

Selling Wales to the world – views sought on new strategy to raise Wales’ global profile

The ambition is to create a new International Strategy for Wales, identifying the priorities, image and messages we should be presenting to the world.

The Strategy will build on the strong links Wales has developed with the rest of the world since devolution and respond to a changing global market – including exploiting the growing market in China and other eastern economies.

Wales’ approach to the world has been defined by our relationship with the EU. The new Strategy will recognise the changing nature of this relationship, acknowledging that Wales will always remain a European country and the importance of sustaining European business and preserving jobs.

As well as strong business links, the strategy will explore our other influential relationships with the rest of the world, including culture, arts and sport.

The Minister for International Relations, Eluned Morgan, said:

“Wales has so much to offer the world. We have a spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation, a skilled and dedicated workforce and excellent links with the rest of the UK and Europe, making us arguably the best place in the UK to invest and start-up a new business.

“Our rich culture and history, breath-taking landscape and reputation for adventure makes us a great place to visit, while our award-winning food and drink, sporting achievements and internationally acclaimed research are things we should be fiercely proud of. But, are we doing enough to convince the world of this?

“At such an important point in our relationship with the EU and the rest of the world, we are developing a new International Strategy to make sure we are in the best position possible to exploit every opportunity to promote Wales to the world.”

The minister added:

“At such a crucial point in our country’s history it feels important to get as much input as possible to help shape a new International Strategy for Wales.

“Government certainly does not have a monopoly on good ideas and we

are looking for views from as many people as possible so we can be confident we are sending the right messages and presenting the best image of Wales to the world.”

The minister will today meet for the first time with the Task and Finish Group established to inform the development of the International Strategy. Members have been selected for their knowledge of operating in an international environment and will help to identify priorities for international engagement.

[Have your say now >](#)

“Wales – Ireland links more important than ever” – Lord Elis-Thomas

He will meet with Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Brendan Griffin TD and celebrate the connections between the two countries during a St David’s Day reception. The Deputy Minister said:

“We’re as keen as ever to promote and foster Welsh links with Ireland; we have many similarities in terms of our traditions, culture and economies. Wales – Ireland links are more important than ever, which is also evident by Irish Government’s announcement that the Irish Consulate will re-open in Cardiff later this year.”

Lord Elis-Thomas will also meet with the Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland, Niall Gibbons, ahead of a Welsh Government St David’s Day Reception at National Museum Ireland where a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between National Museum of Ireland and National Museum Wales regarding a new partnership between the two cultural organisations.

Guests at the reception will also have a preview of the Visit Wales’ Year of Discovery marketing campaign which will go-live in Ireland on March 4 on TV and radio on demand and across digital platforms. Visit Wales have also embarked on partnerships with Stena Line and Irish Ferries – which will encourage more Irish visitors to discover Wales.

This year for the first time, Visit Wales have introduced elements of the Irish language into the Year of Discovery marketing campaign, signifying our long and special relationship as nations.

The evening will also celebrate the Welsh language – one of the first cornerstones to connect and bind Wales with Ireland as a Celtic Nation. As part of the UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages, The Deputy

Minister will also announce a new cultural initiative – Tylwyth (The Clan).

Tylwyth is a project by the National Eisteddfod of Wales, working in partnership with Bangor University's Pontio, and the Irish, Dublin-based circus performance company, Fidget Feet. Written by Gwyneth Glyn, Twm Morys and Myrddin ap Dafydd, it is an original contemporary musical circus which brings to life the story of some of the legends of Wales and will be performed at the National Eisteddfod in Llanrwst this August.

Lord Elis-Thomas said:

“When the UK leaves the EU this form of co-operation will become even more important and we look forward to working on long term, innovative partnerships. It is vital that we continue to focus our activities in Ireland, and we will continue to collaborate and work in partnership to ensure that we grow and prosper with the wealth of opportunities that the Wales Ireland relationship has to offer.”

[Lesley Griffiths officially names new fisheries patrol vessel and hands over 'Pride of Wales' vessel to Liberia Government](#)

As per tradition Lesley Griffiths poured champagne over the new FPV Lady Megan, which has been built and manufactured in Wales as part of the Welsh Government Vessel replacement programme, during the naming ceremony in Conwy Marina.

The vessel is named after Criccieth-born Lady Megan Arvon Lloyd George, who was a Welsh politician and became the first female Member of Parliament (MP) for a Welsh constituency.

The vessel has its own shield with a design incorporating a symbol of a Welsh dragon holding a protective portcullis symbol.

The vessel, which weighs 56 tonnes and can reach speeds of up to 28 knots, is equipped with GPS, Radar, search lights and a wet laboratory, and can accommodate eight people.

Lesley Griffiths boarded the new vessel and was given a tour to see how it will be used to protect Welsh waters from illegal fishing activity and safeguard Wales' fishing industry. It is part of a new multi-million pound

fleet also including FPV Rhodri Morgan, FPV Catrin, FPV Gwenllian and FPV Siwan.

During the visit, Lesley Griffiths also officially handed over the previous fleet's FPV Aegis, which will now be renamed the 'Pride of Wales' vessel to reflect its Welsh heritage, to the Liberian Government.

It comes after the Welsh Government's 'Wales for Africa' team approached the Liberian Government about the viability of a potential donation of FPV Aegis. After extensive discussions between the team, World Bank Fisheries Department representatives, the EU Fisheries Team and Liberian Coastguard and Fisheries institutions an agreement was reached for the handover.

As a result of the donation, the 'Pride of Wales' vessel will help protect the 40,000+ Liberians who use dugout canoes to catch fish to feed their families, as well as the wider community from foreign trawlers operating illegally in Liberian waters. Fish provides 60% of the protein requirements of Liberia which has been ravaged by civil war and more recently Ebola.

