

Economy Secretary in Rhymney to explore local opportunities and challenges

The visits are part of his commitment to empowering and strengthening Wales' regions, so the fruits of prosperity are spread much more evenly across Wales.

It is an approach that is set out clearly in the Welsh Government's Economic Action Plan, launched in December.

As part of his commitment to empowering Wales' regions, the Economy Secretary has appointed three Chief Regional Officers , one for South East Wales, one for North Wales and one for Mid and South West Wales, who will engage with and listen to partners within their region and represent their views and interests within the Welsh Government.

The Economy Secretary and the Chief Regional Officer for South East Wales, David Rosser, visited Rhymney Print Services, and Surevend Catering, two micro businesses on the Lawns Industrial Estate which Caerphilly Council is keen to develop further.

They also visited Philtronics in Hirwaun, part of the supply chain for the South East Wales semiconductor cluster, and attended a roundtable with companies and entrepreneurs to explore how digital technology can support care and retail in the area, which have been identified by the Welsh Government as foundation sectors.

Ken Skates said:

"I am absolutely committed to empowering Wales regions and building on their individual strengths in order to secure maximum economic growth for Wales.

“My Economic Action Plan, recognises that each region of Wales has its own opportunities and challenges and that a one size fits all approach to Economic development will not go far enough to drive the regional economic growth that Wales needs.

“I have appointed Chief Regional Officers to provide a regional voice in Government. They will listen to and involve local partners in decision making and feedback local intelligence that will help to tailor our work, and in the case of South East Wales, support work to deliver the priorities of Our Valleys, Our Future to create thousands of new, fair, secure and sustainable jobs in the Valleys. Visits and meeting like the ones we have enjoyed today will be absolutely key to this approach.”

Later in the day, the Economy Secretary visited section two of the A465 to see progress on the scheme which is now nearly three-quarters complete.

The scheme includes 2km of cycleway and six pedestrian and cycle-bridges to support the Welsh commitments to Active Travel.

There are also impressive structures, including a concrete arch bridge at Gilwern which is the largest of its type in the world, and the gateway bridge at Brynmawr which involved bringing one of the largest cranes operating in the UK to site to lift it in place.

The Economy Secretary said:

“The scheme is delivering a range of benefits around local employment, education and training. Importantly, and in line with the priorities set out in Our Valleys, Our Future we want people who use this new road to see it not as a bypass, but as a destination to thriving communities and a growing local economy.”