

# Economy Secretary in Qatar to build trade links ahead of Cardiff to Doha flights

To further strengthen Wales's relationship with Qatar, the Economy Secretary is attending a Welsh Government business briefing being run in conjunction with the British Embassy, Qatar Airways and Cardiff Airport and in parallel with the British Festival Qatar 2017.

The visit is part of the Welsh Government's ongoing work to help businesses in both Wales and Qatar capitalise on the trading and export opportunities associated with the launch of new daily, direct flights between Cardiff and Doha, which will begin in May.

The Economy Secretary said:

"This is my first visit to Qatar and I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the business community here about all Wales has to offer.

"Wales is an outward facing and welcoming nation, and we are proud of our strong record of welcoming high profile overseas investors and exporting quality goods all over the world.

"The launch of daily direct flights between Doha and Cardiff next year, along with the direct flights already operated between Manchester and Doha which serve the North Wales economy, offers us huge opportunities to strengthen the relationship between our two countries.

"I am optimistic that this visit, along with the trade missions that have already taken place, will help us to build new trade links, increase export levels and attract more inward investment opportunities in Wales, and I look forward to businesses in both our countries working closely and productively together in the months and years ahead."

The British Ambassador to Qatar, Mr Ajay Sharma, said:

"I am delighted to welcome Mr Skates, the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, to Doha to further strengthen the links between Wales and Qatar. The UK-Qatar relationship is extremely strong, and the new flights between Doha and Cardiff will grow that relationship further. It is important that all areas of the UK benefit from engagement with Qatar. I am sure that this visit will make a real difference to this agenda."

Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer, Mr. Ehab Amin said:

“We very much looking forward to the launch of our direct daily service to the Welsh capital next year, our first regular direct flight linking Wales and South-West England to our global hub in Doha. Cardiff is a strategically important destination for Qatar Airways, and the new route will most certainly benefit both leisure and business travelers by connecting passengers to our expanding global network of more than 150 destinations.

“For Welsh businesses in particular, this new route will be extremely beneficial, as it will enhance investment and export opportunities by providing businesses with new links to markets around the world using our award-winning airline.”

Roger Lewis, Chairman of Cardiff Airport, stated:

“The new daily Qatar Airways service represents a pivotal moment for Cardiff Airport. The far reaching consequences of these flights for passengers and businesses across Wales and the South West of England are transformational.

“The service will bolster the critically important relationship between Qatar, Wales and the United Kingdom which is being substantially strengthened. I am confident Qatari businesses will make the most of the fantastic opportunities to develop trade and investment in the region, and look forward to welcoming more visitors through our airport from next May.”