

# First Minister visits expanding Welshpool business

First Minister Carwyn Jones visited the site today to hear more about the company's export success and expansion.

The 6,000 square foot expansion at its site at Offa's Dyke Business Park was constructed at a cost of £375,000 by the Welsh Government and is now leased to Zip Clip.

The extension will allow the company to deal with its increased turnover and fulfill its growth plans. The company's turnover has increased from £4.6m to £5.5m since last year when it moved to its new site, also facilitated by the Welsh Government, and it expects to double its workforce to over 70 in the next five years.

Zip Clip exports to some 22 countries already and has seen a major increase in exports and demand from overseas.

It has now established Zip-Clip Pty Ltd in Melbourne Australia which has its own designated warehouse and offices in the suburb of Thomastown enabling it to better service its customer needs with reduced delivery times. The facility will stock and distribute products manufactured in Wales into the Australian and New Zealand market from June 2018.

The company supplies a huge variety of suspension systems which are used in construction including in the new American Embassy at Nine Elms in London, the Ferrari World Abu Dhabi and the London Olympics Aquatic Centre.

In addition to the support with property provision, Zip Clip have also benefited from the Welsh Government's innovation programme and have taken advantage of the International Trade Opportunities programme which offers assistance with reaching new overseas markets.

The First Minister said:

"It's great to see a company like Zip Clip succeed in this way. I'm pleased the Welsh Government is able to assist them with their export boom and expansion plans.

"It was good to hear about the company's success overseas, with exports to some 22 countries around the world. They are a valuable member of the business community here in Mid Wales providing excellent employment opportunities in the area."

Steve Goldsworthy, chief executive of Zip Clip was also a keynote speaker at this year's Wales Export Conference to highlight the company's success.

Mr Goldsworthy said:

“The extension on the new unit will enable us to future-proof the needs of our export clients. Our aim over the years is to develop our overseas market with the aim to better service our customer needs through new product Development and customer support.

“The success of Zip-Clip in targeting these overseas markets can only be achieved with the support of the Welsh Government. The initial support we had in developing overseas customers through trade missions enabled us target the correct countries and businesses effectively and affordably.

“The support in the new building has enabled us to keep our head offices and manufacturing in Wales where the local community and local supply chain can also benefit.”

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## The epic story continues – Harlech Fire and Sea Festival gets underway

On Sunday, visitors to the festival will learn more about the legend of Meirion and his struggle to harness the power of the magical Harlech Torc. The journey will take them to Harlech beach, with a re-enactment of the Harlech Torc washing up onto the shore and taken up to the castle. As dusk falls, those attending will be invited to bring a picnic and barbecue and stay on the beach for an evening campfire, which will be lit and attended by the Knights of Ardudwy. Joining the campfire session will be professional Welsh musicians, singers and fire dancers. Narrator Siân Miriam will tell the tale of Meirion, the Morfeirch and the Harlech Torc with the help of renowned puppeteer, Owen Davies.

Just ahead of the second Harlech Fire and Sea Festival, the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas will formally launch the Harlech Torc at the visitors centre, Harlech Castle on Friday, 25th May.

Also attending will be Andrew Coomber, the silversmith commissioned to design and make the new Harlech Torc by Harlech Tourism Association. The new Torc is made from five metres of silver, gilded with gold and enamel. The ends are sculpted with the head of Meirion and a Morfeirch (seahorse).

The original Harlech Torc dates to c.1300-1150 BC during what is referred to as the Penard phase of the Middle Bronze Age. Made from four meters of gold, it is a flange-twisted torc of Tara type. The torc was found in a garden near Harlech Castle in 1692. You can see it today at St. Fagans National Museum of

History, Cardiff.

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“This festival is an excellent way of showing the wealth of stories, myths and legends we have in Wales – and sharing them in an innovative way with our visitors and local people while also celebrating Wales’ fantastic coastline.

With Harlech Castle as a backdrop to the celebrations, this promises to be a legendary event and I’m pleased that Visit Wales and Cadw has been able to support the series of events.

I look forward to unveiling the Harlech Torc, which will be an added attraction for the Castle and visitor centre – following investment and since its opening, we’ve seen a significant increase of visitors 13% on the previous year to Harlech Castle.”

Harlech Tourism Association were recipients of Visit Wales Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF) in support of Wales’ themed years.

Visitors will be able to request to wear the new Torc for a photograph when staff and volunteers are available to assist.

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## **Hospital grounds, school grounds and playgrounds to be smoke-free in Wales by summer 2019**

Strengthening the laws around smoking in public in Wales will further protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke and de-normalise smoking for children and young people.

While most hospitals already have no smoking policies in their grounds, it is currently difficult for staff to enforce this.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, has visited the maternity unit at Glan Clwyd Hospital, where staff told him they had received complaints from mothers about people smoking outside the hospital when they enter and leave with their young babies.

The Hospital Management Team has also received complaints about people smoking at the newly refurbished main entrance and at other entrances across the site.

The changes will make it illegal to smoke in the hospital grounds, with legal backing for fines to be issued to smokers breaking the rules, therefore improving the environment for patients, visitors and staff.

