firms taking the initiative to organise their sectors, backed by institutions or organisations which enable vital partnership on research and development throughout the supply chain.

In aerospace, close collaboration between government and industry including through the Aerospace Growth Partnership has been instrumental in creating one of the world's best business environments for advanced engineering, design and manufacture – with thousands of people employed in high-skilled jobs.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said:

FSB has appreciated being part of the discussions with the Business Secretary since last year to help shape the Industrial Strategy. We are proud to be influencing a major government economic blueprint and particularly pleased with the push on skills, infrastructure and connectivity as important drivers of productivity and industry.

In addition, the moves towards a place-based strategy fit well with the UK small business community. Small firms are often the anchors

in our local economies – in cities, towns and villages – right across the country. Finally, we want to continue to see an emphasis on supply chain respect, which underpins the Industrial Strategy announced today but also the Corporate Governance Green Paper.

Adam Marshall, Director General, British Chambers of Commerce said:

The developing Industrial Strategy represents a crucial first milestone in a renewed partnership between business and government, working together to create the conditions for future growth.

Business communities across the UK will be pleased to see that harnessing the potential of our cities, towns and counties lies at the heart of the government's approach to Industrial Strategy. There are dynamic business communities in every corner of the UK – and it is their future success that will make our country more competitive and more prosperous.

A deliberate and steady approach that leads to long-term change is the right way to go.

Terry Scuoler, CEO of EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, said:

This is an important first step towards creating a comprehensive, consistent and long-term industrial strategy that will help Britain adjust to a more globally-focused, post-Brexit economy. Manufacturing has a key role to play and we look forward to working with the government on crystallising this into a strategic framework that will work and deliver for industry.

The end result of this process must be an industrial strategy that lives up to the promise of driving different behaviours and outcomes for the British economy. This requires the whole of government working together to support it, with clear leadership from the Prime Minister and her whole Cabinet.

The government welcomes work on early sector deals, including from:

- Sir John Bell: on life sciences
- Richard Parry-Jones: on the transition to ultra low emission vehicles
- Juergen Maier: on industrial digitalisation
- Lord Hutton: on improving UK competitiveness and skills in the nuclear industry
- Sir Peter Bazalgette: on the creative industries

This is not an exclusive list and the government is prepared to work with any sector which can organise behind strong leadership to address shared

challenges and opportunities.

The Modern Industrial Strategy green paper sets out a plan to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. To achieve that goal, the green paper sets out ten strategic pillars to underpin a new government approach:

1. Investing in science, research and innovation

We must become a more innovative economy and do more to commercialise our world leading science base to drive growth across the UK.

2. Developing skills

We must help people and businesses to thrive by: ensuring everyone has the basic skills needed in a modern economy; building a new system of technical education to benefit the half of young people who do not go to university; boosting STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills, digital skills and numeracy; and by raising skill levels in lagging areas.

3. Upgrading infrastructure

We must upgrade our standards of performance on digital, energy, transport, water and flood defence infrastructure, and better align central government infrastructure investment with local growth priorities.

4. Supporting businesses to start and grow

We must ensure that businesses across the UK can access the finance and management skills they need to grow; and we must create the right conditions for companies to invest for the long term.

5. Improving procurement

We must use strategic government procurement to drive innovation and enable the development of UK supply chains;

6. Encouraging trade and inward investment policy

Government policy can help boost productivity and growth across our economy, including by increasing competition and helping to bring new ways of doing things to the UK.

Delivering affordable energy and clean growth

We need to keep costs down for businesses, and secure the economic benefits of the transition to a low-carbon economy.

8. Cultivating world-leading sectors

We must build on our areas of competitive advantage, and help new sectors to flourish, in many cases challenging existing institutions and incumbents;

9. Driving growth across the whole country

We will create a framework to build on the particular strengths of different places and address factors that hold places back – whether it is investing in key infrastructure projects to encourage growth, increasing skill levels, or backing local innovation strengths.

10. Creating the right institutions to bring together sectors and places

We will consider the best structures to support people, industries and places. In some places and sectors there may be missing institutions which we could create, or existing ones we could strengthen, be they local civic or educational institutions, trade associations or financial networks.

As part of the visit to the North West, the government is also announcing a cash boost of £556 million for the Northern Powerhouse to help create jobs, support businesses and encourage growth.

Goole Intermodal Terminal linking rail, sea and road, a 21st century conference centre in Blackpool, and a new innovation fund for Manchester and Cheshire businesses are just some of the locally-chosen projects set to benefit over the next few years. These are alongside many others which improve educational attainment, create jobs, build homes or improve infrastructure.

This latest award of local growth funding is on top of £2.9 billion of Growth Deal funding already awarded to the 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships in the region – an investment which provides targeted financial support to locally-determined projects in order to unlock growth.

Notes to editors:

The £556m will help do even more to benefit the lives of local people across the north. New projects include:

7. Goole Intermodal Terminal which will mean the town's existing rail, sea, motorway and inland waterway links into one site, providing an

integrated transport facility for business

- A 21st century conference centre and hotel in Blackpool at the Winter Gardens – helping the town re-establish its presence as a leading conference destination.
- £10 million for the Greater Manchester and Cheshire Life Sciences Fund to provide capital to local small and medium businesses to drive the growth of innovative young life sciences businesses
- Flood resilience measures in Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Kirklees and Leeds. These will complement existing government investment and help safeguard over 11,000 jobs and 1,300 businesses
- Building the International Advanced Manufacturing Park in Sunderland and South Tyneside – helping to creating an estimated 5,200 jobs.

The 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships in the Northern Powerhouse have been awarded:

- North Eastern £49.7m
- Cumbria £12.7m
- Tees Valley £21.8m
- York, North Yorkshire, East Riding £23.7m
- Lancashire £69.8m
- Humber £27.9m
- Leeds City Region £67.5m
- Liverpool City Region £72.0m
- Greater Manchester £130.1m
- Sheffield City Region £37.8m
- Cheshire and Warrington £43.3m

Press release: PM call with President Anastasiades of Cyprus: 22 January 2017

From:

First published:

22 January 2017

Part of:

Prime Minister Theresa May spoke to President Nicos Anastasiades and discussed the latest developments in the Cyprus Settlement talks.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to President Nicos Anastasiades this afternoon. They discussed the latest developments in the ongoing Cyprus Settlement talks and the historic opportunity to resolve this long running dispute.

They discussed the need for leadership and flexibility on all sides, and the Prime Minister made clear that the UK would continue to do all we could to help achieve a successful settlement.

Press release: PM call with NATO Secretary General: 22 January 2017

From:

First published:

22 January 2017

Part of:

Prime Minister Theresa May spoke to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and discussed the continued importance of the Alliance.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg this afternoon.

They discussed the continued importance of the Alliance as the bulwark of our defence, and agreed on the need for the Alliance to continue to evolve to be able to effectively counter the biggest threats of the day, in particular terrorism and cyber attacks.

The Prime Minister said she would be taking these messages to Washington later this week where she is expected to discuss NATO with President Trump.