

Behind the scenes visit for Transport Secretary

Transport Secretary Ken Skates and Kevin Thomas, Chief Executive of Transport for Wales Rail Services met Aline Frantzen, Managing Director of Metrolink to go behind the scenes and experience the day to day running of the successful system.

During the visit, the Cabinet Secretary had a tour around the Network Management Centre, which as the control room and customer service centre, is the heart of the Metrolink operation. The network is monitored from here using radio communication, CCTV and tram management systems. Key messages are delivered to drivers from the control room in times of disruption.

Taking the opportunity to learn lessons on how Manchester has developed and grown their system and for operating and continuously improving regional metro networks, Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“We are putting passengers’ key priorities at the heart of the new contract, focusing on alleviating concerns around seat capacity, journey times and service frequency and ensuring fair, affordable fares and quality, clean trains.”

“I was particularly interested in understanding the customer’s perspective – which elements of a Metro network passengers most value and how these lessons can be applied in Wales.

“We will work alongside Transport for Wales Rail Services to deliver these priorities across Wales and the border regions of England.

“The plans I have announced to date are only the start. Buses and active travel will also play a crucial role, as will park and ride and transport interchanges.

During his tour of the Old Trafford depot, Ken Skates also had an opportunity to meet with Councillor Mark Aldred, Chair of the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee.

Over £6 million Brexit support for

Airbus and automotive sector

This support will help significantly improve the chances of developing the Welsh-based sites as the preferred locations for any future and post-Brexit European investment projects.

The EU Transition Fund was announced in January 2018 and is already providing direct financial support to sectors across Wales to plan and prepare for the significant changes of Brexit. A number of projects have already benefited from £7.4 million of funding, including support for our agriculture and fisheries industry sectors, in particular £2.15 million for the development of the red meat sector in Wales.

In addition, £150,000 has been provided to help deliver a Brexit support package to all 22 local authorities in Wales and £200,000 to help the social care sector research into how Brexit could impact the Welsh workforce and help them plan for any eventualities. Wales' universities also received £3.5 million to drive international partnerships and promote Wales as a study destination in a post-Brexit world.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Brexit presents a series of challenges and opportunities for businesses in Wales and it is my priority to ensure Wales is in the best possible position to prepare for a post-Brexit world.

“The funding I am announcing today from our EU Transition fund will provide the vitally needed support to help these important industries.”

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“The EU Transition Fund gives us a good opportunity to provide businesses in Wales with the support they need to provide their workforce with transferrable skills in order to continue showcasing Wales on a global stage.”

£5.7 million EU funds to encourage STEM take up

The £8.2m Trio Sci Cymru project will help to increase take up and grades in

STEM subjects among young people living in West and North Wales and the South Wales Valleys.

More than 5,600 young people aged 11 to 19 from 30 schools will be encouraged to study STEM subjects – in particular triple Science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) – at GCSE level and beyond, helping to create a skilled workforce and a prosperous economy.

Announcing the new funding the Finance Secretary said:

“Technology is moving at an increasing pace and for Wales to capitalise on this change we need a skilled workforce. This EU investment will help stimulate interest in these core subjects, encouraging take up and in turn growing the Welsh economy.”

Eluned Morgan, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, added:

“We know STEM subjects are essential to the technological, social and economic future of Wales. This investment will encourage our young people to pursue these subjects at GCSE level, helping them to build careers that are rewarding, fulfilling and well paid.”

Interest and participation in STEM learning will be stimulated through innovative outreach activities outside the formal education system. Activities will include interactive hands-on experiments, roadshows and awareness about STEM-related careers, equipping young people with the skills and knowledge about options available in the sector.

Trio Sci Cymru is led by the Welsh Government’s National Science Academy, in collaboration with the Institute of Physics and Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth and Bangor universities. The £8.2 million Trio Sci Cymru project is backed by £5.7 million of EU funding and £2.5m from the Welsh Government’s National Science Academy.

New NHS organisation delivers boost to learning for health staff across Wales

Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW) is officially launched today, and brings together the Wales Deanery, the Wales Centre for Pharmacy Professional Education and NHS Wales’ Workforce, Education and Development Services to provide a single approach to commissioning, planning and developing the education and training of the NHS workforce.

HEIW will provide continual learning opportunities, which will be critical to responding to technological advances in the health sector. It will also be responsible for workforce planning and promoting NHS careers.

Approximately £10million will be invested in the NHS Wales e-library over three years, which provides learning materials for all NHS Wales staff, including access to e-journals, research papers and other cutting edge information.

The Health Secretary said:

"We've set out our long-term plan to transform the health service, bringing services closer to home and moving from a reliance on hospitals. Having a strong and sustainable workforce is vital to driving this transformation, and is one of the key reasons we are launching HEIW today.

"HEIW will help nurture and grow the people and organisations that will deliver the next stage of development of our NHS and in turn will deliver better services for the people of Wales."

The Health Secretary added:

"We are committed to attracting more GPs, nurses and other health professionals to work in Wales. The launch of HEIW shows the continued commitment in Wales to strengthening and supporting our workforce and sends a clear message that Wales is a great place for health professionals to train and work."

The Chair of HEIW, Dr Chris Jones, said:

"Supporting NHS Wales, and working closely with Social Care Wales, HEIW will bring a focus and energy to developing the health care workforce of the future. It gives us an exciting opportunity to build our reputation in Wales for healthcare education, training, recruitment and retention.

"As the 11th health body, we look forward to working with our NHS partners, the wider health organisations, and our education partners to improve care through service transformation; building a well trained workforce enabled to adapt to emerging technologies and excellence in care."

Have your say on final measures to reduce air pollution on the Motorway and Trunk Roads in Wales

At the end of July, Welsh Government published an interim supplemental plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations alongside the UK Government's plan 2017 – Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations in Wales.

This supplemental plan contained potential measures to achieve compliance in the shortest possible time with limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) at five locations on the motorway and trunk road network in Wales.

Where sections of the motorway and trunk road network currently exceed Ambient Air Quality Directive and Welsh Regulation limit values for NO₂ concentrations, we acted to safeguard public health by the immediate implementation of temporary 50mph speed limits. This speed limit was shown to improve the limit values based on the work that had taken place.

The consultation on the final package of measures for improvements to air quality at these five sites, known as WelTAG Stage Three, is further to the consultation exercise that took place back in April 2018 on the Stage One and Stage Two findings. It will also look for opinions on the 50mph speed limits.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“The contribution made by the environment to good health cannot be overstated. Tackling poor air quality is a priority for the Welsh Government, reflected in our national strategy ‘Prosperity for All’. We will reduce emissions and deliver vital improvements in air quality through planning, infrastructure and regulation measures.

Alongside the other devolved administrations, we’re working actively to meet our joint objective with the UK Government to transform the UK’s most polluted towns and cities into clean and healthy urban spaces, supporting those most directly affected.

We now need your views on the proposed final measures to achieve compliance within the shortest possible time with the limit values laid down by the Directive and Regulations at each of these five locations.”

Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn, said:

“I welcome people’s views on these proposed measures, which aim to

reduce nitrogen dioxide levels to within legal limits in the shortest possible time. It's important to remember the main reason for taking this action, which is to improve air quality and reduce the harmful effect vehicle emissions can have on people's health and well-being."

We would like to hear your views on how you think we could do this: <https://beta.gov.wales/tackling-roadside-nitrogen-dioxide-concentration-s-wales-weltag-stage-3>.