

# Finance Secretary visits Basque Country to explore the region's innovations in tax policy and economic and infrastructure planning

The Basque Government has a reputation for its innovative approach to progressive taxation, economic development and trade, social, transport and infrastructure planning including its minimum income scheme and investment in public transport infrastructure.

The Cabinet Secretary will meet Pedro Azpiazu, the Basque Minister for Treasury and Economy, Arantxa Tapia, the Minister for Economic Development and Competitiveness and Beatriz Artolazabal, Minister for Employment and Social Policies. He will also visit the Port of Bilbao and see the high-speed railway which serves the region.

Over the past decade Wales' relationship with the Basque Country has steadily grown with joint activity between the regions at both government-level – through joint co-operation in European networks – and at an institutional level.

The Basque Government recently published its revised international strategy, Estrategia Basque Country 2018-20, which includes Wales as one of 5 priority regions for the Basque Country in Europe.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Wales and the Basque Country already enjoy, and benefit from, co-operation across a broad range of areas.

“With the introduction of our new taxes in April and our work to develop new taxes, the visit provides a useful opportunity to share good practice and learn from the Basque Country's progressive ideas on tax policy and administration, social policies and its investment programmes to improve public services and infrastructure. It also provides an opportunity to discuss the region's strategic relationship with the Spanish Government in relation to budgetary matters.

“The visit to the high-speed railway will also help inform our planning for the South Wales Metro.

“We are keen to strengthen ties with the Basque Country and I look forward to exploring how we build on, and deepen, co-operation between our 2 regions.”