

St Athan Airfield: Maximising the Economic Benefits

A 10 year contractual joint venture between Welsh Government and Cardiff International Airport Ltd (CIAL) will drive efficiencies and integrated service provision.

Under the plans the business park, combined with the airfield activity, will generate significant economic benefits to Wales amounting to around £236m and approximately 2000 jobs, which includes the 750 already committed by Aston Martin.

The transition to civilian operation of the airfield and business park combined with the completion of the new northern access road in 2019 and the Aston Martin project make St Athan an exciting opportunity ready to deliver jobs and projects.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“We know we do not have the internal expertise to operate and manage an airport directly. Under the current arrangements we have an obligation to the MOD to operate, manage and maintain the airfield for military purposes.

Our plan now is to transfer responsibility for airfield operations including management and maintenance, security, radar services and air traffic control to a single source supplier.

Cardiff International Airport Ltd (CIAL) has been identified as the only supplier capable of providing all services required, due in part to its proximity to St Athan.

We have developed a proposal to manage the transition of the airfield from Military Aviation Authority (MAA) to Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) licensing and have begun making submissions to CAA in this respect. We have also entered into a JV contract with Cardiff International Airport Ltd which will enable operation of the airfield and air traffic control to be delivered by them in a phased manner to ensure continuity of service.”

News of the joint venture follows Cardiff International Airport Ltd beginning an exercise of public engagement on its Masterplan, which is aimed at further developing the importance of the Cardiff Airport and St Athan Enterprise Zone as a centre of aeronautical excellence.

Deb Barber, CEO of Cardiff Airport, added:

“The Minister’s announcement complements the release of our draft Masterplan which sets out our vision up to 2040. Since Cardiff Airport came under public ownership in 2013, we have worked tirelessly to improve the terminal infrastructure, increase passenger numbers and welcome new routes and airlines to Wales.

As we enter the next phase of our journey, we remain focused on delivering a sustainable airport business focused on continued passenger growth, improving infrastructure and maximising opportunities to diversify the business.

As such, we welcome the opportunity to take over the operation, management and maintenance of the St Athan airfield and business park and remain grateful to our shareholder for recognising the potential of Cardiff Airport, both as a key asset for Wales and a contributor to the local economy.”

[Next steps to strengthen local government announced](#)

In March he published ‘Strengthening Local Government – Delivering for People’ – our Green Paper consultation aimed at invigorating the debate on the future of local government in Wales.

The Green Paper set out a vision for stronger, more empowered councils which can provide bold, determined and focused local leadership. The Green Paper offered three possible ways of achieving this: voluntary mergers; phased mergers; and comprehensive mergers at the earliest opportunity.

The Cabinet Secretary today published the responses to that consultation, and announced he was establishing a new group to take forward the reform programme which would enable councils to merge voluntarily and which will design new structures and ways of working which will deliver on a new vision for empowered local government.

Alun Davies said:

“For a great deal of time many groups and individuals, including local government leaders, told me that the current system and structures for local government were not sustainable.

“I want to work with local government on a shared vision for the future, and to jointly develop solutions to the challenges they

face. Those challenges – about how we maintain progressive public services in the context of long-term austerity – are not going to go away.

“The consultation responses suggested there was an appetite amongst local government to work together to progress voluntary mergers and increase and improve regional working. I therefore intend to introduce the Local Government (Wales) Bill early next year to legislate to enable this to move ahead at the earliest opportunity.

“Therefore I also intend to establish, in partnership with the WLGA, an independent working group to drive a shared approach which will shape the future of local government in Wales.”

Derek Vaughan has agreed to lead this work and will chair this working group. The membership of the working group will be drawn largely from local government and supported by a joint Welsh Government and WLGA secretariat, taking into account the broad range of views and ideas expressed during the consultation.

The group will be asked to identify common ground and to propose a way forward on structures, additional powers, flexibilities and support for change. They would be tasked with creating a plan for change, which would include proposals for voluntary mergers driven by local government and how those mergers might best be supported.

Councillor Debbie Wilcox – Leader of the WLGA stated:

“This approach to taking forward the issue of local government reform is to be welcomed. The WLGA’s position is clear. We are supportive of any councils who desire to merge voluntarily and are committed to working collaboratively to deliver services and this group will consider the potential support that might be available should councils choose to merge.”

“The key point is that sustainability is not achieved by structures but resources and service transformation. The formation of this joint working group is therefore timely to address such issues, and strengthens the democratic base and powers available to councils.”

[Brexit means it is time to come up](#)

with a new way of funding the nations of the UK – Mark Drakeford

He will also call on the UK government to make good the promise made during the referendum that Wales will not lose out on funding as he launches the Welsh Government's latest Brexit policy paper setting out proposals to design a new funding system to guarantee fair and continuing investment for Wales and the rest of the UK.

The proposals include:

- Development of a new approach to funding which promotes fairness across the UK, encourages balanced economic growth across all parts of the country and based on the consent of all the nations of the UK.
- Replacing the Barnett formula with a new, rules-based system which makes sure the allocation of resources within the UK is based on relative need.
- Wales must not lose a penny of funding due to Brexit, with the UK Government replacing EU funding without any top slicing or conditions attached.
- Wales must have continued access to important European partnerships and networks such as Horizon 2020, ERASMUS+, the Creative Europe Programme, the European Investment Bank and others.
- A new way of the 4 nations of the UK working together to agree fiscal issues to replace the current EU framework.
- New bodies independent of government to oversee the new system and resolve disputes.

Mark Drakeford said:

“The current way money is allocated across the UK is not fit for purpose. More than ever Brexit shows the time has come to change it for the better.