Vaughan Gething said:

“I am proud that Wales continues to be at the forefront of UK action to reduce smoking and prevent young people from taking it up in the first place.

“We have seen significant changes to the attitudes to smoking since 2007. Back then we received some resistance to change, but we have seen a remarkable culture-change and I am pleased our plan to extend smoke-free areas to outdoor public spaces has received overwhelming public support.

“This is another step in the right direction to de-normalise smoking in Wales.”

Smoking contributes most to the current burden of disease in Wales, causing approximately 5,450 deaths each year and costing the NHS an estimated £302m annually.

Support is at hand for people who wish to give up smoking. The Welsh Government’s Tobacco Control Delivery Plan commits to helping more people to quit by encouraging the use of integrated smoking cessations services, and strengthening the referrals to these services, particularly for groups with high-smoking prevalence.

The NHS offers free help and advice to people wanting to give up smoking through Help Me Quit.

Teresa Owen, Executive Director of Public Health at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, said:

“A hospital is no place for smoking and the Health Board is determined to create a smoke-free environment. We receive numerous complaints about people smoking around the hospital, particularly near the main entrance. We need to find a way of ensuring our site is smoke free, while also supporting more patients, visitors and staff to quit.”

The changes to the smoke-free legislation will be introduced under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, which was passed by Assembly Members last year.

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# Business are missing out on the skills people like Nath have to offer – Eluned Morgan

The Minister told them about Nath, from Rhondda Cynon Taf, who is on the autistic spectrum and has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. He has found work that suits his skills with help from the Welsh Government's EU funded Communities for Work programme. He is a fluent Welsh speaker and has the ability to translate documents quite easily but struggles in social situations. His Communities for Work adviser helped him to pursue a Welsh translation job and, after some intensive cooperation, he secured work with the *Autism Directory Society*.

With the help of the Society and his adviser, he secured financial help from the DWP's Access to Work programme, as well as the support of an Access to Work Coach for 3 years, which consequently is helping him retain the role he is in. With the vital support of Access to Work, he is trying different approaches and keeping positive, hoping to overcome the frustrations he has had with social communications.

The Minister was addressing the Launch of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's Public Policy Forum where she told delegates:

"There are not enough disabled people in work. Figures released just last week show that the proportion of disabled people who are able to work but who are unemployed in Great Britain is 9.2% – more than twice the proportion of those who are not disabled, which is currently 3.6%.

"Meanwhile, in Wales, just 45% of working-age disabled people are currently in employment, compared to 79% of those who are not disabled. This is not acceptable. It is something I want to see change and I need your help to achieve it.

"This isn't a purely altruistic process. If you aren't employing a wide cross section of society, you're missing out on the untapped potential of our highly skilled workforce."

Earlier this year the Welsh Government's Employability Plan was launched. It recognises that some people experience barriers which prevent them entering work.

One of the main actions in the plan is to provide an individualised approach to employability support that is responsive to an individual's needs and takes account of personal circumstances, barriers, aptitudes and ambitions. Ensuring there are opportunities for disabled people to find and stay in work is a key element of this. The plan calls on businesses to address barriers to

work by adapting job descriptions and using innovative recruitment processes.

The Minister added:

“We don’t expect you to do this without guidance and support. Employability is not just about jobs and skills. It is about getting every aspect of Government policy – education, health, housing and communities – working together to support people into sustainable jobs. But Government cannot, and should not, do this alone. We need employers, businesses and professionals like you, to support us.”

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## Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass given go-ahead

The £135 million project is a significant development in North West Wales and will be vital in alleviating current traffic congestion and reducing journey times in the area.

After considering in detail the inspector’s report, which recommends the scheme should proceed, and following a local public inquiry and all evidence, the Welsh Government will now press ahead with making the orders for the bypass.

The 9.7km bypass will be built from the Goat roundabout on the A499/A487 junction to the Plas Menai roundabout, around Llanwnda, Dinas, Bontnewydd and Caernarfon avoiding the town centres. This route will be made up of three sections separated by new roundabouts at Meifod and Cibyn.

The next steps will see a Design and Construct contract awarded with detailed scheme design commencing in June. Construction could then start in November 2018, and be completed by spring 2021.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

It’s great news we will be pressing ahead with the Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass.

The bypass will not only help connect communities in the area through sustainable and resilient infrastructure, but also provide a vital link to the A55 and beyond to Ireland, England and Europe.

It also presents a big opportunity for local employment, workforce training and apprenticeships, especially during the construction

phase.

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport Ken Skates said:

I am pleased to announce the go-ahead for the Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass. This is a major scheme and one which will bring many benefits to the area. It will be a real boost to the region and foster conditions for sustainable economic development and employment opportunities.

The bypass will help remove traffic congestion, improve air quality and reduce noise emissions in Caernarfon, Bontnewydd and the surrounding villages resulting in healthier communities and environments. It will also provide improved links to tourist destinations in the Llŷn Peninsula and Snowdonia as well as great opportunities for active travel within and around Caernarfon by linking with surrounding communities.