

Welsh Government working with DECA on plans for second Welsh Advanced Manufacturing and Research Institute

The Economy Secretary confirmed that following a meeting of the Deeside Enterprise Zone on 13th July, the Welsh Government has declared its intention to work with the Enterprise Zone Board and the Ministry of Defence led by the Defence Electronics and Components Agency (DECA), to develop a proposal that would see Wales' second AMRI situated on MOD land adjacent to the Deeside Industrial Park Interchange.

Wales second AMRI follows the first in Broughton which is currently under construction and due to open by the end of 2019.

Speaking ahead of his visit to the Farnborough Air Show, Ken Skates said:

“News that DECA are keen to work with us to develop an AMRI on Deeside is incredibly positive and exciting, particularly given DECA's prominence as a world leader in the test and repair of avionic and electronic component support services.

“Both I and the Deeside Enterprise Zone are hugely encouraged that the MOD supports, in principle, the use of such a prominent and accessible piece of land at the gateway to North Wales for this exciting project, and I am delighted to announce this as I travel to Farnborough to celebrate Wales' thriving and successful aerospace sector.

“In developing our plans for Wales' second AMRI we have listened carefully to the needs of business. As a result of that dialogue we intend to develop the second AMRI as an open access centre, which will include a real focus on skills development across the advanced manufacturing & materials and technology sectors. Delivering everything from apprenticeships right through to postdoctoral research it will be a real jewel in North Wales' crown.

“I am confident the second AMRI in Wales will be of huge benefit to companies across North Wales, including in the aerospace sector, and I look forward to attracting significant high value inward investors to the region, many of whom are already showing a keen interest.”

Speaking before attending the Farnborough Air Show where DECA are exhibiting, Geraint Spearing, Chief Executive, Defence Electronics & Components Agency said:

“Following the announcement in November 2016 that DECA and its industry partners BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman would become the global hub for F-35 component repair, I am delighted to be able to support Welsh Government, in principle on behalf of MOD, in taking forward their proposed plans for a second AMRI at DECA.

“I am also tremendously proud that, should this proposal proceed, we will be able to continue DECA’s commitment to growing apprenticeships and high-end manufacturing skills now and in the future supporting local, regional and national job sustainment, Welsh Government’s advanced manufacturing and skills strategies and the UK Government’s Prosperity Agenda.”

The Economy Secretary is visiting Farnborough to meet key players from the Aerospace Sector and celebrate the successes of companies based in Wales.

While at the show he will meet representatives of a range of Aerospace companies and organisations including Raytheon, Thales, Dennis Ferrati, Otto Fuchs and DECA.

The Economy Secretary will also visit the Qatar Airways Stand who have recently begun daily direct flights between Cardiff and Doha.

These, along with the direct Manchester flights serving North Wales, are opening up tourism and business links between Wales and vibrant markets in the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand China and India.

Expert group to consider improvements to residential leasehold in Wales

Groups representing different perspectives on leasehold, including residents groups, housebuilders, advice services, and housing professionals will come together next week in a task and finish group to consider a number of issues:

- failings in the leasehold system in Wales: how they impact on leaseholders, and recommendations to address these
- advising on production and dissemination of materials to better explain how leasehold works, guidance and relevant training for all those involved in buying or selling leasehold property;
- proposals for a voluntary code of practice for management agents
- options for freehold homeowners on private estates to challenge estate charges.

Rebecca Evans said:

“We have seen widespread criticism of poor practice in the use of leasehold in Wales. We will not support practices which have a negative impact on homeowners, and I have already taken action to prevent the use of leasehold in new build houses in Wales.

“In terms of where we go next, these are complex issues, and I have asked a wide range of interested parties to advise me so that I can take well thought through and appropriate steps to address the wide and varied concerns that have been raised with me.”

The group includes the Federation of Private Residents Associations, the Homebuilders Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing and has been convened for up to two years. It is anticipated that the Minister will receive a report from the task and finish group in summer 2019.

Further relaxation of Glastir obligations to help farmers during prolonged dry weather

Farmers and land owners have recently reported challenges in soil tillage and the increased risk of crop failure due to the current dry spell.

There will now be a blanket derogation on the establishment of root crops until 15 August. Although contract holders do not need to contact RPW, farm records such as activity diaries must be updated.

Alternatively, contract holders can request to not undertake the root crop option for 2018. In these circumstances, it will not contribute towards the 2018 payment but no penalties will be applied for not delivering the option either. Claimants must request this derogation in advance either in writing or through RPW online.

On unsprayed Spring Sown cereals, current rules prevent farm businesses from harvesting before 1 August or until 14 weeks after sowing (whichever is later). A blanket derogation will now allow harvesting to commence from 15 July. Again, contract holders do not need to contact RPW but farm records must be updated.

For contract holders with hay meadow options, a derogation has already been given to allow them to cut before the 15th July. Contract holders do not need to contact RPW although farm records must be updated.

