

## More than 1000 Welsh businesses benefit from free ICT advice service

The Superfast Business Wales service is backed by the Welsh Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Part of the Business Wales service, it provides Welsh SMEs with comprehensive ICT advice and guidance about how they can use online technologies such as cloud computing, online apps and software, social media, mobile working, and much more, to grow and develop their businesses further.

The service is independent and free and includes access to an online needs review, masterclasses and workshops, 1:1 ICT support, and a full website diagnostic. Businesses can also download the new Software Directory, as well as a number of online tools, guides and top tips available on the website: [business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales](http://business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales).

To date, 1081 businesses have received a telephone consultation with an online business adviser, 860 businesses have attended workshops and masterclasses, and 545 have received 1:1 advice from a digital business adviser.

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James said:

“I’m pleased over a thousand businesses have taken advantage of the Superfast Business Wales service since it was launched a year ago and I would encourage more to do so. The service offers free independent advice and guidance on how to make the best use of the digital technology which is becoming ever more important in the business world.

“Superfast broadband can make a real difference to the way business communicates with its customers and helps to deliver a better quality and more efficient service. The Welsh Government is committed to investing in superfast broadband infrastructure which is vital in supporting growth and prosperity in Wales.”

Monmouthshire-based consultancy business Chris Jones Regeneration has benefited from the free service. Chris Jones said:

“The workshop enabled us to check where we were in terms of the wide platform of digital technologies, helped validate activities we were doing well, and identify gaps that required plugging.

“The 1-1 session with a digital business adviser which followed was holistic and client-focused from the start. My adviser identified ways of making efficiencies and working smarter in relation to customer reach and relationship handling. She also looked at

project management and visualization tools and provided advice on low cost digital solutions. A diagnostic report was prepared with some clear realistic actions for the business to implement over a period of time.

“Overall the service was personal, responsive and above all action based.”

New specialist subjects for 2017 include: How to grow your food and drink business with digital technology, Cyber security, Data Protection and CRM systems, and How to grow your construction business with digital technology.

To find out more and to register onto the Superfast Business Wales service call 0300 060 3000, email [superfast@businesswales.org.uk](mailto:superfast@businesswales.org.uk) or visit [Superfast Business Wales](#).

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## [Jahr der Legenden 2017 – at the world’s largest travel show](#)

The show is attended by 120,000 trade and media visitors and around 26,000 consumers. Visit Wales will host meetings with the German, Swiss and Austrian travel trade, press and media over the first 3 days, and promote Wales to consumers over the final 2 days of the show. The team will be joined on the stand by industry partners Blaenavon World Heritage Site, Cambria DMC, Cadw, and Destination Conwy

This year, Wales will host one of the world’s greatest annual sporting events, the UEFA Champions League Final. The countdown is on to Wales hosting this prestigious sporting event in June, and Visit Wales will be showcasing the men’s and women’s UEFA Champions League Final trophies to ITB Berlin from 8- 12 March.

Visitors to the stand will have the opportunity to have a photo taken with the trophies and Visit Wales will be running a prize draw to win a legendary week in Wales for two people during June with tickets to the Women’s and Men’s UEFA Champions League Final. The competition will also be promoted in the German and UK markets throughout March and April as part of the UEFA Champions League marketing activity.

Attendance at ITB is one element of a marketing drive in Germany. January to March is a key booking period for German visitors to Wales, and the campaign aims to inspire potential visitors to come to Wales in 2017. The new TV advert featuring Welsh Hollywood star Luke Evans, which has been well received since its launch, will also be shown to visitors at ITB.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“During these times of great change we are committed to promoting Wales to the world like never before – taking our nation’s story out to new audiences with creativity and confidence. Germany is one of Wales’ three key overseas markets. In 2015, Wales attracted 96,500 visitors from Germany who spent £30 million in the Welsh economy. We’re looking forward to a legendary sporting summer – and hosting the UEFA Champions League Final – the single biggest sporting event in the world this year will be the highlight. ITB gives us an excellent platform to raise awareness of the event coming to Wales this year and we have international campaigns planned in the build up, during and post UEFA Champions League Final which will aim to maximise the impact of hosting the event for Wales, and drive longer term visitor benefits from the UK, German, French and Spanish Markets.”

A digital marketing campaign focusing on the theme of Legends runs until the end of March, attracting visitors to the Visit Wales website and [Facebook page](#). Print campaigns will include a supplement partnership with VisitBritain and women’s lifestyle magazine ‘Brigitte’ and a direct marketing campaign to Visit Wales’ database. Visit Wales will also work with influential partners such as Flybe, P&O Ferries, Dertour, Tui Wolters Reisen, DFDS Seaways and KLM Germany.

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## **BCC: Chancellor must act on mounting concern on business rates**

Responding to new statistics on business rate concern, the BCC renews its call for action by the Chancellor at the Budget.

