

[Notice: Molesey Veteran's Head](#)

River Thames restriction information for Saturday 18 February 2017 between 1:30pm and 4pm.

[Economy Secretary visits set of big budget US drama](#)

Ken Skates visited the set of TNT's Will, a high end drama series based on the early life of William Shakespeare and met members of the cast and production team.

Will is being filmed largely in Pontyclun's Dragon Studios and is due to broadcast in the US this summer with UK dates to follow. It boasts the largest budget and highest spend of any production shot in Wales to date.

Will is the latest in a growing list of US productions to be filmed in Wales and follows other high profile productions such as Da Vinci's Demons, The Bastard Executioner and The Collection.

It is anticipated that the production, which has been backed by Welsh Government finance, will generate around £18m spend into the local economy.

The first series of Will was commissioned following the success of an initial pilot programme filmed in London. Following support from the Welsh Government the production company decided to undertake a significant proportion of filming and production of the first series of Will in Wales.

Speaking after his visit, Ken Skates said:

"I was so pleased to be able to visit the set of Will, which really is an impressive and quality production with the highest budget of any film or programme to be in Wales so far.

"The scale of the project is resulting in the largest local spend related to TV and film production even seen in Wales which is great news for the local economy and a real coup for the Welsh film and TV sector more broadly.

"We are continuing to work hard to attract high end drama to Wales with a specific focus on the lucrative US market and the probability of repeat series.

"I know the Will production will act as another great endorsement

for what Wales can offer the film and TV industry, in terms of our location, expertise and talent. I am delighted that Welsh Government has been able to play a decisive role in bringing this investment to Wales.”

Ninth Floor UK Productions Limited – the company behind the series – will be based at Dragon Studio in Pontyclun for nine months of the year with location shooting in and around South Wales as well as London.

Executive Producer Alison Owen said:

“Filming at Dragon International Film Studios has provided many advantages for the production – using Dragon’s four stages and its extensive backlot, we have been able to create a whole world in one place.

“The streets of Shakespeare’s London spread out on the backlot, whilst the huge Theatre takes up one whole stage, additional interior sets complete the show’s universe. Other breath-taking exterior locations are a stone’s throw away, giving scope and breadth to the show’s visual landscape.

“The close proximity of so many locations has given us an ease and efficiency enabling us to be ambitious with our show, giving us terrific ‘bang for our buck’ and putting the budget on the screen. With access to the experienced Welsh crew based in the area, in Cardiff and Swansea, while only a couple of hours from London on the train, it has been the perfect choice for us.”

Last month the Welsh Government launched a promotional showreel featuring clips from the latest major productions filmed in Wales to promote Wales worldwide as a premier location for TV and feature film production.

[BCC: UK exporters put in strong performance in final quarter of 2016](#)

Commenting on the UK trade statistics for December 2016, released today by the Office for National Statistics, Mike Spicer, Director of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“The narrowing in the UK’s trade deficit in the final months of last year is a welcome improvement from the weaker performance in the previous quarter, and reflects a growing number of goods being exported to non-EU countries. As

Brexit dominates the headlines, the results are an important reminder that UK companies take advantage of trading opportunities in every part of the world.

“This performance comes despite the mixed reaction of exporters to the depreciation in Sterling – which our research has found is hurting as many as it is helping. Looking ahead, the continued weakness of the pound and the expected slowdown in economic growth will likely dampen demand for consumer imports.

“In order to keep UK businesses trading with the world, companies need more direct support from government such as more investment in trade show access. But with margins under pressure, we need to see action at the Budget to reduce the upfront costs of doing business, particularly business rates. This will free up resource for businesses to invest in people and product development – absolutely necessary to taking full advantage of the growth opportunities in overseas markets.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

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

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Senior Press Manager

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812

Government needs to urgently look at suggestion of abuse of extra time provision in exams – Rayner

Angela Rayner, Labour’s Shadow Education Secretary, commenting on reports that independent school students gain extra time for exams, said:

“Our education system allows children with special educational needs extra time in exams to ensure that they are not unfairly disadvantaged. The suggestion that this could be being abused raises serious questions about the fairness of this arrangement.

“The Government needs to look at this urgently to make sure that no school is abusing the system.”

Ends

Hollow words from Jeremy Hunt as the NHS is suffering from the biggest financial squeeze in history – Ashworth

Jonathan Ashworth, Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary, commenting on reports that Jeremy Hunt said the problems facing some parts of NHS England are ‘completely unacceptable’, said:

“These are hollow words from the Secretary of State this morning. On his watch the NHS is suffering from the biggest financial squeeze in history and social care is at tipping point. Jeremy Hunt appears to be finally waking up to the scale of the crisis but he must now accept responsibility. Instead he offers just hand wringing but no solutions.

“This week we have seen more and more statistics revealing that patients are waiting longer, and suffering longer in discomfort.

“Government advisor Lord Carter has extraordinarily called NHS conditions ‘warlike’ and now Sir Robert Francis says there is an ‘existential crisis’ for the health service warning that another Mid Staffs is ‘inevitable.’

“By making such stark warnings Sir Robert Francis blows apart Jeremy Hunt’s rhetoric on putting patient safety first.

“The

Prime Minister can't just put her head in the sand and ignore these astounding warnings. This is clearly not just a 'small number of incidents' as she glibly suggested.

"The Government's mismanagement of the NHS is causing chaos and misery for patients. We can't go on like this. They need to listen to the experts and explain fully in the Budget in a few weeks time how they will put the NHS and social care on sustainable footing. NHS patients and their families should never be put through a winter like this again.

Ends