

New £100m train depot to open in Taffs Well

The Welsh Government will invest nearly £100m in the new Transport for Wales depot which will house and service 36 of the new Metro vehicles operating on the Taff Vale lines.

The depot will also become the base for 400 train crew, 35 Metro vehicle maintenance staff and a South Wales Metro integrated control centre employing 52 staff.

As part of the Welsh Government's £194m investment in Wales wide station improvements, Taffs Well will also see its railway station being modernised, with a park and ride facility to improve commuter access to the South Wales Metro.

The new depot at Taffs Well will complement existing South Wales depots including the one in Canton, which will benefit from around a £5m investment to modernise maintenance facilities so it can support the new tri-mode rolling stock being introduced as part of the new rail service.

There will also be investment in enhanced stabling facilities in Treherbert and Rhymney, and an upgrade of the station at Rhymney to accommodate more and longer tri-mode rolling stock.

Ken Skates said:

“Public investment with a social purpose is right at the heart of our new approach to rail and in line with our Economic Action Plan, and we are determined to ensure that our £5bn investment in rail services maximises opportunities for Welsh business, stimulates the Welsh economy and develops the local skills base, creating and supporting as many local jobs as possible.

“The construction of the Taff's Well depot presents one of the first opportunities for Welsh suppliers to directly benefit from our £738m investment in the South Wales Metro which will see us creating a sustainable and connected transport infrastructure. I am genuinely excited about the benefits of this public sector investment making a real and tangible difference to Welsh businesses and communities.”

Clearance and construction work for the new depot is expected to start in 2019 and complete by mid 2022.

Transport for Wales will procure construction companies for the new depot through Sell2Wales and the Stride framework to ensure that economic benefits for Wales are maximised.

Less reliance on hospitals & more care closer to home – Health Secretary outlines revolution in Wales’ health & social care

The proposals are set out in the Welsh Government’s long-term plan for the future of health and social care in Wales, A Healthier Wales, which focuses on providing more joined-up services, in community settings – removing many of the current frustrations expressed by those both using and working within the system.

In the future people will only go to a general hospital when it is essential. The intention is to create even better care locally, with support and treatment available across a range of community-based services. This shift will mean that when hospital based care is needed it can be accessed more quickly,

The changes will begin immediately, with a £100million Transformation Fund to support the implementation of the plan. The funding will be targeted at resources to speed up the process, including the development of new integrated prevention services and activities in the community.

Vaughan Gething said:

“This year we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the NHS, which was born here in Wales. We remain hugely proud of its achievements and all who work within it. However, it is clear that much has changed in those 70 years. With an increase in life expectancy and our continued public health challenges the service is facing increasing pressure.

“Today’s plan sets out our vision for the future – it looks at how we will adapt to meet these future challenges and transform the way we deliver health and social care. We will deliver that change and remain true to the core values of the NHS to provide free healthcare for all.”

This is the first time Welsh Government has set out a shared plan for health and social care. The aim is to see a shift from healthcare which focuses on treating people when they become unwell, to one that provides services which support people to stay well, lead healthier lifestyles and live independently for as long as possible.

There will also be more focus on seamless services, which are designed to fit around the individual. Information will be shared between services and providers, allowing a smoother patient experience. This will also allow those with the greatest need to be treated first and make the most effective use of resources.

The plan also commits the Welsh Government to increasing investment in digital technologies and to support and develop the workforce, including unpaid carers and volunteers.

The Health Secretary added:

“The Parliamentary Review found that much of what we are doing in health and social care in Wales is right, but that change needs to be made to secure services for the future and to ensure people continue to get the best care.

“Today we are responding to that review. This will be a revolution from within the health service. We have to move on from the idea that the hospital is the first or best place for you to be when you are unwell. That isn’t always the case, especially when there are a range of local services that will allow you to remain safely at home.

“I recognise the challenge and this will take time, but change will begin immediately. By the time we celebrate the 80th anniversary of our NHS I expect to see a stronger, joined-up system between health and social care that will be fit to serve people for generations to come.”

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, said:

“To respond effectively to our ageing population, we must re-evaluate the way we view social care. This is the first time Welsh Government has produced a joint plan for health and social services. It recognises the extremely important role social services play in promoting good health, keeping people independent for longer and reducing admissions to hospital. It makes sense to view it in partnership with health services, with all parts of the system working together to deliver better outcomes for all.”

Don't let Brexit chaos derail the Welsh economy

First Minister Carwyn Jones has today issued a stark warning that economic opportunities post-Brexit are being undermined by uncertainty and a chaotic approach to negotiations by the UK Government.

Statistics released today show Welsh exports continue to rise, with businesses exporting £16.4 billion worth of goods in the year to March 2018 – an increase of £1.1 billion on the previous 12 months.

Welsh exports to EU countries increased by £649 million (7 per cent), while exports to non EU countries increased by £439 million (7.3 per cent) over the year.

The statistics also show exports to EU countries accounted for 60.6% of Wales' exports, in comparison with the UK figure of 49.6%. Taking into account the 70 plus countries with Free Trade Agreements that the UK has access to through its membership of the EU's Customs Union, nearly three in every four pounds earned by Welsh businesses from overseas sales depends on our relationship with our EU partners.

The First Minister is therefore calling on the UK Government to provide clarity to Welsh business on the UK's future relationship with Europe, so they can properly prepare and continue to grow.

Speaking on a visit to Concrete Canvas, a Pontypridd based manufacturing businesses that exports 85% of its goods, the First Minister said:

“Wales' export market continues to grow – and this £1.1 billion increase is really great news for the Welsh economy.

