

# “Let’s keep up the pace on local government reform” – Mark Drakeford

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I congratulate all councillors – both new and returning – who were elected last week.

“Local government plays a vitally important role in the lives of every person in Wales. Councils provide the services which educate our children, care for the elderly, dispose of our waste and light our streets.

“Wales’ newly-elected councillors have taken on a valuable role in our society and know the many responsibilities that come with public office.

“The coming weeks will be busy as new administrations are formed and council leaders are elected. Councillors are facing many challenges but none of us must lose sight of the wider issue of local government reform.

“After I announced new proposals for local government reform last year, I have been encouraged by the willingness of leaders to engage and I’ve had some very constructive and positive conversations.

“I want to continue this dialogue and work with council leaders in the same spirit of mutual respect as we take the next steps in reforming local government in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“Inevitably, we will not always agree but I want to stress this is not an open-ended process – I will listen to different views but we will be moving forward with mandatory regional working.

“The Welsh public have heard us talking about local government reform for many years and the time has come to bring this to a long-lasting resolution.

“We have had thoughtful and well-considered responses to the White Paper consultation and I will shortly set out our next steps.

“I will be writing to council leaders over the coming weeks and am very keen to meet with them over the next few months as we discuss how we can move forward and build a solid working relationship for

the years to come.”

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## [North Wales Shortlist for new Development Bank of Wales HQ](#)

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates revealed that sites in and around the Wrexham area were being actively considered for the bank’s new headquarters.

The news comes as Finance Wales, which will evolve into the Development Bank of Wales, confirms that last year was its busiest yet in the North Wales region.

Ken Skates said:

“My decision to locate the headquarters of our new Development Bank in North Wales is part of a wider commitment we have as a Welsh Government to spread prosperity and jobs across to every region of Wales. Having the bank in North Wales will mean it is ideally located to make the most of the huge opportunities associated with the growth of the cross border Financial and Professional Services sector.

“Finance Wales is already doing great work in the North Wales area and has just confirmed that last year was its busiest yet in the region.

“We are now actively considering two potential sites in and around the Wrexham area for the Development Bank’s headquarters which we believe will allow us to build on this success.”

Giles Thorley, Chief Executive of Finance Wales said:

“The strong appetite for investment we have seen over the last year is testament to the ambition in the North Wales economy. We don’t see that as the end of the story and feel that the region has huge potential for further growth. During the year we strengthened the investment team based in North Wales and we are currently looking at further recruitment which, once complete will more than double our presence.”

“Finance Wales’s overall impact last year of £26.6m into 43 businesses is a great result but we shouldn’t be complacent. As we move forward towards the Development Bank of Wales it will be vital

that the new organisation has a strong presence in all regions as we scale up to support more micro to medium sized enterprises.”

Latest figures show that last financial year Finance Wales directly invested £7.7m in North Wales securing private sector leverage from other investors of £19m.

The Development Bank of Wales will be tasked with providing more than £1 billion of investment support to Welsh business over the next five years and will ensure micro to medium businesses in Wales have greatly improved access to finance, support services and management advice.

It will create and safeguard over 5,500 jobs a year by 2022 and will be tasked with increasing annual direct investment to £80m by that date.

The Economy Secretary confirmed that senior management will be represented at the head office, including the current Director of Risk, Compliance & Legal at Finance Wales. The Welsh Government has also agreed that any new services offered by the Development Bank that will be located in North Wales

The Development Bank remains on course to launch later this year subject to regulatory approval.

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## [Galácticos and Bianconeri set for a world-class croeso in sporting showpiece](#)

With the line up for the men’s UEFA Champions League Final now complete, Economy Secretary Ken Skates has outlined what two of the world’s biggest clubs can expect when they come to Wales in June.

With around 170,000 additional visitors expected in Cardiff and an estimated global TV audience of 200 million across 200 countries and territories, few events can match the Champions League Final for size and scope. Cardiff is expected to be incredibly busy and alive with not only Spanish and Italian voices, but with people and languages from every corner of the globe, including an estimated 2,500 members of the media. A security operation befitting the size of the event will also be in place, aimed at ensuring a safe and successful event for visitors and locals alike.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“These are two clubs and cities who already have a rich footballing

affinity with Wales, sharing with us a love for footballing greats John Charles, Ian Rush, John Toshack and Gareth Bale, to name a few.

“But for many fans, this will be their first visit to Wales and they will find a country ready and determined to deliver a well-organised and well-resourced event – a real celebration of football both inside and outside our capital city. The excitement across Wales is palpable.

“For a city and country of our size to be chosen to host such a prestigious event is unprecedented and builds on our success in hosting the Ryder Cup, Ashes and NATO amongst many others, further cementing our standing as world class hosts.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for people across the world to see what Wales can deliver, whilst providing hundreds of thousands the opportunity to sample our excellent tourism, produce and business offering.

“Croeso. Welcome. Bienvenido. Benvenuto. We are ready and excited to host the biggest sporting event of the year and look forward to players and supporters of these two great clubs joining us for the sporting showpiece of 2017.”

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## [Support for Streetlife project to extend outreach work](#)

Safer Wales works with people who experience domestic abuse and sexual violence, street-based sex workers, hate crime and young people at risk.

Their StreetLife project protects women who are exploited through prostitution, working with local authorities, the NHS and other partners. The vehicle helps volunteers go out a few times a week and offer women support, advice and access to services.

Carl Sargeant said:

“I am pleased that with Welsh Government support, Safer Wales have been able to purchase a new vehicle. This has enabled Safer Wales to increase capacity through the recruitment of additional volunteers and deliver outreach work simultaneously across Cardiff and Swansea.”

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## Welsh Government boost to help up-skill Enterprise Zones

The pilots will enable all employers in Ebbw Vale and Port Talbot Enterprise Zones to access an array of pre-approved training, with Welsh Government providing a 50 percent contribution to the cost.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“I am pleased to announce a new strand of Wales’ Flexible Skills Programme will be piloted within Ebbw Vale and Port Talbot Enterprise Zones. The pilots are designed to facilitate access to a variety of skills training programmes, assisting employers and businesses to up-skill and grow.

“The programme also provides an additional incentive for employers to engage with the Welsh Government and develop mutually beneficial relationships with schools, further education and higher education institutions.

“From Robotics to quality auditing, the areas of training have been specifically selected against the needs of employers operating in those areas and designed to assist them and enhance the skill sets of their employees, which in turn will help develop the businesses and the local economies”

“I am sure the launch events will be very worthwhile and provide an opportunity for businesses to engage with a new and exciting skills support programme. I’d encourage all employers to get involved.”

The Ebbw Vale pilot will launch at an event being held on 16 May at The General Offices, Ebbw Vale with the Port Talbot pilot launching at the Skills Summit on 23 May at The St Pauls Centre, Port Talbot.

Employers and employees who would like more information about the launch events and the scheme itself are invited to email [DFESRM@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:DFESRM@wales.gsi.gov.uk).