

Ken Skates and automotive industry meet to discuss Welsh future

With Honda's decision to close its Swindon facility affecting some 2,000 supply jobs in Wales, and other manufacturers such as Nissan and Ford expressing a desire to look again at how they choose to operate in future, the Economy Minister was keen to ensure Welsh Government continues to do everything possible to ensure the automotive industry in Wales remains prosperous.

Speaking after the meeting, Ken Skates said:

"Today's round table meeting was part of a week of intense activity concerning Brexit and the automotive industry, which included a visit to Geneva and in-depth discussions with Aston Martin Lagonda.

It provided a welcome opportunity to discuss with the Welsh Automotive Forum and others, their concerns and hopes for the future of the automotive industry in Wales.

"There's no question that the automotive industry is experiencing a period of rapid change at present, with major technological advancement and stronger environmental standards bringing with it both challenges and opportunities.

"Add to that the potential for new tariff and non-tariff barriers and frictions and costs if the UK leaves the EU without access to the Single European Market and it's clear that this is a time of uncertainty and adjustment for the sector.

"The Welsh Government and I have been relentless supporters of the automotive industry over recent years, and today's meeting reinforces that we stand ready to support the sector as it manages the challenges ahead. Wales has the skills, the supply chain, the expertise and the appetite for innovation that can help the industry flourish here.

"What we need to see now is some direction and clarity from UK Government on the most fundamental of these issues – Brexit, and ensuring it takes a form which does not adversely affect an industry which has long been a vital part of the Welsh economy. In the meantime, however, we cannot stand still as we look to ensure Wales plays a full and active part in the automotive industry of tomorrow."

The industry in Wales comprises of around 150 companies employing nearly 19,000 people – 13% of the Welsh manufacturing workforce, generating over £3 billion worth of revenue and manufacturing around 30% of the 2.7 million engines produced in the UK.

Finance Minister calls for transparency and clarity ahead of UK government's Spring Statement

Finance Minister, Rebecca Evans, said:

"Today is another opportunity for the Chancellor to confirm, once and for all, that austerity is over for good. We have weathered 9 long years of austerity and it's now time to see some clear evidence that this statement is true.

"Last month I pressed the Chief Secretary of the Treasury for clarity on a number of financial issues relating to Brexit, particularly with the threat of a no-deal Brexit still on the horizon. It is absolutely vital that Wales is at the heart of decision-making and is able to prepare for the impact of Brexit.

"I want reassurances from the Chancellor that more funding will come to Wales in the event of a no-deal Brexit and a commitment for meaningful dialogue between the UK government and devolved nations about these challenges.

"I will also be looking for the Chancellor to use the Spring Statement as an opportunity to provide more details about the forthcoming spending review."

Glastir Woodland and Restoration schemes open to bids

The schemes which provide financial support for new planting and restoration of woodland will be open to bids from the 1st April.

Glastir is the Welsh Government's flagship sustainable land management scheme, and has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government. It pays for the delivery of specific environmental goods and services aimed at:

- combating climate change
- improving water management
- maintaining and enhancing biodiversity

The Glastir Woodland Creation Scheme was set up to increase the area of new woodlands in Wales by offering financial assistance for new tree planting. It can also contribute to the First Minister's commitment to create a new National Forest for Wales.

The Glastir Woodland Restoration Scheme enables woodlands infected by *Phytophthora ramorum* and stands of larch, to be replanted to help slow down the spread of the disease. When a woodland is clear-felled, the scheme provides an opportunity to diversify tree species to increase resilience to climate change and damage from pests and diseases.

Together, they have delivered 1,081 hectares of new planting and 813 hectares of restocking, with hundreds more awaiting approval.

Lesley Griffiths said:

"The Glastir schemes provide support for a range of proposals which will improve the management of our natural resources and will contribute to the well-being of our rural communities.

"Forestry is not just good for our environment and well-being. It is also good for our economy. Well-managed woodlands can provide a continuous, sustainable supply of timber which is why we want to encourage better management of our existing woodlands across Wales.

"Disease has been an unprecedented challenge on the public estate but Natural Resources Wales has responded well. Where trees have had to be felled we are replanting with more resilient species in order to develop healthier and more varied woodlands. These will provide a greater variety of trees to produce high quality Welsh wood and forests as well as reducing their vulnerability to disease in the future."

Yesterday the Minister made an Oral Statement in the Senedd outlining the Welsh Government's plans to address the challenges the environment faces and the work underway to support forestry in Wales.

