

Welsh and UK Governments host key Brexit meeting with farmers, the fishing industry and business

During the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary will outline her commitment to actively promote the interests of these sectors to ensure they continue to thrive and so we can safeguard and enhance on our environmental achievements after leaving the EU.

The meeting, which is being held in Cardiff, will discuss the practical issues facing the sectors as we approach EU exit, the preparation being undertaken and how powers returning from the EU should be exercised in the future.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, Cabinet Secretary said:

“It is now under a year before we leave the European Union. Brexit brings with it both challenges and opportunities and this is particularly the case for our valued rural economy. That is why it is so important that we engage and listen to partners as we prepare to leave the European Union.

“Today’s meeting is an important opportunity to look at the interests of Wales in relation to those sectors across devolved and non-devolved areas. This engagement builds on the regular roundtable discussions I have held with key partners over the last two years.

I am committed to working with partners as we develop proposals for land management post-Brexit so we can ensure a resilient and thriving industry in Wales after we leave the EU.”

Plans to grow Welsh research published in Reid review

Julie James emphasised the Welsh Government’s commitment to implement the proposals with funds secured alongside the UK Government as part of the post-Brexit settlement.

Last year, we asked Professor Graeme Reid of University College London to

lead the review to look at the strengths, gaps and future potential to sustain and grow strong research and innovation activity in Wales.

The aim of the review was to look at the Welsh Government's overall investment into research and innovation and consider how it is making a difference and what we can do to improve things for the future.

The review builds upon and is informed by two previous reviews (Diamond and Hazelkorn) and provides clear analysis of current and future challenges and opportunities in Wales and across the UK. The report makes three recommendations including the establishment of;

- a new Welsh Research and Innovation Office in London to increase the visibility and influence of Welsh research;
- an additional fund of £30m a year, to incentivise researchers to win greater funding from business and from outside Wales; and
- a single overarching brand for its research and innovation funding to increase the visibility, coherence and impact of Welsh Government-funded research and innovation in Wales.

The Leader of the House said Welsh Government would accept the report's recommendations in principle and will consider how they can be implemented alongside responses to the current technical consultation on the new proposed Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales, as well as the post-Brexit funding settlement for the nations and regions of the UK, and the UK Government's plans to rebalance science spending across the country in pursuit of accelerating regional growth and productivity.

Julie James said,

"I would like to thank Professor Reid for his hard work in producing this extensive piece of work and would pay tribute too to the distinguished panel of advisers who assisted him.

"I was pleased to read that Professor Reid found research and innovation in Wales to be strong, with many examples of national and international impact and success. It is essential that we build on this success and grow the sector, as we respond to the changing UK research landscape and the potential consequences of Brexit.

"We do acknowledge however that, working across sectors, we can do more to increase the visibility and influence of Welsh research. We will therefore take forward the recommendation on a dedicated London presence to promote Welsh Research and Innovation immediately."

Professor Reid said,

"Given continuing pressures on public finance, significant reforms to higher and further education, and fast-approaching changes in UK

and EU funding, this was an opportune moment to review Government-funded research and innovation in Wales, and I was delighted to have the opportunity to lead that work.

“The growing UKRI budget now presents major opportunities for Welsh businesses and universities to win sizeable amounts of additional funding, which can help ensure Wales increases its competitiveness in the research and innovation sector.”

[Brexit funding gap could hit Welsh colleges](#)

The Minister was speaking following a visit to Coleg Gwent’s Newport campus on Monday where she met those who have benefitted from EU funded courses and projects.

Over the past 10 years alone, FE Institutes in Wales have reported¹ that they have been involved in the delivery of EU funded projects worth a total value of nearly £600m, made up of EU funds and match funding from public and private sources.

These involve EU backed programmes and projects which

- enable FE Institutes to deliver subsidised training to employers to support employees jobs and growth;
- support college and school learners at risk of becoming NEET
- support rural skills training; and
- give learners the opportunity to gain work experience or learn abroad.

Over the last decade, projects supported by EU funds in Wales have helped 81,400 people into work and supported 282,600 people in Wales to gain qualifications. The projects include the £19m Upskilling@Work scheme backed with EU funding of £10.8m which is led by Coleg Gwent and Coleg Y Cymoedd. It provides work-based training programmes to develop the skills and careers of over 8,000 employees in companies across South East Wales.

In addition, FE institutions are helping to deliver much of the training for the Welsh Government’s Apprenticeship programme. Backed by EU funding of £206m, Apprenticeships are helping people to learn while they earn a wage and gain the skills and competences they need in the workplace.

The Welsh Government wants guarantees from Whitehall that EU funding will be replaced after the UK leaves the EU and for decisions on how it is invested to continue to be made in Wales.

The Welsh Government has also called for the UK to participate in a range of European co-operation programmes after Brexit including ERASMUS+, an EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, to support learning from best practice in Europe and beyond.

