

Welsh Government invests over £660,000 to develop higher strength steel products to safeguard the industry's future in Wales

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates has announced that £666,327 of Welsh Government Research and Development Grant Funding is being made available to Tata Steel to help the company develop new and innovative higher strength steel products at its sites in Port Talbot and Llanwern.

The grant funding is in addition to Tata's own investment in the two year project and will enable the company to develop and test new forms of steel that boast improved functionality and increased technical specifications.

The investment in the project will mean Wales is well placed to respond to global market demand for new and advanced steel goods for the automotive and construction sectors and will place Wales in a more competitive position for the future.

Ken Skates said:

"The Welsh Government has been working to support Wales' steel workers and this latest offer demonstrates our continued commitment to safeguarding a long-term future for the steel industry in Wales.

"Increasing the level of steel related research and development taking place in Wales is critical if we are to meet the demands of the market and secure the long term future of Welsh steel.

"Not only will increased research and development enable us to develop new products here in Wales it will also increase our competitiveness, help to reduce costs and enable us to reduce our carbon emissions.

"Ultimately it is part of our ongoing efforts to secure a long term future for our steel workers, their families and the industry as a whole."

This latest funding agreement is part of a wider package of support from Welsh Government for Tata that includes £4m of funding towards skills development activities across Tata's Welsh operations and a further £8m investment in its Port Talbot plant which will reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. With the exception of funding for skills, Welsh Government support will be subject to agreeing legally binding conditions with Tata.

Chief Nursing Officer presents awards for excellence in nursing at annual showcase conference

The event was held at Cardiff City Stadium and provided an opportunity for health care workers to share experiences, innovative ideas and good practice. The sixth showcase conference was attended by over 200 delegates, including nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses, health care support workers and students.

During the event, the CNO presented the Betsi Cadwaladr Scholarship Foundation award for excellence to Corinne Hocking, sister in the Assessment and Therapy Unit, Llandudno hospital for her work in developing the infusion service provided at the unit. Debbie Tucker, senior ward sister in Prince Philip hospital was highly commended for her work to develop a new Frailty Support Worker role.

Jean White, Chief Nursing Officer said:

“It was a great honour to present the winners of the Betsi Cadwaladr Scholarship Foundation Award, to those who have achieved excellence in their field of nursing.

“I would also like to thank everyone who has contributed to this event. The enthusiasm and pride we have seen here today are a credit to all those involved.

“It was fantastic to see nurses from all sectors, as well as health care support workers and students working together, sharing ideas and experiences to improve patient care.”

The event was opened by Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans, who said:

“I am glad to have the opportunity to spend time with so many nurses, midwives and health care support workers today.

“It is a chance for me to recognize and pay tribute to the fantastic work that nurses are involved in to make sure that patients have the best possible care, and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you.

“The Welsh Government has made a commitment to attract and train more nurses across Wales and we have just launched a nurse

recruitment campaign, promoting the benefits of training, working and living in Wales. We are also extending the NHS Wales bursary scheme for a further year.”

Looked after children must have same educational opportunities as their peers – Kirsty Williams

The Cabinet Secretary has reported on progress to better support the education of children who are looked after and outlined her plans for action to continue to raise their educational attainment and make sure they have the same opportunities as their peers.

An annual report on the three year plan for looked after children highlights the progress being made, including an improvement in GCSE results. In 2016 23 per cent of children who are looked after achieved the equivalent of five GCSEs at grade A*–C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics, a 6 percentage points increase on 2015.

The Welsh Government has also worked with Cardiff University – CASCADE to create a new online hub to share information and resources focusing on children in care to help improve their educational outcomes.

The Education Secretary has committed to:

- Looking at the training available to schools and further education colleges with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Getting local authorities to review the roles of key workers with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Working with the third sector to consider better ways of supporting children who are often difficult to engage in education.
- Making better use of the data available to help looked after children.

The Education Secretary recently announced that the Pupil Development Grant will be extended to provide support to three year old looked after children during their early years in schools. This is part of more than £90m this year to help disadvantaged pupils.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Central to our national mission of education reform is for all children to do well and reach their potential, whatever their background. Looked after children must have the same opportunities

as their peers. We have seen an excellent improvement in the GCSE results of those in care and we have committed more funding to build on this, but I want to go further.

