

Press release: Alun Cairns: “Welsh manufacturing firms should be at the forefront of innovation as we leave the EU”

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns is to call on Welsh manufacturing businesses to maintain their competitive edge and keep firing on all cylinders, as Britain prepares to leave the European Union.

Mr Cairns will deliver a keynote speech to firms at this evening’s annual EEF dinner (26 October), where he is expected to outline plans to address Wales’ low productivity rate, through the UK-wide Industrial Strategy, which calls on Welsh firms to be at the forefront of innovation and export trade, so that prosperity is shared across the country.

Wales currently benefits from its economy’s manufacturing base, which employs around 150,000 people and is made up of over 5,000 companies, 97% of which are SMEs. But Wales is the least productive region in the UK, with productivity only 80.5% of the UK average.

The Secretary of State for Wales is expected to say:

If we want to stimulate every part of our economy, then we need to create the right conditions for generating ideas and innovation – we need to foster entrepreneurship.

Wales has the advantage of a strong innovation base – be that compound semi-conductors in Cardiff, agri-tech in Aberystwyth, or advanced manufacturing in Deeside.

The UK Government will invest an additional £4.7 billion by 2020-21 in research and development funding and create a new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to help the UK capitalise on its strengths in science and innovation in manufacturing.

Mr Cairns will also say:

We know Wales has huge potential when it comes to trade and investment, as there are currently more than 3,800 businesses in Wales that export.

I’d like to see businesses in Wales taking advantage of the world-class support on offer from the UK Government and Welsh Government so that Wales and the wider UK is the best place in the world to do business.

Additional information:

- The UK Government has announced an additional £4.7 billion by 2020-21 in research and development funding and created a new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to help the UK capitalise on its strengths in science and innovation in manufacturing.
- There are currently more than 3,800 businesses in Wales that export, with a combined value of £13 billion in the first quarter of 2017. Wales is also an attractive place for inward investment, with latest figures showing that 85 foreign direct investment projects were secured in Wales, creating 2,581 new jobs and safeguarding almost 9,000 more.
- The Secretary of State for Wales has recently written to over 26,000 Welsh businesses identified as potential exporters including a copy to the Wales Export Guide. The Wales specific guide sets out the full range of support available to Welsh businesses from the UK Government and contains inspiring stories of companies based in Wales that are successfully exporting. You can read the guide online [here](#).