

First Minister marks start of a week of St David's Day events around the world

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, will be in Brussels on Tuesday (26th February) to host a St David's Day reception and in Paris on Wednesday (27th February) to open officially the Welsh Government's new office in the city.

The Paris office is the latest in the Welsh Government's careful expansion of its presence in Europe and across the globe. Having representatives of Welsh Government in these areas significantly helps to promote Wales in order to sell Welsh goods to overseas markets, promote our tourism and higher education offers. They will also continue to help in our efforts to attract new inward investment into Wales which is increasingly challenging in the continuing climate of uncertainty surrounding Brexit.

The visits demonstrate Wales' commitment to maintaining relations with Europe, with the First Minister reiterating that whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, Wales will continue to develop longstanding friendships with countries and regions in Europe.

Speaking ahead of his visit, the First Minister said:

"Our relationship with our closest neighbours in the EU remains especially important to us. Wales is a European nation and always will be.

"Around 60% of our manufactured exports go to the EU. We need to do all we can to sustain that business and preserve jobs. We now have offices in 5 European cities, which put us in a stronger position to strengthen our links with Europe during this crucial junction in our political and social history."

The Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language, Eluned Morgan, will be in North America this week in a bid to boost trade and raise Wales' profile.

The visit includes a St David's Day reception on Capitol Hill, as well as meetings with current and potential investors in Wales and an address to the World Bank in Washington DC.

The Welsh Government will also be using St David's Day to promote Wales right across the world, with events planned in Dubai, China, Japan and Canada to name a few.

Much closer to home, commuters in London will be greeted by a Welsh choir and have the opportunity to sample Welsh food and drink at Paddington Station

this week. Welsh food will also be a feature at Borough Market and at Manchester Piccadilly on St David's Day.

The First Minister added:

"It's great to see the events taking place in the UK and beyond to celebrate St David's Day and promote Wales across the globe.

"It's important we make the most of the opportunity St David's Day presents to tell Wales' story to the world – we are a progressive, open and welcoming country, a nation alive with creativity and innovation, and supportive of businesses and people. As a country we have so much to offer and we will continue to work hard to sustain and develop that reputation in Europe and beyond."