

“The World can follow Wales’ example on building a better society” – Eluned Morgan

The minister was speaking during the first day of her first overseas visit as Wales’ first ever International Relations Minister.

It’s also the first time a Welsh Government minister has visited the World Bank in the USA’s capital city.

During a keynote speech, the minister set out the way that the Welsh Government is ensuring that when making policy there is an understanding that most aspects of life interact with each other. There is no point in focusing just on what happens in the classroom if the child has not eaten or goes home to a cold home.

The unique Welsh law – the Well-being of Future Generations Act, is a pioneering legislative initiative designed to ensure that all parts of government and wider Welsh society also act in ways that promote the long term benefits of Welsh citizens.

The minister said:

“I strongly believe that Wales has a unique story to tell.

“In 1999 Wales became one of the first nations in the world to put sustainable development at the heart of its constitution, and the World’s First Fair Trade Nation.

“Through the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, we’ve introduced a law which is designed to ensure all parts of Wales act in ways that will ensure the promotion of the long term benefits for generations to come. This is, I believe, the most ambitious and far-reaching piece of legislation that the Welsh Government has ever delivered.

“As the world is calling out for ways to localize and strengthen progress at a more local level, I believe Wales can provide a blueprint for others to follow.”

Welsh tax plans to build momentum in 2019

This year's plan focuses on developing our approach to taxation in Wales – exploring the scope for continued improvement to tax administration, while further strengthening the links between tax and policy areas, and ensuring taxes remain fair throughout this process.

Some of the highlights of the 2019 work plan are:

- Developing tax policy – we will develop our proposals to build the Welsh tax base, while continuing to make the case for devolution of air passenger duty to Wales, taking forward our consideration of land and property taxation, and continuing to work with the UK government on disposable taxes and other environmental taxes. We will also explore further the funding options for social care in the future, progress our plans to devolve powers for a vacant land tax to Wales, and develop our thinking on a tourism tax.
- Building a coordinated approach to tax policy – ensuring Welsh taxes are working effectively is a key priority in 2019. Following the successful introduction of land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax last year, and with Welsh rates of income tax going live on 6 April, we will continue to work closely with the Welsh Revenue Authority and HMRC. As part of our coordinated approach we will also consider options for developing information resources, including data sharing and analysis to strengthen the evidence base for tax policy decisions and improved tax administration in Wales.
- Engaging, communicating and capacity building – continuing to build on our open and transparent tax policy making process remains a key priority. We will develop a long-term plan to build capacity on tax policy and administration, and work with the UK and other devolved governments to share best practice and address common challenges. We want to help Welsh taxpayers understand our approach to taxation and be clear how their taxes are supporting public services in Wales.

Minister for Finance and Trefnydd said:

“Our annual tax policy work plan is an important part of the communication process, building on what we have achieved and learned so far and identifying areas we want to explore further.

“I am committed to ensuring our tax policy is developed in an open and transparent manner and this plan is an invitation to anyone who wishes to contribute to our thinking, and help shape Welsh tax policy.”

The Welsh Government's tax policy is being developed in line with the

principles set out in our Tax Policy Framework. A report summarising the main findings will be published alongside the draft Budget in the autumn.

[Tax policy work plan 2019](#)

Welsh Government make £2m available for West Wales Arfor pilot

The Arfor Innovation fund, a product of the Welsh Government's budget agreement with Plaid Cymru, will target support in Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, particularly in areas where there is a high percentage of Welsh speakers and an inflow of older people and outflow of younger people. It will focus on those areas where the foundational and agricultural economy are of vital importance and in market and university towns where low incomes remain an issue.

The funding being made available to the four local authorities will look to facilitate new and innovative methods to supporting economic development in the region, by:

- promoting enterprise and supporting business growth in areas with a high proportion of Welsh speakers
- generating more and better paid jobs to retain local people in these areas and encourage those who have left to return
- promoting the wide ranging value of the use of Welsh and bilingualism in business creating a vibrant sense of place
- encouraging the businesses and people who move to rural areas to value and use the Welsh language

In addition to supporting a range of projects within each local authority area, the nature of the scheme will allow for a collaborative approach to projects where the benefits can be felt across council boundaries. An evaluation of the programme will be commissioned to capture the success or otherwise of individual interventions and best practice from the programme of works.

In announcing this new programme today, Economy Minister Ken Skates said:

“This innovative programme, based on extensive discussion with local authority partners, aims to test out new approaches to promote entrepreneurship, business growth and community resilience in the four local authority areas, with a focus on promoting the use of the Welsh language.

The Economic Action Plan has been very clear on the need for Welsh

Government to support all parts of our economy to drive up skills, encourage innovation and identify and utilise emerging technology. I am therefore pleased to provide £2 million funding over a two year period to support this initiative which will help guide and inform future activity in areas where we know the rural and foundational economies are of paramount importance, our Welsh speaking and rural heartlands.”

Gwynedd County Council will co-ordinate the programme on behalf of the four local authorities to minimise costs. Speaking on behalf of the Arfor partnership, Gwynedd Council Leader Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn said:

“Today’s announcement is a significant step forward in our joint efforts to build a prosperous and sustainable future for the people and communities of Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Gwynedd and a vibrant future for the Welsh language across the region.

