

First Minister takes step to protect Wales post-Brexit

In an unprecedented move, the Welsh and Scottish Governments have worked jointly on their opposition to the bill and have today tabled a memorandum setting out their detailed analysis of the bill as it is currently drafted.

The EU (Withdrawal) Bill would see all EU laws which affect the UK brought on to the British statute book on the day of Brexit. It would impose new constraints on the powers of the devolved nations and enable UK ministers to amend devolved legislation, bypassing the governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

As the Welsh Government publishes its official opposition to the bill, the First Minister said:

“The EU (Withdrawal) Bill, as it currently stands, would allow the UK government to hijack powers which should come to Wales post-Brexit.

“Our position is clear and unequivocal; we do not accept the bill in its current form and recommend that the Assembly does not grant its consent.

“This is not about stopping Brexit. This is about protecting the interests of the people of Wales. We simply cannot back any law which would see Wales lose influence over areas that are rightfully ours to control.

“We are ready and willing to work constructively with the UK government to reach agreement on the bill. But, if they continue to plough on regardless, they will spark a constitutional crisis, which they do not need and we do not want.

“I urge David Davis and his colleagues in Whitehall to seriously consider our proposals and amend the bill so we can get on with the most important job in hand; securing the best possible Brexit deal for the whole of the UK.”

Welsh Government factory expansion

plans for Invertek Drives heralds jobs growth

Invertek Drives Ltd already employs 180 people. It was first established in 1998 to manufacture controllers for electric motors found in everything from machines, fans and conveyors through to elevators.

It has ambitious plans to increase its turnover to £50 million by 2022 and to increase the number of employees to 230.

The company has grown consistently to accomplish global sales of more than £30m with a sales and service presence in over 80 countries worldwide.

The new factory is vital in order to maintain growth, the company requires bigger premises to increase production and to bring all its activities in Welshpool on to one site.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I am pleased our involvement in this expansion supports our vision to improve the Welsh economy, safeguarding established jobs and creating new posts.

“Invertek Drives already benefits its local community as an employer and through its use of local supply chains. This expansion will help to have an even more significant impact on the local economy.

“We are delighted to have the opportunity to help them achieve their ambitious plans for the future.”

Charles Haspel, Operations Director, Invertek Drives said:

“This major new development endorses Invertek’s significant commitment to the Mid Wales area as it seeks further growth in the high technology international industrial automation market.”

Huge increase in visitor spending in

Wales

In the 12 months ending July 2017, there were 102 million tourism day visits to Wales, with an associated spend of £4,874 million. The number of visits has increased 11% compared to the 12 months ending July 2016, while the amount spent has increased 51%.

Wales' performance is particularly strong in the GB context: for GB as a whole, the number of visits has decreased by 1% compared to the 12 months ending July 2016, while the amount spent has increased 5%.

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, said:

“These indications are very positive for 2017. In what is an extremely competitive market place, tourism in Wales is in a strong position and these figures continue to reflect the success we have experienced over the last two years.

“It's great news that we're attracting more visitors to Wales – but that visitors are also spending more while on a day trip – which is a boost to economy. In addition to this, 87% of respondents in our tourism barometer survey undertaken in June said they were confident about how their business would perform over the summer.

“We will continue with our campaign work to ensure that we make the most of the opportunities to attract those looking to holiday at home due to the weak pound and give people compelling reasons to visit Wales during the Autumn.”

Our Valleys, Our Future

These are the three priorities in Our Valleys, Our Future – the high-level action plan launched by the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys, in July.

The Blaenavon meeting is the latest in a series of public engagement events taking place in September and early October to discuss the plan.

Key themes to emerge from previous engagement sessions have included the need to work with businesses to develop skills; issues in relation to local transport and connectivity; the regeneration of local high streets; the need for public services to work better together and the cost and availability of child care.

All of these have been reflected in Our Valleys, Our Future, which was developed based on feedback from people living and working in the South Wales Valleys.

