

Your last chance to have a say on plans to strengthen local government

The Green Paper consultation, launched in March, sets out proposals to explore the possibility of creating larger, stronger councils and sets out for debate, possible options on how this can be achieved – from voluntary mergers, to a phased approach with early adopters merging first, followed by other authorities, to a comprehensive merger programme.

The proposals aim to ensure councils are able to continue to deliver excellent essential services by providing the support, recognition and reward for the crucial role they play in our democracy.

Alun Davies said:

“Wales needs strong, effective, empowered local authorities which can weather continued austerity and build local democratic structures fit for future generations. I do not believe that our local authorities, as currently constituted, can fully play this role; and I am not alone.

“The next steps we are proposing are game-changing. We have the chance to create new structures to which we can devolve additional powers and with which we can protect the roles and jobs of public service workers. Only then can we deliver excellence in public service, and ensure democratic accountability and decision making within those structures is delivered as close to the citizen as possible.”

We have already received many responses to our consultation, from an array of individuals and organisations, but the Cabinet Secretary said he was keen to hear from as wide a section of society as possible.

Alun Davies continued:

“The consultation closes on 12 June and I would urge everyone who, like me, cares about public service and local accountability, to get involved.”

Llanberis company growth a real success story

DMM Engineering was founded in 1981 to manufacture mountaineering and industrial safety products and at the time had four employees. Since then DMM has experienced steady and sustained growth and now employs more than 190 people with a turnover of over £12.5 million and exports accounting for more than 60% of the company's sales.

The Cabinet Secretary visited DMM yesterday to celebrate the completion of their investment in a state of the art CNC machining facility which is a key part in extending and improving their manufacturing capability.

Welsh Government support has enabled DMM to invest over £2.5 million in plant and buildings in the last five years and seen the workforce grow from 150 to 195 employees.

DMM's C.E.O. Richard Rust said:

"Despite uncertain times, as a Group we are continuing to invest in expanding our factory capacity & capability. The fantastic support we have received from the Welsh Government has enabled us to grow our turnover by more than 25% and, more importantly increase our employment levels and skills."

DMM continues to grow and each year the percentage of goods manufactured at their Llanberis factory increases. Ten years ago, around 50% of sales were exported to 41 countries, DMM now sell into 55 countries.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"DMM Engineering is a real success story and I am pleased Welsh Government support has enabled the company to grow, make a significant contribution to the local economy and continue to reach out to a worldwide market.

"Our new Economic Action Plan ensures we will support high value manufacturing companies such as DMM who commit to growth, fair work, and up-skilling their work force. It offers a simplified, unified and competitive package of support for companies who commit to our economic contract ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

"A key part of the plan is the approach to developing regional economies such as North West Wales to ensure prosperity falls more evenly across Wales.

"I congratulate DMM on their success to date and wish them well for

continued growth going forward.”

All Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone to end

The Cabinet Secretary has taken this decision based on an updated veterinary risk assessment conducted by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) which found the risk of incursion from wild birds has reduced from High to Low. Similarly, the risk to poultry is also Low.

The Prevention Zone was introduced on 25 January to mitigate the risk of infection following three separate findings in England of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N6 in Wild Birds.

In Wales, there has been only one finding in a wild bird this year. There have been no cases of H5N6 avian influenza in poultry in the UK this year and the poultry sector retains its OIE disease free status.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“In January, I took action and declared the whole of Wales an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone in response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N6 findings in England. This was a precautionary measure to minimise the risk of infection to poultry here in Wales.

“We have since been monitoring the situation closely and the latest risk assessment by APHA has concluded that the risk has reduced from High to Low for wild birds and the risk to poultry is also Low.

“Based on this evidence-based veterinary advice I am pleased to announce that the current All Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone will come to an end with immediate effect. Whilst this is welcome news it is important to remember avian influenza remains a constant and real threat to our poultry and other captive birds.”

Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Christianne Glossop added:

“I cannot stress enough the need for all keepers of poultry and other captive birds to remain vigilant for signs of the disease and to continue to practice the very highest levels of biosecurity.

“If anyone suspects disease they should contact the Animal and

Plant Health Agency immediately. Also, we can all play a part in supporting the ongoing surveillance by reporting any findings of dead wild birds to the GB helpline.

“I would also like to remind all poultry keepers with 50 birds or more they must register their flocks on the Poultry Register and strongly encourage all poultry keepers, including those with fewer than 50 birds, to register. This will ensure they can be contacted immediately, via email or text update, in an avian disease outbreak, enabling them to protect their flock at the earliest opportunity and minimise the spread of infection.”

Information on the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone, guidance and latest developments are all available on the [Welsh Government website](#).

To report any findings of dead wild birds please contact the GB helpline on 03459 335577.

[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."

[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.