This initial investment is the culmination of several months of joint-working between the Leaders of the four Arfor councils and the Welsh Government. With the funding now in place, we can move forward together to explore ways in which we can ensure a vibrant and diverse economy that includes new and better paid work for local people which will, in turn, support the Welsh language.

We very much hope that this will be the first phase of a project that will both boost the Arfor economy and contribute towards the government’s target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.”

Minister for International Relations and Welsh language visits the US to boost trade with Wales’ most important business partner

The United States is Wales’ largest inward investor, with some 270 US-owned companies currently based in Wales employing almost 50,000 people. America is also one of Wales’ top trading partners, importing £2.3 billion worth of goods from Wales last year.

During the 4 day visit, the Minister will hold meetings with US companies who have a presence in Wales or are considering expanding to Wales. The minister

will also meet with senior political representatives in Washington, New York and Philadelphia as part of our commitment to strengthen relations between the 2 countries.

The meetings are designed to identify and promote export opportunities for Welsh businesses and meet with senior business reps who are considering investing in Wales – either new FDI or expansion plans – particularly important post-Brexit.

During the visit, the minister will address an audience at the World Bank in Washington on the 2030 Development Agenda and talk about Wales' ambitious and far-reaching Future Generations Act. This is the first time a Welsh Government Minister has visited the World Bank in Washington DC. The minister will then host a St David's Day reception on Capitol Hill for key political figures and business leaders.

2019 is the UNESCO year of Indigenous Languages, and on Thursday the minister will be speaking at the United Nations in New York on the unique approach taking in Wales to promote and encourage use of the Welsh language, including through our new school curriculum which proposes to teach Welsh as a first language to all learners. The minister will point out that Welsh is still very much a living language in a society dominated by a global language, which in itself is testament to the remarkable story of the survival of the language against all the odds, at a time when other Celtic languages have declined.

The minister will celebrate St David's day at a joint event with the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in New York in honour of Catherine Zeta Jones.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Eluned Morgan, said:

"This will be my first international visit in my new role and forms part of our continued efforts to promote Wales, and its many benefits, to the world. We have always been an outward looking nation. We recognise that we have a great deal to gain by working with others. Our international links enrich our country economically, socially and culturally, but we also have much to offer the world too.

"In the current international climate it is more important than ever to maintain close links with one of our most important markets. We are demonstrating that Brexit does not mean we are turning our backs on Europe and the world. The US is the 3rd largest export market for companies in Wales and now more than ever we need to make sure we are doing all we can to maintain these strong links and explore new possibilities for the future.

"Wales has so much to offer the world, from our rich culture and heritage, to our outstanding landscapes. We also have a unique story to tell in the way we are placing sustainability at the heart

of all that we do. I believe Wales can provide the blueprint for others to follow in emphasising and protecting our culture and communities, and the environment. We are tackling the challenges of today, while also laying the foundations for a sustainable future. This is something we are fiercely proud of and something I believe we can all learn from.”

First Minister marks start of a week of St David's Day events around the world

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, will be in Brussels on Tuesday (26th February) to host a St David's Day reception and in Paris on Wednesday (27th February) to open officially the Welsh Government's new office in the city.

The Paris office is the latest in the Welsh Government's careful expansion of its presence in Europe and across the globe. Having representatives of Welsh Government in these areas significantly helps to promote Wales in order to sell Welsh goods to overseas markets, promote our tourism and higher education offers. They will also continue to help in our efforts to attract new inward investment into Wales which is increasingly challenging in the continuing climate of uncertainty surrounding Brexit.

The visits demonstrate Wales' commitment to maintaining relations with Europe, with the First Minister reiterating that whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, Wales will continue to develop longstanding friendships with countries and regions in Europe.

Speaking ahead of his visit, the First Minister said:

“Our relationship with our closest neighbours in the EU remains especially important to us. Wales is a European nation and always will be.

“Around 60% of our manufactured exports go to the EU. We need to do all we can to sustain that business and preserve jobs. We now have offices in 5 European cities, which put us in a stronger position to strengthen our links with Europe during this crucial junction in our political and social history.”

The Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language, Eluned Morgan, will be in North America this week in a bid to boost trade and raise Wales'

profile.

The visit includes a St David's Day reception on Capitol Hill, as well as meetings with current and potential investors in Wales and an address to the World Bank in Washington DC.

The Welsh Government will also be using St David's Day to promote Wales right across the world, with events planned in Dubai, China, Japan and Canada to name a few.

Much closer to home, commuters in London will be greeted by a Welsh choir and have the opportunity to sample Welsh food and drink at Paddington Station this week. Welsh food will also be a feature at Borough Market and at Manchester Piccadilly on St David's Day.

The First Minister added:

"It's great to see the events taking place in the UK and beyond to celebrate St David's Day and promote Wales across the globe.

"It's important we make the most of the opportunity St David's Day presents to tell Wales' story to the world – we are a progressive, open and welcoming country, a nation alive with creativity and innovation, and supportive of businesses and people. As a country we have so much to offer and we will continue to work hard to sustain and develop that reputation in Europe and beyond."