

Talks to further support bus industry in Wales

Welsh Government, local authorities, bus service providers and users will meet in Swansea today to discuss how to further develop an improved, more sustainable bus industry for Wales.

At Wales' second Bus Summit, Transport Secretary Ken Skates will also announce £3.5m for local authorities to improve audio-visual equipment on board buses and real-time technology at bus stops.

The summit, to be held in the Liberty Stadium, will build on the successes of last year's. Bringing all interested parties together, it will revisit the purpose of the first bus summit, provide an overview of the activities that have now taken place in support of the industry and provide a clear direction for the bus industry in Wales.

Speaking ahead of the summit, the Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

"I called the first summit last year because 2016 saw mixed fortunes for the bus industry in Wales. A five point plan in 2017 I introduced sought to stabilise and support the industry in the short term.

"This summit will be looking at longer term solutions we need to deliver a quality service in which our passengers can have confidence.

"This is an opportunity for us to share ideas and look to the future of the industry, define what we want our bus services to deliver and understand how we can better work together in order to deliver the quality, sustainable services communities across Wales expect and deserve.

"The money I am announcing today will help provide tangible results for passengers to enjoy. It will speed up the implementation of on-bus audio-visual equipment, including technology to bring on-board 'next stop' announcements. It will also make possible improvements to related infrastructure, such as stops, shelters, signs and flags, timetable displays and accessible kerbs.

"The funding demonstrates Welsh Government's continuing strong commitment to the bus network throughout Wales. It is a reflection of the support we give to our buses and to delivering an effective network for communities as part of an integrated, multi-modal system of public transport right across Wales.

"Local scheduled bus services are, and will continue to be, the

foundation of our public transport system, allowing people across Wales to get to work, hospital appointments, education and leisure activities.

“They are vital to Welsh life and actually account for around 100m passenger journeys each year, which is why this summit is so important for the healthy future of our bus industry.”

Professor Donna Mead appointed chair of Velindre NHS Trust

Professor Donna Mead OBE takes over from Rosemary Kennedy.

The Health Secretary said:

“I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Professor Donna Meade as the new chair of Velindre NHS Trust. Professor Meade brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of the NHS to this role. It is an important and challenging time for the NHS in Wales as we look to deliver a health service fit for the future and Professor Meade’s enthusiasm and knowledge will help drive that work forward.”

Donna said:

“I am absolutely delighted to be appointed Chair of Velindre NHS Trust. Like everyone who lives in Wales and beyond I am aware of the awesome reputation that all aspects of the Trust has for service delivery. I consider it a huge privilege to be given the opportunity to serve the staff, patients and blood donors who receive services from Velindre Trust. I realise that the outgoing chair, Rosemary Kennedy, has left me with very big shoes to fill and that will be one of my challenges. I am joining the Trust at an exciting time and look forward to seeing the many important plans come to fruition.”

As a registered nurse, Donna brings more than 40 years-service in the NHS and education and has been an independent member in several NHS organisations. Donna is also a trustee of St John (Cymru) Wales and a governor at Neath Port Talbot Group College. Her academic credentials include a PhD and recently received an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Swansea University.

£9.2m EU-backed programme to help Welsh industry reduce carbon emissions

The Reduced Industrial Carbon Emissions (RICE) initiative, led by the Energy Safety Research Institute (ESRI) at Swansea University in partnership with University of South Wales, will draw on world-class expertise to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from large and heavy equipment and facilities, and help drive a stronger and greener economy.

Backed with £5.9m of EU funding, RICE will work with local supply chain companies to test how carbon dioxide produced from heavy industrial processes can be innovatively used to make high value products and industrially important chemicals.

The technologies to be tested will also explore the production of green hydrogen, which can be used to fuel cars, other modes of transport, and energy production processes, further helping to reduce our carbon footprint.

As part of the project, large-scale demonstration systems will be set up with global steel manufacturer Tata Steel, as well as Welsh Water, to support the testing of technologies that can capture carbon dioxide and convert it into high-end products such as pure proteins for animal feed and DHA omega-3 fatty acids for human use.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs said:

“As a Government, we are committed to addressing both the threat and impact of climate change and making the most of the opportunities. If we are to meet our climate change targets, we and our partners must work innovatively with industry to develop new cutting-edge, innovative processes and technologies that have the potential to significantly reduce carbon emissions across Wales, creating a cleaner environment for existing and future generations.”

The initiative is also expected to lead to the creation of new businesses and employment in the region.

Professor Andrew Barron said:

“Industry is one of the largest emitter of carbon dioxide emissions in Wales, suggesting that decarbonising industrial processes is one of the most impactful way to reach our own and the Paris climate agreement targets. Working with industry, RICE will test and drive the use of low-carbon technologies and also facilitate the creation

of new industries which can maximise these next generation technologies to provide significant employment opportunities.”

Work underway on Cardiff Transport Interchange

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates was joined by Cardiff Council Leader, Huw Thomas, Network Rail Wales' Route Managing Director (Acting), Bill Kelly, and Chief Executive of Rightacres Property Company, Paul McCarthy on a visit to the site.