“Today's statistics are the result of a great deal of hard work and tenacity by our exporting companies, such as Concrete Canvas, who I have the pleasure of visiting today.

“I am delighted by the continued success of Welsh businesses who are succeeding in their efforts to increase their share of overseas markets, despite the looming threat of Brexit on the Horizon.

“It is vital this success continues. But, in order for this to happen, our businesses urgently need clarity on our future relationship with Europe. The EU is already warning businesses in Europe to factor in the risk of a no deal Brexit and reduce reliance on components and products that are manufactured in the UK.

“Such uncertainty will have a direct impact on Welsh businesses and their ability to export. While the Welsh Government is working hard

to support exporting companies, what they urgently need is clear direction from the UK Government.

“The UK Government needs to recognise that the approach they have taken so far simply isn’t working. The Prime Minister needs to go back to the drawing board, rub out the red lines and work with the EU27 to retain alignment with the Single Market and a new, durable Customs Union with the EU.

“This is the only way we will secure a Brexit that allows Welsh businesses to retain their existing trade partners, safeguard the economy and protects the jobs and incomes of the people of Wales.

“The country will survive a hard Brexit, but it will not continue to thrive. Exports figures such as the ones we are celebrating today will drop, there will be lower growth, lower investment, fewer jobs and smaller incomes. This isn’t remoaning, this isn’t Project Fear part 2, it what the Government’s own figures conclusively show.”

[Keolis and Amey to open new Welsh headquarters and design hub and create 130 new Welsh jobs](#)

Following award of the contract for the Wales and Borders rail service and South Wales Metro to KeollisAmey, Keolis UK has announced it will move its headquarters from London to a new office in Wales by 2019, and will relocate its global rail division from Paris to Wales by 2020.

Meanwhile Amey will open a new design hub in Wales where it will offer consultancy services and further jobs will be created when the companies open a shared services and customer contact centre providing services to both businesses.

These jobs are in addition to the 600 jobs and the 30 apprenticeships a year announced earlier this week.

Ahead of a meeting with Alistair Gordon and Nicola Hindle from Keolis and Amey, Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“In line with our Economic Contract, public investment with a social purpose is right at the heart of our new approach to rail, and I am delighted the new rail contract will be delivering

tangible and significant economic benefits for Wales.

“The decision by internationally recognised companies Keolis and Amey to between them locate two headquarters and two new offices to Wales is a real coup, and a move that we predict will provide a significant economic boost, beginning with the creation of a further 130 high quality jobs. These are in addition to the 600 jobs announced earlier in the week.

“KeolisAmey has also committed to becoming a Living Wage employer by 2021 and they will ensure that the Real Living Wage is cascaded throughout the significant supply chain

“On top of news earlier this week that the majority of the new trains will be assembled in Newport by Spanish company, CAF, who will be bringing their new manufacturing base to Wales, there is no doubt that the new rail contract will deliver not only improved train services but also very real economic benefits for Wales.”

Alistair Gordon, CEO of Keolis UK, said:

“Being selected as Transport for Wales’ partner for the next 15 years means that we’ll be a part of the fabric of Wales for almost a generation. Moving our headquarters here underlines our commitment and embeds us within the communities we’ll be serving.

“Wales is a great place for any company to base itself. As part of the procurement process, KeolisAmey was exposed to both business and life in Wales and we were impressed with the commitment, skills and quality of life Wales offers. This, coupled with the extensive and innovative nature of Transport for Wales’ ambitions, means that Wales is an obvious location for us.”

Mr Gordon also confirmed that Keolis’ new HQ will become a centre of excellence, working closely with the shared service centre to become a centre of knowledge which can be utilised by all Keolis’ subsidiaries.

It will also support the further development of Keolis’ businesses in the UK with new developments in parking, cycling, buses and technology all being led from Wales.

Nicola Hindle, Managing Director of Consulting & Rail at Amey, said:

“As part of our long-term commitment to Wales, and building on our existing presence with over 300 employees delivering services for the Welsh people, we will be investing in a new Amey Consulting design hub in Wales.

“This new office will be a fantastic addition to our strategic

network of consultancy hubs across the UK in Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Motherwell, Edinburgh, Belfast and Crawley.”

[Extended Pupil Development Grant to reach well beyond the classroom](#)

The new fund, [announced today](#) by Education Secretary Kirsty Williams, will also cover equipment for activities within the curriculum, such as design and technology.

In addition, parents will also be able to access funding for equipment for out of school hours trips, including outdoor learning.

The new fund, which will be in place ahead of the new academic year in September, will become another element of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) and will be known as PDG – Access.

As well as making funding available for new uniforms and activities both in and outside the classroom, PDG – Access will be available to a wider range of pupils than the previous School Uniform Grant and attract a higher per pupil funding level of £125.

For the first time, learners in both Reception and Year 7, who are eligible for free school meals will fall within scope of the funding. Unlike the previous school uniform grant, all looked after children in these year groups will also be covered.

As with the previous scheme, the funding will be distributed via local authorities. The Welsh Government has worked with local authorities to develop the grant and will continue to do so to make sure that the funding is being used effectively and that good practice is being shared amongst schools.

Announcing PDG-Access today, Kirsty Williams said:

“Reducing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is at the heart of our national mission to raise standards.

“The Pupil Development Grant has already been described as “invaluable” by schools. PDG – Access will allow us to go that step further in supporting our disadvantaged learners to reach their full potential and narrowing the attainment gap between those learners and their peers.”

In addition to the grant, further consideration is also being given to current non-statutory school uniforms guidance and how it can be strengthened.