

No-Deal Brexit disastrous for North Wales – First Minister

He will be addressing the Deeside Business Forum's Brexit Business conference at Theatr Clwyd.

Ahead of the event Mark Drakeford said:

"We are at a critical point in the Brexit process and the message from the Welsh Government is clear, a no-deal Brexit is wholly unacceptable and must be ruled out as an option.

"Manufacturing is of critical importance to Deeside. Airbus alone employs 6,000 people, Toyota 600 and their suppliers thousands more. As Airbus and many others have made clear, a no deal outcome – which would seriously disrupt supply chains – would be disastrous.

"It is clear that a no-deal Brexit would be hugely damaging on North Wales, and must be avoided at all costs.

"But we also need a deal which gives business the long-term certainty it needs. Not one, like the UK Government's that only postpones, not removes the threat of the cliff-edge.

"The root of the problem isn't the EU but the refusal of the UK Government to commit to continued participation in the Single Market and Customs Union, a form of Brexit the EU would have preferred if it had not been for the Prime Minister's red lines.

"Our message to the UK Government is clear, rub out the red lines, go back to the drawing board in terms of the long-term relationship and provide the certainty business needs."

Housing investment in West Rhyl moves forward

Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Hannah Blythyn announced the Targeted Regeneration Investment funding for the project, being delivered by Denbighshire County Council with Pennaf Housing Group.

The first phase of the project will involve:

- the renovation of a property on Crescent Road into three affordable housing apartments for the over 55s
- two properties at on Water Street will be renovated to create six affordable housing apartments
- eight properties on Aquarium street will be renovated to create homes available under the Low Cost Home Ownership scheme
- a site on John Street will be redeveloped to create 15 accessible apartments suitable for older residents.

Hannah Blythyn said:

“This investment will create 32 affordable homes, revitalising old properties and will help to contribute to wider regeneration work going on locally. They will also contribute towards our commitment to build 20,000 affordable homes during this Assembly term.

“At the beginning of January we announced £2.5m of regeneration investment to support Denbighshire Council to buy and redevelop the Queens Buildings in Rhyl, which together with this investment is part of a much wider regeneration programme. I look forward to seeing this work develop, including these fantastic new homes in the area.”

The Welsh Government’s flagship Targeted Regeneration Investment programme is providing £100m of capital funding across Wales over three years to support regeneration projects in town centres and neighbouring areas.

This funding is supported by estimated further investment of at least £60 million from other organisations and businesses, providing an overall boost of £160 million to communities all over Wales. This is part of the Welsh Government’s regeneration strategy, which will invest £800m between 2014 and 2023. This includes around £250m from the Welsh Government supported by more than £550m from other organisations and businesses.

Cllr Tony Thomas, Denbighshire’s lead member for Housing, Regulation and the Environment, said:

“This funding will enable the Council and Pennaf to undertake further improvements to housing in the West Rhyl Regeneration Area and build on the success of the earlier property acquisition programme undertaken by the Council and the investment in new homes which was recently recognised as the best regeneration project of its size in the UK-wide Inside Housing awards. It will also contribute towards the delivery our Corporate Plan priority to provide affordable homes in the county.”

Ethical Code of Practice reaches 150 milestone

The Minister will speak at an event in Wrexham to mark the milestone, which has been reached less than two years after the Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains was first launched in March 2017.

The code asks public, private and third sector organisations to commit to a series of actions which are designed to tackle illegal and unfair employment and working practices.

All organisations receiving funding from Welsh Government, either directly or via grants or contracts, are expected to sign up to the code.

Ken Skates said:

“We need to make Wales a more equal nation, where everyone has access to fair work that pays a living wage and where all workers can develop their skills and careers.

“This ambition is at the heart of our Economic Action Plan, and it is why we developed our economic contract. This makes it very clear that businesses must demonstrate their commitment to fair work if they want to access Welsh Government funding.

“The code helps address this, and it’s a pleasure to celebrate this milestone at the event today.

“The code covers a spectrum of practices – from criminal, through unlawful, unethical and on to the positive practice of paying the Living Wage.

“The Economic Action Plan, our Code of Practice, and our ambition to be a Fair Work Nation – all contribute to the same objectives of promoting fair work, eliminating unlawful practice, and allowing our best employers to compete for contracts and customers on a level playing field.

“This is about providing our families and communities with access to secure work, a decent standard of living and prospects for the future.

“Moving forward I’m keen to build on this strong foundation and use our Economic Contract to encourage a greater number of firms in Wales to sign up to the code.”

Mobile bank Monzo chooses Cardiff

The digital bank has attracted huge amounts of media coverage over recent months and is famed for its smartphone app which provides Monzo customers with a user friendly analysis of their spending habits.

The app also enables Monzo customers to manage their money via the bank's bill splitting functionality, block their card instantly and spend abroad without fees or charges.

Last summer Monzo added to its products and services with the successful launch of a full current account and a Mastercard Debit card.

The bank's success and rapid growth means that it now has 1.3 million customers, and with more 100,000 new users signing up each month, this figure is set to soar.

As a result of its growing success, Monzo is now looking to expand and following £950,000 of Welsh Government support, the bank will be opening a new customer operations centre in Cardiff that will create 312 new jobs over the next four years.

This is in addition to the Monzo's existing headquarters in London that employs more than 500 people.

Economy Minister Ken Skates said:

"Our Economic Action Plan is clear on our commitment to supercharging the industries of the future and supporting businesses to innovate and compete in a rapidly evolving market place.

"Monzo's innovative business model, its ground breaking functionality and rapid growth has seen it quickly evolve into one of the world's leading digital banks and as a Welsh Government we are proud to have supported its expansion into Wales.

"I look forward to Monzo joining our thriving Financial and Professional Services Sector here in Cardiff and in doing so creating 312 high quality customer service jobs right in the heart of our capital."

Tom Blomfield, Monzo's CEO said:

"I'm very excited for us to be expanding our presence in Cardiff and continuing to provide amazing customer support for our 1.3

million customers. Over the next few years, we'll be hiring hundreds of people into our Cardiff office as we grow our customer base by millions more people”

Monzo is currently recruiting for customer operations roles in Cardiff and will shortly be moving offices in the centre of Cardiff, overlooking the castle.

[Right to Buy to end in Wales this month](#)

People who are eligible and wish to buy their own home must have completed an application form available from their landlord or the Welsh Government website and submitted it to their landlord before the upcoming deadline of 26 January 2019.

Housing and Local Government Minister Julie James said:

“We passed the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights Act to protect the stock of social housing in Wales from further reduction, so it is available to provide affordable housing for people who need it. This legislation is one of a range of actions we are taking to increase the supply of housing in Wales.

“Between 1981 and 2016, over 139,000 local authority and housing association homes were sold under the Right to Buy. This has led to many people, many of whom are vulnerable, waiting longer to access a home they can afford. Abolishing the Right to Buy is also giving social landlords more confidence to invest in building new social housing by removing the risk of these homes being sold after only a few years.

“We are committed to creating 20,000 more affordable homes by 2021 and we are supporting social landlords to help us to achieve this.”

Right to Buy has already been suspended in Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Powys, Swansea and Cardiff. Following the one year allowed under the Act to exercise their rights, the Right to Buy and associated rights will finally be abolished throughout Wales on the 26 January 2019.

Further information is available from housing associations and local authority housing teams. Information on the legislation and how it will affect tenants is available on the Welsh Government website.