Well-managed woodlands can provide a continuous, sustainable supply of timber which is why we want to encourage better management of our existing woodlands across Wales. We have already committed £5 million of RDP funding towards our very popular Timber Business Investment Scheme and we have committed a further £2 million towards a 4th round of funding which we opened for

expressions of interest on 1 February. The scheme provides capital funding for improvements which add value to forests for woodland management activities, timber harvesting and timber processing.

The Welsh Government is committed to accelerating woodland creation and our refreshed Strategy gives guidance on the kinds of trees and woodlands we need in Wales and clear direction to woodland managers.

Lesley Griffiths added:

“By working with others, our aim is to optimise the multiple environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits the woodland estate provides.

“Woodlands can make an important contribution to public goods such as carbon sequestration and woodland biodiversity. We are also exploring ideas for integrating woodlands and forestry into resilient farm businesses. This can tie in with the creation of a national forest.”

Minister confirms appointments to the Education Workforce Council

The Education Workforce Council (Appointments and Membership) (Wales) Regulations 2014 provides for membership of the EWC to consist of not less than 14 members. Seven members would be directly appointed by Welsh Ministers and seven members would be appointed by Welsh Ministers having being nominated by organisations listed in the Schedule of the Education Workforce Council (Appointments and Membership) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Obtaining Council members through nominated and direct appointments helps to ensure that all sectors of the wider education workforce are fairly represented.

The 14 members, of whom 8 are new appointments and 6 reappointments, will start their four year term on 1 April 2019.

The members are:

Direct appointments

Reappointed:

- Angela Jardine
- Kevin Pascoe
- Berni Tyler

New Appointments:

- Dr Gwawr Taylor
- Ann Pitman Direct
- Rosemary Lait

Nominated appointments

Reappointed:

- Paul Croke (Colegau Cymru)
- Clare Jones (National Education Union – National Union Teachers section)
- Jane Setchfield (National Association of Schoolmasters *Union* of Women Teachers)

New Appointments:

- David Williams (Principal Youth Officers Group) new appointment
- Kelly Edwards (National Training Federation for Wales) new appointment
- Eithne Hughes (Association of School and College Leaders) new appointment
- Stephen Drowley (Education Training Standards Board) new appointment
- Ian Roberts (Association Education Directors Wales) new appointment

The Minister said:

“I’m delighted to confirm the appointments of the members of the Education Workforce Council. All will play an important role in maintaining and raising teaching standards and ensuring our young people receive the very best learning and support.”

These appointments were made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

These posts are not remunerated and members of the ECW are not paid, however, they are reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence costs.

Members have a typical time commitment of 10-12 days per year.

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for the political activity of appointees (if any declared) to be published.

- Stephen Drowley has carried out political activities in the last five years that relate to canvassing on behalf of the Labour party
- Kevin Pascoe has carried out political activities in the last five years

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- Clare Jones has carried out political activities in the last five years that relate to packing and delivering envelopes on behalf of the Labour party
 - Kelly Edwards has carried out political activities in the last five years that relate to being a member of the Labour party.
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Wales making connections at London Book Fair 2019

London Book fair is one of the most significant global marketplaces for publishing and takes place this week (12-14 March) at Olympia, London.

Presence at the London Book fair provides a platform to showcase the distinct and unique culture of Wales to a global audience allowing writers, translators, publishers to present their work, strike business deals, make new connections and network.

The Wales at London Book Fair stand is co-ordinated by seven Welsh organisations working across the literature and publishing sectors (Arts Council Wales/ Wales Arts International, British Council, Literature Across Frontiers, Literature Wales, Wales Literature Exchange, Wales PEN Cymru Welsh Books Council).

The stand showcases the work of 14 publishers from Wales, as well as our thriving bilingual magazine culture. The publishers showcased on the stand are: Accent; Atebol; Cinnamon; Cyhoeddiadau Barddas; Dref Wen; Firefly; Gomer; Graffeg; Honno; Parthian; Rily; Seren; University of Wales Press and Y Lolfa.

To coincide with UNESCO Year of Indigenous Languages, this year, the Wales stand has partnered with Publishing Scotland to provide a seminar on the subject of indigenous languages and identities in Wales, Scotland and Europe.

Translation and cultural exchange are key themes of the Wales presence this year. A launch event on the final day of the fair showcases the exciting new project of Parthian Books; with the help of a grant from Creative Europe, as well as support from the Arts Council of Wales, British Council, Welsh Books Council, , and Literature Across Frontiers, Parthian are translating several books from European languages into English.

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Lord Elis-Thomas said:

“I’m delighted that the Welsh Government has been able to provide

funding for Wales' presence at this prestigious book fair, and keep up the momentum of developing the publishers' international profile. Wales has a lot to celebrate, share and promote in both languages and never has it been more important to bridge Wales culturally, digitally and physically to the world."