The Metro Delivery Partnership has been established to drive forward progress of Cardiff's Integrated Transport Hub, which includes both the Bus Station, upgrading the Central Station and improving access for bicycles, pedestrians, cars etc.

And it has been further cemented by a collaborative working agreement, signed by the Welsh Government, Cardiff Council, Network Rail and developer, Rightacres, to help ensure a co-ordinated and partnership led approach to delivering a modern and integrated metro system for South Wales.

The Welsh Government recently acquired the site for the new Interchange from Cardiff Council for £15m, including the rights to the original design, transport analysis, ground conditions, utility information and architectural principles.

The new Transport Interchange will be much more than just a bus station and will include 300 apartments specifically designed for the rental market, 80,000 sq. FT of Grade A office space and related car parking. The bus station itself will include 14 stands for buses and coaches. The project is scheduled to complete by mid-2021.

The bus station and interchange is just one element of the wider hub. Others developments include:

- New offices, residential and leisure facilities in the Central Quay area
- Improvements to and around the Cardiff Central Station to improve access for pedestrians, train and Metro passengers;
- Increased space for Metro lines;
- Bringing coach services back into Cardiff city centre;
- Increased space for coaches, car parking, a new bicycle hub in Central Quay and 1000 cycle spaces, south and north of the railway line.
- Increased passenger capacity at Cardiff Central Station to make it a fitting gateway to the capital city of Wales.

Economy and Transport Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“I am pleased that following the Welsh Government’s acquisition of the Interchange Site, we have been able to move quickly to the start of construction on this vital project.

“As a Welsh Government we are committed to creating modern, integrated metro networks that put users right at their heart. Working with our partners we want to provide world class, accessible public transport that encourages the modal shift we need and sparks inclusive economic growth across wider geographical regions.

“The Cardiff Central interchange is key to our wider vision for the South Wales Metro and we are proud to be working with Cardiff Council, Network Rail and Right Acres, under the terms of our newly agreed collaboration agreement, to make it a reality.

“I am proud that Welsh Government involvement in this partnership is helping to deliver solutions that are firmly focussed on economic growth, and I am confident this will help attract wider investment. It is a model I’m keen to explore in other areas of Wales, too.”

Leader of Cardiff Council, Cllr Huw Thomas said:

“By working together, all of the partners are now in a position to move this project forwards. A huge amount of work has taken place since last May to ensure this development can be built on a fully commercial basis, and through the Welsh Government’s involvement we can now secure Grade A offices as part of the final mixed-use scheme. This gives us an excellent opportunity to secure the major inward-investment project that we have all been working towards for some time.”

Bill Kelly, acting route managing director for Wales and Borders, said:

“I was proud to sign the Metro Delivery Partnership agreement. The railway helps to connect people, businesses and communities, as well as supporting economic growth.

“We will continue to work with the Welsh Government and other partners to deliver for passengers and the people of Wales.”

£4.7m funding boost for Holyhead

The funding will support the construction of new business units in Penrhos and the reconstruction of Holyhead's historic Market Hall.

The £3.9m development on the former Heliport site of Penrhos Industrial Estate will provide more than 2,800m² (30,000 square feet) of office, light industrial and storage space for businesses and will support Anglesey's growing low carbon energy sector.

Led by Ynys Môn Council, the project is funded by £2.3m of EU funds in a joint venture with the Welsh Government, with £1.5m of investment provided by Economy Secretary Ken Skates.

Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford said:

"This investment will help ensure Holyhead has suitable infrastructure in place to enable businesses to flourish in the growing low-carbon sector and create prosperity for North Wales"

Holyhead's historic Market Hall will receive more than £818,000 to complete its redevelopment into a modern information, business and community centre, housing the town centre library. The investment includes more than £570,000 of EU funding and builds on more than £860,000 of Welsh Government investment so far in the Market Hall project, which is being led by Ynys Môn County Council. This investment is part of the Welsh Government's £110m Building for the Future Fund.

Building for the Future is supported by £38m from the European Regional Development Fund and £16m from the Welsh Government's own targeted match fund. The programme will support business growth, create employment and increase footfall in town centres.

Housing and Regeneration Minister Rebecca Evans said:

"Building for the Future is regenerating town centres and surrounding areas in Wales by refurbishing or redeveloping derelict or under-used land and buildings and bringing them back to life.

"The redevelopment of the Market Hall will create an exciting new resource in the centre of town and contribute to work to regenerate the town centre."

Economic Development and Major Projects portfolio holder Councillor Carwyn Jones, added,

"We are determined to grow the local economy and create more job

opportunities on Anglesey. That's why we're working hard to attract private sector projects, more investment and funding which will aid regeneration on several fronts.

"There are currently an unprecedented number of major private sector projects under development on Anglesey. We want to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place so that the Island benefits from these exciting business opportunities. I'm grateful to both colleagues in Welsh Government and ERDF for working in partnership with us to provide these new business units and the exciting Market Hall project in Holyhead."

"The new Market Hall will preserve an important civic building and a significant piece of Holyhead's rich history. The refurbished building will also create a focal point for the local community and a meaningful space for its residents. It will also provide a home to a brand new library and serve as a hub to direct visitors to local tourism places of interest."