During a short ceremony flags were changed on the FPV Aegis to signify its new ownership, in front of representatives from the Liberian Government

Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said: "I'm delighted to officially name the FPV Lady Megan and see the cutting edge technology that will be used to protect Welsh waters from illegal fishing activity and safeguard Wales' fishing industry.

"It is more important than ever that we use state of the art facilities like these to ensure Wales continues to effectively enforce fisheries and marine laws. I'm immensely proud of the whole fleet we now have and look forward to seeing them in action.

"Brexit will present us with a number of challenges, but these vessels put us in fantastic stead to support our fishing industry and improve future sustainability."

Speaking about the handover of FPV Aegis to the Liberian Government, she said:

"It is a great honour to be able to hand over this retired vessel to the Liberian Government. I know it will be of great benefit to their industry. It is important assets like these can be reused, as it ensures environmental sustainability as well as helping build links with partners around the world."

Minister for International Relations, Eluned Morgan, said:

“The Wales for Africa programme has gone from strength to strength in recent years and the handover of FPV Aegis to the Liberian Government is just another example of the fantastic work being carried out.

“This will make a massive difference to the Liberian people and we hope the benefits this gesture makes to their fishing industry will be felt for many generations to come. I’m proud projects like these build relationships between Wales and Africa, at a time when it is more important than ever that we look outwards at how we can support projects abroad.”

[Busiest January on record for Welsh emergency departments](#)

During a visit to Ysbyty Glan Clwyd emergency department today (Thursday, 21 January), Mr Gething also said he wanted to see an improvement in performance at Emergency Departments, particularly in North Wales, where performance was well below the national average.

He said:

“Last month was the busiest January on record for Emergency Department staff. There was an increase in numbers of seriously ill patients attending, with emergency admissions and attendances at major emergency departments noticeably higher.

“Big spikes in cases of flu and gastroenteritis have contributed to pressure, with more flu cases confirmed in hospitals so far this winter than the same time last year.

“It is testament to our hard-working NHS staff that despite this pressure the number of patients seen and treated within the 4-hour target was the highest for January since 2014.

“Four health boards improved their four-hour performance compared to January last year. While the ambulance target was surpassed for the 41st consecutive month and the average response time for red and amber patients improved compared to the same time last year.

“However, I am disappointed to see an overall drop in emergency departments’ performance indicators, which has been particularly affected by the poor performance at two of the three Emergency Departments in north Wales. I have been clear with the Chief

Executive and Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board that I expect to see immediate and continuous improvement following substantial Welsh Government support.

“We are committed to whole system solutions to drive improvement – this is not an Emergency Department issue but one that can be improved by the wider health and social care system.”

The Minister welcomed significant improvements in the longest waiting times for planned care.

He said:

“We are investing record levels in our NHS, including almost £50m this year to tackle some of the longest waiting times. This investment is paying off as the latest figures show continuing improvement in this area. The number of people waiting over 36 weeks for treatment was 41% lower this December compared to December last year and all health boards are in a better position than they were last year.

“Diagnostic waits over eight weeks were 54% lower in December 2018 than December 2017 and 14 week waits for therapy services show an 83% improvement over the same time period. We expect further improvement in all these areas by the end of March.”

Mr Gething also pointed out that the number of cancer patients seen within the 62 day target improved on December last year and the number of people seen within the target period in 2018 was the highest ever for a calendar year.

“I am pleased to see the number of delayed transfers of care in January decreased by 8% compared to December and by 6% compared to January last year and continues to show a long term downward trend. This is an indication that our commitment to investing in social care is paying off and helping to relieve pressure on the health service.”

Cabinet to meet in North Wales

First Minister Mark Drakeford will meet Horizon at Wylfa, before meeting the

leader of Anglesey Council and hosting a roundtable of council and business representatives from across North Wales. He will be accompanied by Ken Skates, the Minister for Economy and North Wales.

The First Minister said:

“One of my immediate priorities has been to ensure North Wales has a strong voice in government and in the Cabinet so we have a strong focus on the region and its future.

“I appointed Ken Skates as Minister with responsibility for North Wales. Holding an early Cabinet meeting in North Wales is part of that effort.

“There has been some difficult news for North Wales over the past few weeks, and the uncertainty of Brexit is a source of concern for businesses across the region – Airbus has been clear about its views in the last week, for example.

“But we must – and we will – deliver for North Wales. We are committed to the region and are investing in the area’s economy.

“We will provide whatever assistance we can to support individuals and companies affected by the recent announcements. I will be listening carefully to what people tell me today.

“I have previously called on the UK Government to put in place a funding model to deliver large infrastructure projects such as Wylfa Newydd and I repeat that today.”

Ken Skates, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, added:

“We have strong relationships, which have been built across North Wales over many years, these are crucial now as we work together to respond to the announcements about Wylfa Newydd and Rhau and to the challenges of Brexit.

“Our commitment to North Wales is clear. We are making unprecedented investment in transport in the region, with £600m of developments planned. These include the Caernarfon to Bontnewydd bypass, with work now underway. We are moving ahead with the next stages of the third Menai crossing, which includes the appointment of technical advisers to develop the scheme in more detail with stakeholders and we are making progress with the vital A494-A55 Flintshire Corridor.

“The Welsh Government is investing significantly in supporting the long-term North Wales economy, including £20m in a new Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility (AMRI) at Broughton.

“We have invested £20m of Welsh Government and European funding in the Menai Science Park on Anglesey, which has enjoyed a successful first year, and we have pledged to match the UK Government’s commitment to the North Wales Growth Deal and called on it to increase the contribution to allow the region to maximise its impact.”

The Cabinet meeting will be in the Welsh Government’s Llandudno Junction office.