

'Direct delivery to communities' at heart of Plan for Wales

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart has outlined the UK Government's ambitious plans for Wales which aim to deliver thousands of skilled jobs and ensure Wales's place as a hub for innovation and the green industries of the future.

Speaking to an online audience of representatives from Welsh business, industry and tourism on Thursday (20 May) the Welsh Secretary explained how the UK Government will build back better and greener from the pandemic by investing in digital infrastructure, providing financial backing for green industry and supporting jobs and growth right across Wales in the coming months and years.

Launching the UK Government's Plan for Wales, Mr Hart also described how his government will operate at a community level in Wales, working directly with local authorities and other groups on delivery of funding and major projects.

Speaking about the plans, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Just as the economic heft of the UK provided the resources to get all four of its constituent parts through the worst of the pandemic – and acquire the vaccines that will ultimately bring it to an end – so that strength in numbers will help Wales become fairer, greener and more prosperous as we build back better from Coronavirus.

By working together we can bring faster internet connections, more reliable mobile signals and better transport connections. We can create good, skilled, well-paid jobs from Menai Bridge to Machynlleth to Merthyr Tydfil and we can help Wales play its part in building a net-zero economy with everything from the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub to vast floating windfarms in the Celtic Sea.

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:

The UK Government is stepping up a gear in Wales. We are accelerating our support for local communities to help them recover from the pandemic, we are bringing the UK Government closer to Wales and we will lead Wales' recovery into a green industrial revolution of jobs and growth.

Every single investment we make will be looked at through the prism of jobs, livelihoods and sustainability. Like never before people will see the UK Government work directly with the 22 Welsh local authorities as well as other local partners.

Neither Westminster nor Cardiff has a monopoly of knowledge and expertise and I firmly believe it is local communities that are often best placed to determine both how to meet the specific needs of their areas and what will have the greatest impact.

The Plan for Wales has been published following a year which has seen unprecedented support provided to businesses and individuals in Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic with more than 500,000 Welsh jobs protected by UK Government support schemes including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, billions provided in government loans to Welsh firms and an extra £8.6bn allocated to the devolved Welsh Government through the Barnett Formula since the start of the pandemic.

Mr Hart said that the collective strength of the United Kingdom has been instrumental in harnessing collective scientific, industrial and financial strength to deliver a world-class vaccination programme that has provided a path out of lockdown.

The Welsh Secretary outlined a series of ambitious projects across Wales to which the UK Government has recently committed funding and support, and reiterated his government's backing for longer-standing policies like significantly improving Wales' digital infrastructure and ensuring transformational growth deals cover every area of Wales.

Projects highlighted by the Welsh Secretary include:

- Investing, alongside industry, more than £40m to support a cluster of industries in South Wales to transition to net-zero.
- Hundreds of millions of pounds in business and job creation in every area of Wales via the Growth Deals programme.
- Investing £15.9m in low-carbon heavy goods vehicles which will be pioneered in Cwmbran.
- Moving more jobs in UK Government departments including the Home Office and the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy to locations in Wales.
- Making almost £5m available for the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub project to pilot the use of hydrogen in the transport sector.
- Investing up to £30m, subject to approvals, in the Global Centre of Rail Excellence to create a world class train testing and R&D facility in the Dulais Valley.
- Supporting the emergence of floating offshore wind, with the Crown Estate holding a formal leasing round for floating offshore wind projects in the Celtic Sea.
- Implementing the new Levelling Up Fund which will invest up to £4.8 billion in local infrastructure across the UK that has a visible impact on people and their communities.
- Launching Project Gigabit, a £5bn connectivity programme to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in the hardest to reach communities in Wales and across the UK.
- Continuing to improve rural connectivity via the Shared Rural Network, a £1 billion deal with the mobile network operators to deliver 80% 4G

mobile coverage from all four operators across Wales and 95% coverage from at least one.

- Investing in Wales' transport infrastructure including a further £2.7m to upgrade the digital signalling capability on the Cambrian Line.
- The delivery of the first-ever Freeport in Wales which could lead to thousands of new jobs.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

The UK Government's ability to act quickly and protect our economic future has been instrumental in saving jobs and livelihoods as vast swathes of our economy were shut down.

This includes the furlough scheme, which has protected more than 460,000 jobs in Wales and the Business Interruption and Bounce Back loan schemes which have also provided support worth over £2bn for Welsh businesses.

The UK Government has supported people and businesses across Wales through the worst of this pandemic and we will now do everything in our power to lead the way out of it.

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[Read the full Plan for Wales.](#)