“Children often enter care come from a background of family crisis or breakdown. While we can not change their personal experiences, we will continue to support them through their education and prepare them for adulthood.

“Research shows that all too often that simply by being ‘in care’ the expectations placed on these young people reduce. We are taking action to face this issue head on and will continue to do so.”

Contact centre Carpeo Estate Planning to create 300 jobs in Newport over the next five years with Welsh Government support

The new business will be based at a new contact centre in Newport where it plans to create 300 jobs with Welsh Government support.

The FCA-regulated organisation, currently employs 250 people in Swindon, and is opening the new branch at Cleppa Park, Duffryn. A location in Teeside was under consideration for this project but funding support from the Welsh Government secured the investment for Wales.

The centre opens in June and the business is actively recruiting 24 employees at all levels for its launch date, rising to 60 by end of the year and 300 by 2022.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This is Carpeo’s first investment in Wales and I am delighted the company is joining a growing and vibrant sector that employs more than 30,000 people in over 200 centres in Wales.

“Carpeo has ambitious growth plans with the potential for further future investment in Wales and I welcome their plan to open this new business in Newport that will create a range of jobs and training opportunities for local people.”

Carpeo Estate Planning’s Chief Executive Officer Mike Minahan said:

“Having sat on the board of the Welsh Contact Centre Forum for the past 15 years, I know that Wales has a range of competitive advantages to offer contact centre businesses. The quality of people available and their experience of working in a regulated services market is a huge pull. On the softer side, the Welsh accent is sympathetic and consoling, particularly important in our market.

“We’re hugely proud to be bringing these well-paid roles and good employment opportunities to Newport.”

For a small monthly fee, members of the new subscription-based Carpeo Estate Planning service have access to affordable wills and funeral planning products. Members can also access a discount portal enabling them to save thousands a year on key household purchases, including at supermarkets Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Morrisons and Asda.

Innovative software that has been tried and tested will be utilised to identify those people whom these products and services are particularly relevant and who would have had recent experience of the difficulties of executing an intestate estate. A potential market of 3 million people has been identified.

Sandra Busby, Managing Director, Welsh Contact Centre Forum, said:

“This announcement is further evidence of the attraction of Wales as a home for some of the most innovative contact centre businesses around. Over the past two decades our role has been to build up

Wales as the destination of choice for organisations that want to run a successful contact centre.”

Carpeo’s turnover grew to £9.4M this financial year with plans to rapidly increase to £20M over the next four years, by expanding into Wales and potentially other areas of the UK.

Carpeo Estate Planning has partnered with Hugh James, the UK’s largest provider of will writing services; Golden Leaves, the market leader in the provision of funeral plans, and professional advisory firm Broomfield & Alexander.

[Welsh Government introduces Bill](#)

amendment to protect rights of public sector workers

The Welsh Government will amend its Trade Union Bill, at Stage 2 of the Bill's passage through the National Assembly, to ensure current arrangements remain in place with regards to devolved public services.

The Trade Union (Wales) Bill will, when enacted, reverse the effect of certain provisions in the UK Government's Trade Union Act 2016, in order to protect and promote the successful Welsh model of social partnership.

The decision to introduce an amendment to the Bill follows a UK Government consultation on revoking the current legal position where employers are unable to use temporary workers to provide cover when staff take industrial action.

This would apply to industrial action taken by workers in all sectors, including workers employed in the public sector in Wales.

The Welsh Government has since consulted on whether the current position should be maintained in devolved public services and has subsequently decided to amend the Trade Union Bill to prevent the UK Government from legislating in this area.

Speaking ahead of today's Stage 1 Debate on the Trade Union Bill, the Cabinet Secretary said:

"We have long said that the UK Government's position is counterproductive -leading to prolonged, protracted disputes, greater confrontation and more disruption to some of the most vulnerable users of our vital public services.

"Although the UK Government has yet to enact legislation on agency workers, we have taken the necessary steps to ensure that, if they choose to do so, devolved public services would remain unaffected and that the current legal position would remain the same. We are acting to retain the status quo.

"Our Bill and the amendment we are introducing both have the very clear backing of the Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, with strong support for the proud tradition of constructive social partnership we have here in Wales. We are not prepared for this to be partnership to be jeopardised."