Eluned Morgan said:

“Further Education Institutions are central to Wales’ communities, providing the training and skills that are essential to the growth of our economy. Over the past decade Welsh colleges have benefitted from hundreds of millions of pounds of EU investment that has made a real difference to people’s lives.

“The UK voted to leave the EU, but no one in Wales voted for our colleges to lose funding that supports people, businesses and the economy. The UK Government needs to give a guarantee that this vital EU funding is replaced and continues to support people through our colleges, many of which are in some of our most disadvantaged communities.

“Our FE sector faces a double Brexit whammy – losing EU funding and having to meet the challenge of meeting potential skills gaps and changes to our economy as we leave the EU. The Welsh Government will back the sector all the way, but the UK Government needs to meet the promise made that Wales would not lose a penny due to Brexit.”

Iestyn Davies, Chief Executive of ColegauCymru, said:

“There has never been a more important time to make sure that Further Education Colleges continue to receive the levels of funding that allow them to invest in learners, communities and facilities to face the challenges ahead.

“As the UK prepares to leave the EU, the life-changing opportunities for learners to experience work placements in European partner countries via Erasmus+ must be maintained.

“In the absence of a clear outline of the UK Government’s proposed ‘Shared Prosperity Fund’, the EU funding that Wales would have received must be replaced and guaranteed in full by the UK Treasury. Likewise, assurance must also be given by the UK Government that all mechanisms relating to this funding will stay in Wales to ensure continuity. This will provide the assurances necessary to business, institutions, and most importantly learners and apprentices.”

Free flu vaccinations for Wales' care home workers

NHS healthcare staff are already offered flu vaccination by NHS employers as part of occupational health services. Sustained, year on year progress has been made in increasing uptake.

Last winter, to the end of March 2018, there were 71 reported flu outbreaks in Wales, of which 42 (60%) happened in care homes. Studies have shown that the uptake of flu immunisation in staff in care homes is low, and that they have an increased risk of catching flu.

Until now, responsibility for offering flu vaccine to social care staff has rested with individual employers. Despite having high flu vaccination rates in residents, flu can spread easily within care homes and can be passed from staff to residents when the staff member has mild or even no symptoms. This is partly because, as people age, they do not produce as good an immune response to vaccination. This makes vaccination of staff caring for frail, older people even more important.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends that healthcare and social care workers receive a flu vaccination to help protect vulnerable patients and residents in their care, from the effects of flu.

Health and Social Services Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“As we prepare for the flu season each year, it is important that we maximise resilience within health and social care services to enable them to manage better during times of exceptional seasonal pressure.

“Vaccination of staff has been shown to be effective in reducing the spread of disease and patient mortality in care home settings. It can also help to ensure business continuity by reducing flu related staff illness and the need to provide locum cover. The social care sector has a crucial role to play in preventing hospital admissions over the winter period, particularly for older people.

“Therefore, for winter 2018-19, I have taken the decision to offer flu vaccination to staff working in adult residential care and nursing homes, at no cost to themselves or their employers, through community pharmacies on the NHS.”

This action is being taken alongside a significant expansion of the

children's vaccination programme. Next winter, the programme will be extended by two additional school years to include school years 5 and 6. This means that all primary school aged children from reception class to year 6 will be offered the flu vaccine from 2018-19.

The Health Secretary added:

"It is really important that people more at risk of developing complications from flu, such as pregnant women, those aged 65 and over, and people with long term health conditions, receive the vaccine. In 2017-18, take up of the flu vaccine in these groups, was higher than ever. That is good news, but we cannot be complacent, and our flu campaign for 2018-19 will continue to stress the real benefits of getting the flu jab."

[Heléna Herklots appointed Wales' next Older People's Commissioner](#)

Heléna is currently Chief Executive of Carers UK, the national membership charity for the UK's 6.5 million carers. She has had over 30 years' experience of supporting and working with older people. She was awarded a CBE in the 2017 New Year's Honours list for her work with carers.

Created by the Welsh Government in 2008, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales is the independent voice and champion for older people aged 60 and over across Wales. The Commissioner's work is driven by what older people say matters most to them, and ensures their voices are at the heart of all the commissioner does.

The Commissioner:

- promotes awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales;
- challenges discrimination against older people in Wales;
- encourages best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales;
- reviews the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

The Commissioner has a wide range of legal powers to help deliver the change older people want and need to see.

The Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"I'm very pleased to announce the appointment of Heléna Herklots as Wales' next Commissioner for Older People.

“The Commissioner is the voice and champion for older people across Wales, listening to their views and concerns and acting in their best interests. I look forward to working with Heléna in her new role.”

The appointment has been made by the First Minister of Wales, following a full public appointments process, which involved representatives of older people as well as a group of cross-party Assembly Members.

Heléna replaces the current Commissioner, Sarah Rochira.

Heléna Herklots said:

“It is a great honour to be appointed the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales. I am looking forward to working with older people across Wales in this vital role to protect and champion older people’s rights.”

Heléna’s appointment is for an initial four year term, with the new Commissioner starting in the role in August. The Commissioner’s role is remunerated at £90,000 per annum.