

More work to be done despite Brexit progress – Mark Drakeford

Speaking ahead of a meeting of the devolved governments and UK government, Mark Drakeford has outlined the significant issues the Welsh Government want addressed as the 2nd phase of talks begin.

Mark Drakeford said:

“The progress we saw last week is to be welcomed but there is a huge amount of hard work to be done if we are to achieve the right sort of Brexit. This is just the green light for more talks, talks that will get to the heart of what our relationship with the EU will look like after Brexit.

“As the talks move on to discuss detailed issues related to the transition and to the long-term relationship, it is vital that the devolved administrations are fully involved with the negotiations in a way we have not been to date.

“These negotiations will involve questions such as agriculture support during and after the transition period, the sort of environmental regulation we will have in future and whether the UK will continue to be part of important European programmes for education and research, such as Erasmus Plus and Horizon 2020 – all issues which are firmly within the remit of the devolved institutions.

“It’s essential that the UK government agrees a common approach to these and many other issues – not least our future access to the Single Market – with the devolved administrations in advance of the negotiations, based on a proper consideration of the evidence.”

The Finance Secretary will be at the JMC (EN) meeting with First Secretary of State, Rt Hon Damian Green MP, who will chair the meeting, and other cabinet ministers.

“We also need firm proposals from the UK government on amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill if a major constitutional battle – wasting time and energy on the part of all concerned – is to be avoided. The government needs to bring forward amendments before the bill leaves the House of Commons, as it has suggested is likely. If it does not, while we are clear that a UK-wide approach that respects devolution is the best approach, we are ready and able to put in place our own legislation: work on this has been underway for many months and everything will be in position, should it be needed.”

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's role to be expanded – Kirsty Williams

The [announcement](#) was made as the Cabinet Secretary formally accepted the recommendations made by the review of the activities of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol which was published earlier this year. The review concluded the Coleg makes a key contribution to Welsh-medium provision in the higher education sector and its remit should be expanded.

The establishment of the review was a key part of the Progressive Agreement between the First Minister and Kirsty Williams.

The Coleg will now be tasked with working with the Welsh Government to create a formal action plan to develop Welsh-medium post-16 provision over the next three years and establishing a post-16 advisory board made up of experts in the field to advise on the development of the plan and any future interventions.

Making the announcement, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“Our Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers strategy, launched in the summer, aims to develop post-compulsory education provision to support everyone, whatever their command of the language, to develop Welsh language skills for use socially and in the workplace.

“This is an important step forward to develop opportunities for all learners to study through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. I’m pleased that the Coleg will be able to take these recommendations forward and that is already engaging with the post-16 sector and developing its activities for the future.”

Delyth Evans, who chaired the task and finish group that carried out the review, said:

“I am pleased the report has been welcomed and the recommendations have all been accepted. The future for the Coleg is exciting and I am delighted the task and finish group has been able to contribute to its development and lay the foundation for future development.”

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New economic contract to drive competitiveness and growth with purpose

Prosperity for All: the Economic Action Plan sets out how the goals of growing Wales' economy and well being, whilst also reducing inequality will be achieved. It has been developed to meet the needs of business today but also to help Welsh communities and businesses to rise to the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

The Economy Secretary said:

"We live in an age of unprecedented change alongside huge opportunity. Fired by the fourth industrial revolution, the way we live, work and spend our leisure time is transforming before our eyes.

"We must get ahead of that change to equip our people, businesses and places to face the future with confidence.

"Our new economic action plan seeks to do just that.

At the heart of Prosperity for All: the Economic Action Plan is a commitment to develop a new and dynamic relationship between Government and business that is based on the principle of public investment with a social purpose.

"This will mean us introducing a new economic contract that will require businesses seeking Welsh Government support to commit to growth, fair work, reducing their carbon footprint and promoting health, up-skilling and learning in the work place. "In return, and in response to calls from the sector, the Welsh Government will provide a simplified, unified and competitive package of business support.

"This approach to economic development and prosperity will stand as a template for government support across the public and private sector, helping to develop a stronger sense of unity and purpose

The plan sets out five calls to action to help businesses overcome the key challenges of the future. These are:

- Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Headquarters – to support businesses to innovate and introduce new products and services
- Exports and Trade – to proactively support trade with the UK and the rest of the world
- High Quality Employment, Skills Development and Fair Work – to improve

our skills base and ensure work is fairly rewarded

- R&D, Automation and Digitisation – to help develop new products, automate and digitise to ensure Wales remains competitive in the fourth industrial age
- Decarbonisation – to enable more Welsh businesses to become carbon light or free

The plan recognises that to achieve maximum effectiveness, the Welsh Government must target its support to specific sectors and work across these sectors to drive the development of new skills, new business models and new infrastructure

The Welsh Government is therefore simplifying its approach around three national thematic sectors and four foundation sectors.

Evidence shows that the three chosen thematic sectors – that is Tradable Services, including Fintech services, online insurance and creative, High Value Manufacturing, including compound semiconductors and new composites manufacturing and Enablers including digital, energy efficiency and renewables. – offer particular opportunities to drive industries of the future.

Meanwhile the four Foundation Sectors of Tourism, Food, Retail and Care are crucial to the lives of people and communities across Wales and can play a huge role in unlocking the potential of better jobs closer to home. They are also areas where more effective cross government working will maximise and increase benefits.

The plan commits the Welsh Government to a five year programme of capital funding aimed at delivering projects in the most efficient and effective way.

This is expected to drive efficiencies of between 15 -20% on new projects, and taking the 2018/19 draft published budget figures for transport capital over the next 3 years as a benchmark, could drive efficiencies of up to £630m over a ten year period.

The Economy Secretary added:

“While our Economic Contract requires business to do the right things today, our Calls to Action require businesses to respond to the challenges of tomorrow. Together they will ensure the investment we provide to business delivers for the present and the future.

“And our decision to focus our support on three thematic sectors and four foundations sectors will enable us to maximise the impact of our interventions.

“A key part of the plan is recognition of the distinctive opportunities and challenges of our regional economies. Rather than a one size fits all approach we will strengthen regional

collaboration and use local intelligence to tailor national delivery, and ensure prosperity falls more evenly across Wales.

“I call upon the business community, our learning institutions, trade unions and our wider society to work with us so together we can grow our economy, build a fairer Wales and seek to deliver our ambition of prosperity for all.”

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