

# **“A Welsh legal jurisdiction and a devolved justice system is inevitable” Counsel General tells Legal Wales conference**

Making the law accessible is vital to enable citizens to understand their rights and responsibilities under the law – something that has become increasingly important since repeated cuts have been made to legal aid and to other services designed to advise those in need of assistance or representation.

Addressing an audience of legal professionals the Counsel General set out his plans to improve accessibility, through a series of initiatives. The first of these initiatives is the Legislation (Wales) Bill which will be introduced later this year. This Bill will set Wales on a new journey to develop clear, accessible codes of law – a first for the UK.

The Counsel General told delegates that the bill will be accompanied by a draft Taxonomy of Codes, which will aim to organise Welsh law into comprehensive codes by the subject areas devolved to Wales.

Moving on from the bill the Counsel General expanded on other initiatives in place to improve accessibility. He said:

“We are working with the National Archives whose role it is to publish Welsh laws to develop a clearer and more accessible system of categorisation of law, prior to its future consolidation. This will enable us to organise the publication of legislation by subject matter, rather than by the date it is made, which will be a significant breakthrough.”

During his address the Counsel General discussed his intentions to re-launch the Law Wales website. He said:

“This site already serves a useful purpose but it remains a work in progress and its content is limited. I recognise that the content on the website falls short of people’s expectations, not least mine. If each of us as practitioners, legislators, academics, commentators and others in the Welsh legal community shared a small part of our experience and expertise, by producing content for Law Wales, this would have a huge impact. Collectively we can transform this asset from something that is little known and under used into a genuine public good for the people of Wales.”

Bringing his speech to a close the Counsel General commented:

“A process has begun to create a distinct legal infrastructure for Wales. This is a process that won’t stop. The process of making laws for Wales won’t stop, the divergence in laws between Wales and England won’t stop. The creation of a Welsh legal jurisdiction and the devolution of the justice system is inevitable.”

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## “Welsh Government here to support Refinitiv workers”- Ken Skates

The decision was taken by New York based private equity business Blackstone following its recent acquisition of the controlling share in parent company, Thomson Reuters, and is a devastating blow to the 300 highly skilled employees currently working at the Wrexham based finance business, formerly called Avox.

The Economy Secretary stressed that finding alternative employment for them was something his department were already actively pursuing.

He said:

“This is devastating news for not only for the skilled workforce, who have won many plaudits for their professionalism and productivity, but also for their families and the many communities in and around Wrexham who are affected.

Yesterday’s announcement caught everyone by surprise and my officials are meeting with the site management today to get clarity on the nature and timing of their decision. I expect the company to ensure those affected are properly supported and that it undertakes the 45 day staff consultation in accordance with its statutory obligations.

I have put my department into action immediately, looking to use our connections across the industry to help secure alternative employment for those currently working at Refinitiv as quickly as possible. This has proven to be successful elsewhere in Wales following job losses and my clear message to all those affected is that we will leave no stone unturned in our support.

As part of this, we have already contacted colleagues in the UK Government’s Department of International Trade to enquire as to the recruiting plans of the many companies within the financial

services industry operating in Chester and the surrounding area and are also in contact with our New York office for more intelligence on yesterday's announcement.

Should the decision to close the site be upheld following the 45 day consultation period our ReAct 3 team will be deployed. This programme provides a comprehensive package of support to individuals in Wales who are affected by redundancy.

This is an extremely difficult and uncertain time for all workers at Refinitiv and I can give them my absolute commitment that Welsh Government will do everything possible to help this skilled workforce find alternative employment following this extremely disappointing and sudden decision."

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## [Finance Secretary gives key note speech at 'EU funding post-Brexit' event](#)

The event which will be co-hosted by Julie James AM and Derek Vaughan MEP, will examine issues including how funding currently received from the EU should be replaced, how powers returning from the EU should be exercised in future, and how current arrangements which ensure a high degree of control by the Welsh Government and its partners over the way the funding is used can be built upon.

Speakers will also include former Scottish Secretary, Michael Moore Director of Strategic Business Development at Tata Steel, Deirdre C Fox, and Chair of ABMU Health Board, Professor Andrew Davies.

Speaking before the event, the Finance Secretary said:

"Through our Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit paper we have called for every penny of the £370 million that Wales currently receives from the EU' Structural and Investment Funds each year to be replaced by the UK government and added to the Welsh Government's annual budget.

"We are best placed to lead on regional investment in Wales. Over almost 20 years we have built up the experience, working closely with the regions of Wales, businesses and communities, who know what they need and the kind of investment that would benefit them.