6th March 2016

**As the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) publishes statistics that show two-in-five businesses are more concerned about business rates than three months ago, the business group renews its call for action in the Spring Budget this week to ease the burden of rates and bring about fundamental reform to the system.**

New interim statistics from the BCC’s Quarterly Economic Survey, based on the responses of over 900 companies, show that 39% of businesses are more concerned about business rates than three months ago, second only to those reporting higher concern around exchange rates (42%) than three months ago.

The results show that it is small businesses who are most worried about the burden of business rates, with one-in-two (50%) saying it's of greater concern, the highest of any factor.

The business group is calling for the Chancellor to use his Spring Budget to support long-term investment and growth by taking action on this upfront costs which hits businesses unfairly, and irrespective of their economic health or circumstances.

BCC seeks four key measures on business rates from the Spring Budget:

- **Abandon the fiscal neutrality principle in business rates reform** – an unacceptable barrier to fundamental reform of the business rates system that is unique to that tax. This would allow the government to help those firms most affected by the revaluation.
- **Drop proposals that would restrict the ability of the Valuation Tribunal for England to order changes to business rates liabilities** – ensuring businesses access to justice and fairness.
- **Bring forward the switch from RPI to CPI, currently planned for April 2020, to April 2017** – limiting annual increases starting more swiftly.
- **Longer term, remove all plant and machinery from the valuation of property for business rates purposes.**

**Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:**

“Rising business concerns demonstrate the urgent need for action on business rates in the Budget this week. The UK had the highest business property taxes in the developed world even before the recent revaluation – hammering firms with sky-high costs before they turn over a single pound. This undermines business investment, which in 2016, fell for the first time in seven years.

“As the new bills kick in from April 1st, many will see this situation get worse with some facing double, even triple-digit growth in the amount they must pay. Businesses face a tipping point: with rates rising for many and the combined costs of currency depreciation, the new National Living Wage, Pensions auto-enrolment and rising energy prices – urgent action is needed to reduce the upfront costs of doing business.

“In the short-term, the Government must provide additional relief to the firms hit hardest by rates and re-visit the detail of reform to the appeals system. It should bring forward the change from RPI to CPI this year.

“In the longer-term, fundamental change is needed, including stripping plant and machinery from rates assessments that does so much to discourage business investment.”

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

The interim data from this survey are drawn from responses from over 900

business people across England. Firms were questioned online between 20<sup>th</sup> February and 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017. Please note that the fieldwork for this survey is still ongoing. Small businesses are defined as those with between 10 and 49 employees.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

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## [Chinese leaders review gov't work report with lawmakers](#)



Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC), joins a panel discussion with deputies to the 12th NPC from Zhejiang Province at the annual session of the NPC in Beijing, capital of China, March 5, 2017. (Xinhua/Gao Jie)

Senior Chinese leaders on Sunday joined national legislators in deliberating

the government work report, stressing the main theme of “seeking progress while maintaining stability.”

The report was delivered by Premier Li Keqiang at the opening of the annual session of China’s top legislature, the National People’s Congress (NPC).

Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Liu Yunshan and Wang Qishan, all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, joined national lawmakers in deliberating the report.

Zhang, also chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, joined lawmakers from east China’s Zhejiang Province.

Zhang stressed concrete actions to implement the decisions and policies of the CPC Central Committee, promote the steady and healthy development of the economy and the harmony of the society to create a favorable environment for the 19th National Congress of the Party, slated for later this year.

Yu Zhengsheng, also chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference National Committee, joined a delegation of lawmakers from central China’s Hubei Province during another panel discussion.

Yu urged Hubei Province to apply the new concepts of development and advance supply-side structural reform.

He called for further efforts to conserve energy and protect the environment to provide the people with clean water, fresh air, safe food and beautiful environment.

Liu Yunshan joined NPC deputies from Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in their panel discussion.

Liu called for proper understanding of the relations between maintaining stability and seeking progress, stressing efforts to guide social expectations and dissolve risks, while making breakthroughs in reforms. P Major tasks in supply-side structural reform should be accomplished to improve growth quality and efficiency, he added.

Wang Qishan, also secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, joined NPC deputies from Beijing.

Wang stressed the need to explore effective CPC self-supervision for long-term governance, deepen reform of the national supervisory system and establish an anti-graft mechanism under the unified leadership of the Party.

The CPC should enhance supervision over itself and state organs to realize full-coverage oversight of all public servants, he added.

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## Press release: PM call with Taoiseach Enda Kenny: 5 March 2017

This afternoon Prime Minister Theresa May spoke to Taoiseach Enda Kenny following the recent elections in Northern Ireland.

They discussed their shared commitment to work with the parties to move forward and create a stable administration which ensures a strong, peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland.

To that end, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Brokenshire and Irish Foreign Minister Charlie Flanagan will meet the parties on Wednesday and the Prime Minister and Taoiseach agreed to discuss the issue again at the EU Council on Thursday.