Minister for Lifelong Learning and the Welsh Language Alun Davies will be at the meeting together with fellow taskforce member Ann Beynon and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council leader Andrew Morgan. They will be joined by Alison Ward, Chief Executive of Torfaen Council and Councillor Anthony Hunt, leader of Torfaen Council.

Our Valleys, Our Future sets out a range of aims and actions in each of the three priority areas, including:

- Closing the employment gap between the South Wales Valleys and the rest of Wales by helping an additional 7,000 people into work by 2021 and creating thousands of new, fair, secure and sustainable jobs;
- Launching three pathfinder projects to look at how services and local delivery can be better joined-up in Llanhilleth, Ferndale and in Glynneath and Banwen;
- Exploring the development of a Valleys Landscape Park, which has the potential to help local communities use their natural and environmental resources for tourism, energy generation and health and wellbeing purposes.

“I am excited to be part of this work in the valleys – this part of Wales is close to my heart; it is where I was born and brought up. I recognise that many of the problems we face are deep-seated but I am determined the taskforce will make a real difference.

“We are committed to working with Torfaen Council, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the employment service, the police, schools and colleges and a host of voluntary organisations to help valleys communities go from strength to strength.”

The taskforce was set up a year ago to work with communities and local businesses across the South Wales valleys to deliver lasting economic change in the region; to create good-quality jobs, closer to people’s homes; improve skill levels and bring prosperity to all.

The taskforce will work to maximize job opportunities in the local economy, including in retail, care and the food industry. It will also encourage and provide support for existing and potential entrepreneurs.

World's first semiconductor cluster comes to Wales thanks to Welsh Government

Originally built for LG Semiconductors, the Celtic Lakes development at Imperial Park in Newport was sold by the Welsh Government to City Deal Councils for a £38m make over.

As one of the premier business locations in South East Wales, its use as a compound semiconductor wafer foundry is a key part of the Welsh Government's strategy to build the world's first semiconductor cluster – bringing high end jobs, investment and skills to Wales.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“It is hugely encouraging that Welsh Government's initial £12m investment in developing the cluster back in 2015 has been the catalyst for today's announcement that IQE plans to expand into the City Deal's new facilities. Not only is it extremely exciting news for the Welsh economy, securing additional jobs and investment, but it further cements Wales as a world leader in this state of the art technology.

“With the world's first compound semiconductor cluster located here in South East Wales, we are punching well above our weight in developing technology which not only plays an increasingly vital role in the way we live our lives today but will drive innovation which will shape the world we live in tomorrow.”

The foundry will support the development of a compound Semiconductor Industrial cluster in the region, with the potential to:

- lever £375m of private sector investment,
- create up to 2,000 high skilled jobs,
- return the investment for use on other regional schemes, and
- create hundreds more jobs in the wider supply chain cluster

Compound semiconductors are more complex than silicon technology and offer lower power consumption, higher operating speeds and temperatures, light-emitting and detecting properties. These properties are opening up significant markets in the automotive, health and security sector not least in helping deliver 5G smart phones, the Internet of Things, tele-health and autonomous vehicles.

Dr Drew Nelson, Chief Executive of IQE plc said:

“Compound semiconductors are rapidly defining 21 century technologies and Wales is uniquely positioned to be centre stage of this global, high-tech industry sector.

“This dedicated compound semiconductor facility between Cardiff and Newport will act as a key component of the burgeoning cluster that is already cementing Wales’ reputation for technology leadership.

“The initiative is a shining example of what can be achieved through collaboration. The Welsh and UK governments, along with the ten councils that form the Cardiff Capital Region, have worked closely with academic institutes and industry to build an innovation infrastructure that will support and nurture the region as a true global player in new and emerging technologies.

“The facility will become the base for a number of compound semiconductor related activities, including IQE, where we expect to rapidly expand our production capacity to meet increasing demand for our technology.”