“We need a new system for how we work out the funding needs for each nation and benefit all parts of the UK. This is about fairness and making sure areas of greatest need get the resources they require.

“Brexit brings considerable uncertainty and will have an impact on every nation and region of the UK and we must consider how all this will function outside the EU. We have put forward proposals on how funding can be agreed, and how disputes between the UK Government and devolved governments can be resolved.

“We also need ongoing access to EU programmes that bring investment and opportunities for Wales.

“Our proposals are for all of the UK, not just Wales. The UK

government must now work with the nations, regions and cities of the UK to develop fair funding systems that will ensure a better future for all.”

Tim Peake joins Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to announce £7.2m to get girls into STEM

The astronaut, joined the Minister at an event organised by The Prince's Trust Cymru at Tramshed Tech where they met young people involved in the youth charity's STEM-related programmes, There, the Minister announced an investment of £7.2m, including £5.2m of European Union funding, for two similar projects. Gwynedd Council's £1.9m STEM Gogledd and Swansea University's £5.3m Technocamps 2 have been awarded £1.4m and £3.8m of EU funding, respectively.

Both projects will help to ensure young people, particularly girls and young women, continue STEM studies at GCSE and beyond with the aim of pursuing STEM-related careers.

Over the next four years, STEM Gogledd will work with 600 young people, 60% of whom will be female, to enrich and promote STEM subjects through a range of activities that complement the mainstream curriculum within schools across Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy.

Technocamps 2 will work with 3,600 young people across West Wales, North Wales and the South Wales Valleys, two-thirds of whom will be female. It will target secondary schools which do not currently offer computer science as an option at GCSE, or where the subject is only recently available. The project will enable pupils in these schools to take part in workshops to build on their existing knowledge and enthusiasm for IT and computing.

Announcing the funding, the Minister said:

“It is a pleasure to be standing alongside Tim Peake today to announce such an important investment which will help to build the skills of our young people to help drive a the Welsh economy.

“Wales must become a STEM nation if we are to build a modern, dynamic, open economy that benefits everyone in Wales. Both the pace and nature of technological change is increasing dramatically and, to have the skilled workforce to capitalise on it, it is vital we have more young people who choose to study STEM subjects to a

sufficiently high standard. While this is quite a challenge to address for both boys and girls, the challenge for girls is much greater.

“This is why I am grateful to organisations like The Prince’s Trust for their pioneering programmes and to role models, like Tim, who are influential in promoting the study of STEM subjects. Tim’s Principia mission inspired a generation and showed just how far, literally, science can take you.

“We cannot just rely on people like Tim, though. We must all play our part in stimulating interest in these crucial subjects as a way of securing the next generation of STEM professionals in Wales. This is why I am so pleased to announce this £7.2m investment, £5.2m of it from the EU, for STEM Gogledd and Technocamps. This is a great example of EU funds helping to enthuse and excite young people, particularly girls, about the opportunities available to them.”

Philip Jones, Director of The Prince’s Trust Cymru said:

“We are delighted that Tim Peake was able to join us and Welsh Government in promoting the importance of STEM to Welsh Education today. At The Prince’s Trust Cymru, we believe every young person should have the chance to succeed, and we believe Welsh Government’s latest commitment to STEM activities will help transform more young lives in Wales.”

[Transport Secretary calls on UK Government to invest in Welsh rail](#)

In May, Ken Skates announced Cardiff University’s Professor Mark Barry would lead on the case for investment in rail infrastructure in Wales, against the backdrop of the UK Government’s £50bn investment in HS2.

The Transport Secretary will summarise the case in the Senedd this afternoon (Tuesday 17 July).

He will tell Assembly Members:

“The initial findings of this work are stark. Wales has not received an equitable share of UK rail investment over a sustained period, denying us the economic benefits enjoyed elsewhere in the

UK.

“Network Rail’s Wales Route, which makes up 11% of the network, has received little more than 1% of total spend on enhancements in England and Wales.

“This has resulted in low lines speed on the South Wales Mainline, capacity and speed constraints along the North Wales Coast, infrequent commuter services for the Swansea Bay city region, and inadequate cross-border services in both North and South Wales.

“I continue to support HS2, but call once again on the UK Government to make the right choices to benefit north Wales, and exert pressure on them to mitigate against the probable impact of HS2 on the economy in South Wales.”

The work carried out by Professor Barry highlights the use of old, inefficient, and unreliable infrastructure constraining the number, speed, and quality of services.

“These constraints dampen demand, restrict economic growth, and increase costs to passengers and tax-payers.

“I will continue to set out a broader vision for a successful rail network. One that helps us meet our obligations to the environment, responsibilities for Well-being and Future Generations, delivers the goals of the Economic Action Plan, and meets the UK Government’s commitment to rebalance the economy.

“The work undertaken has identified direct transport user benefits of at least £2bn, generated by reducing journey times for rail passengers. Additional benefits also arise from reduced road congestion leading to environmental and safety improvements.”

James Price, Chief Executive, Transport for Wales said:

“The success of the Wales and Borders rail service relies on efficient and reliable infrastructure with the ability to transport more people more efficiently. We look forward to working with the Welsh and UK governments to deliver improvements that meet the needs of passengers in Wales and across the border.”

Cardiff University Professor of Practice in Connectivity, Mark Barry said:

“Wales’ railways are stuck in second gear. Long-term under-investment compared to the UK as a whole has left them unfit for purpose.

“It’s no great surprise fewer people in Wales choose to use the train than in the rest of the UK, leading to less efficient rail operations, higher subsidies per passenger and more road congestion. This is a brake on our economic growth, improvement of air quality and carbon reduction.”