Farmers and land owners experiencing difficulties in meeting other Glastir options or have animal welfare issues, such as availability of water for

livestock, are advised to contact RPW immediately for further consideration on a case by case basis.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

“The prolonged period of dry and hot weather has been a real challenge for farmers across Wales.

“I want us to be able to provide flexibility to them and I am pleased to be able to announce further temporary relaxations to Glastir obligations. These will not only support farmers to mitigate the impact of the dry period but enable them to continue delivering their Glastir commitments.”

Full details of the derogations and advice can be found on the [Glastir pages](#).

[£60m programme to develop new childcare settings across Wales](#)

Ministers are committed to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year. The 30 hours will be made up of the existing minimum of 10 hours of Foundation Phase and up to 20 hours of childcare with a registered provider.

The Childcare Offer is currently being roll-out across Wales, and will be available across the country by 2020.

The £60m grant programme, which will be spread over three years (2018-2021), will be focussed primarily on supporting the co-location of existing Foundation Phase provision with the new Childcare Offer provision on a single site, wherever possible.

This will involve either establishing new childcare settings or refurbish existing ones to ensure they meet the required standard that would be expecting of a setting delivering the Welsh Government’s Childcare Offer.

The programme will ensure the Childcare Offer is available to parents across Wales by ensuring there is sufficient childcare in the right areas, with a specific focus on developing new provision in areas that currently lack childcare services, in particular rural and disadvantaged areas.

The funding will also support the childcare sector in other ways, including:

- Supporting the growth and sustainability of the childcare sector across Wales, helping to create high-quality jobs in the sector;
- Improving the physical quality of childcare settings;
- Supporting the expansion of Welsh medium provision, in line with the Welsh Government's 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy; and
- Supporting SEN and ALN provision.
- Local authorities have been invited to bid for the funding.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"I'm really pleased to announce a significant £60m Welsh Government investment in new childcare settings across Wales, which will ensure parents across the country are able to access high quality, government-funded childcare places. This will not only ensure their children are given the very best start in life, but it will go a long way to help reducing the strain on family income and helping ensure childcare is not a barrier to them taking up employment or increasing their hours.

"This investment will help ensure the 30 hours offer is as clear and easy as possible for working parents to understand and children to access. As part of this, we need to enable parents, wherever possible, to be able to drop off their children and pick them up from the same site and access a seamless 30 hours of childcare, although wrap around provision will continue to be an important part of the answer for some children and parents."

The investment will help deliver the Welsh Government's commitment to introducing Community Learning Centres which provide extended services with childcare, parenting support, family learning and community access to facilities built around the school day.

[Economy Secretary in Rhymney to explore local opportunities and challenges](#)

The visits are part of his commitment to empowering and strengthening Wales' regions, so the fruits of prosperity are spread much more evenly across Wales.

It is an approach that is set out clearly in the Welsh Government's Economic

Action Plan, launched in December.

As part of his commitment to empowering Wales' regions, the Economy Secretary has appointed three Chief Regional Officers , one for South East Wales, one for North Wales and one for Mid and South West Wales, who will engage with and listen to partners within their region and represent their views and interests within the Welsh Government.

The Economy Secretary and the Chief Regional Officer for South East Wales, David Rosser, visited Rhymney Print Services, and Surevend Catering, two micro businesses on the Lawns Industrial Estate which Caerphilly Council is keen to develop further.

They also visited Philtronics in Hirwaun, part of the supply chain for the South East Wales semiconductor cluster, and attended a roundtable with companies and entrepreneurs to explore how digital technology can support care and retail in the area, which have been identified by the Welsh Government as foundation sectors.

Ken Skates said:

"I am absolutely committed to empowering Wales regions and building on their individual strengths in order to secure maximum economic growth for Wales.

"My Economic Action Plan, recognises that each region of Wales has its own opportunities and challenges and that a one size fits all approach to Economic development will not go far enough to drive the regional economic growth that Wales needs.

"I have appointed Chief Regional Officers to provide a regional voice in Government. They will listen to and involve local partners in decision making and feedback local intelligence that will help to tailor our work, and in the case of South East Wales, support work to deliver the priorities of Our Valleys, Our Future to create thousands of new, fair, secure and sustainable jobs in the Valleys. Visits and meeting like the ones we have enjoyed today will be absolutely key to this approach."

Later in the day, the Economy Secretary visited section two of the A465 to see progress on the scheme which is now nearly three-quarters complete.

The scheme includes 2km of cycleway and six pedestrian and cycle-bridges to support the Welsh commitments to Active Travel.

There are also impressive structures, including a concrete arch bridge at Gilwern which is the largest of its type in the world, and the gateway bridge at Brynmawr which involved bringing one of the largest cranes operating in the UK to site to lift it in place.

The Economy Secretary said:

“The scheme is delivering a range of benefits around local employment, education and training. Importantly, and in line with the priorities set out in Our Valleys, Our Future we want people who use this new road to see it not as a bypass, but as a destination to thriving communities and a growing local economy.”