“We have networks across Wales and the machinery on the ground to effectively devise and deliver regional investment. Whitehall simply does not have and cannot replicate this.

“Just as the Welsh Government is best placed, working with partners, to provide an overarching Welsh policy, each region is best placed to identify specific priorities, challenges and opportunities in their places and for their people.”

The ‘EU Funding post-Brexit’ event will take place between 2:00 and 5:30 pm at the Energy Safety Research Institute, Swansea University Bay Campus.

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## [Welsh Government marks the launch of new Rural Education Plan with innovative ‘E-sgol’ project](#)

Based on the successful ‘E-Sgoil’ initiative introduced by the Scottish Government in the Hebrides, ‘E-sgol’ will use video technology to connect classrooms. This means that pupils from one school can join classes at other schools remotely, and can access a greater range of subjects in both English and Welsh.

The project aims to bring all schools in Wales into the digital age by introducing innovative teaching techniques. It is just one of the measures in the Rural Education Action Plan which also includes the introduction of a presumption against closure of rural schools, a new Small and Rural School grant, and working alongside BT to improve connectivity in schools in difficult to reach areas. The 21st Century Schools capital investment programme which aims to create modern and sustainable education communities across rural Wales will play an important role in achieving this.

The action plan also sets out additional training and support opportunities for teachers and head teachers in rural areas through the Business Manager Pilot and National Academy for Education Leadership (NAEL) programme; improved emotional and mental health support through the CAMHS in-reach project and aims to ensure schools play a more central role in their communities.

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams said:

“Today’s E-sgol lesson has been great fun and has demonstrated how technology can provide solutions to some of the issues rural schools face. I am delighted to launch the project and am grateful

to the Scottish Government for their help in getting the technology to Wales.

“This project will connect pupils in Welsh schools with other schools across the country, and ensure they’re given the best learning experience even in the most rural parts of the UK.

“If we ensure that pupils and schools in rural Wales have the right support to succeed, then we can ensure that our rural communities and economy will go from strength to strength.”

Scottish Deputy First Minister and Education Secretary John Sweeney said:

“Our languages and culture are important to both our nations and we have strong visions of growth for Gaelic and Welsh going forward. It is particularly pleasing to see the innovative E-Sgoil model for digital learning, designed and championed by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, with support from the Scottish Government being adopted by the Welsh Government to support their young people’s language learning.

“In these times of uncertainty, it is important that we continue to work across our different Governments to identify further potential projects that could benefit our prosperity.”

Cllr Angus McCormack, Chairman of Education, Sport and Children’s Services at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said:

“Supported by the Scottish Government, we are constantly discovering new ways that e-Sgoil digital learning allows us to deliver education in ways which we have never before been able to do.

“Our vision is that all learners can experience an education enriched by digital technology. Given the aspirations we have for our respective languages, we are very pleased to be working in partnership with the Welsh Government in order to support their young people’s language learning.”

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## **A55 works completed ahead of schedule**

Work on the Kneeshaw Lupton underbridge near Junction 23 began on 17 September and the road will be fully re-opened on Friday 12 October, six days

before it was originally due to.

Taking place on a 24 hours a day, seven days a week basis, the work on the Kneeshaw Lupton underbridge has involved surface removal, waterproofing of the bridge deck, concrete repair and the replacement of bridge joints.

Due to the nature of the engineering works, boards have been in place with work taking place on the other side of these. Critical work on the bridge joints at either end of the structure, which involved hydro-demolition, has been carried out under cover and out of sight of the public to ensure their safety.

All work on the westbound carriageway will be completed by 6am on 12 October when traffic management measures will be removed.

Action has also been taken to offset the impact for the travelling public by ensuring work on the eastbound carriageway can be delayed until next year.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I am very pleased to announce essential improvements to the Kneeshaw Lupton underbridge on the A55 have been completed six days ahead of schedule. This is in no small part down to officials and contractors who have worked tirelessly to conclude work as quickly as possible and I thank them for their efforts.

“I also want to thank the travelling public for their patience whilst this work has been carried out. Disruption is never welcome on our roads, but this work has been absolutely necessary and as the waterproofing element needed to be laid in reasonable weather conditions, doing it after the busy summer period, but before the half term break, was the right time to act.

“The A55 is a vital route in North Wales and these improvements again strengthen its safety, resilience and reliability, matters which are an absolute priority. The Welsh Government is delivering for the region and our commitment and investment in the road network clearly demonstrates that.”