

Lesley Griffiths visits Catalonia and Basque Country to promote Welsh food and drink exports

During the visit, the Cabinet Secretary will meet with various food clusters to see how they are used in the promotion of their food and drink industry and how Welsh Food Clusters can learn from these to help our own businesses increase their trade and competitiveness.

In the Basque Country, the Cabinet Secretary will meet the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to discuss the development of a new EU network of 'renowned food regions' – the REGAL network. The network is focused on developing food culture and supporting entrepreneurship and innovation. This visit is one in an ongoing exchange of Ministerial visits between Wales and the Basque Country as we continue to strengthen collaborative links between the two.

Food clusters are groups of businesses with a common interest working together for the benefit of all. They aim to remove the isolation of firms, especially SMEs and connecting them to innovative systems. There are over 450 companies involved in the Welsh Clusters, generating business through increasing collaboration within the sector.

In February, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the Welsh food and drinks industry turnover has increased and stands on the edge of meeting the Welsh Government's ambitious 30% growth target.

Welsh food and drink exports increased overall by 8% from £403.8m in 2015 to £435.6m in 2016, including a rise in the value of these exports to the EU.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Cabinet Secretary said:

"I am pleased to be visiting Catalonia and the Basque Country to promote our thriving Welsh food and drinks industry, to learn from the success of their pioneering cluster initiatives and explore future collaborative opportunities.

"We've seen Welsh companies become global brands, such is the high quality of food and drink we produce in Wales. Our Welsh food and drink Clusters are powerful engines for driving future growth and opening up new market opportunities for our industry. This visit will help us to build on this, enabling us to learn from the experiences of Catalonia and the Basque Country and to strengthen the links between our countries.

"There are undoubtedly challenging times ahead. The EU remains our biggest export destination by quite a stretch. That is why it is more important than ever that we use every opportunity to build

collaborative partnerships within Europe and learn from the successes of their food and drink industries.

“The food and drinks industry is a key ‘foundation’ sector for us post-Brexit. This visit is therefore particularly timely as we work to secure a resilient and thriving industry in Wales after leaving the EU.”

£2.5m to develop new ways to tackle respiratory disease in Wales

The money will be used to create a Respiratory Innovation Centre, bringing together health professionals, academic and business people to more quickly develop, test and implement innovative methods to tackle respiratory illness.

By helping to make new products and services commercially viable the Centre will also help create jobs and support economic growth as well as the obvious health benefits for patients.

The funding is for three years after which time it is expected the Centre will become self-financing by generating profits and drawing in funding from other sources. Three sites within the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University and Hywel Dda University Health Board areas are being considered to house the centre and a decision on that will be announced shortly.

It will be the first innovation centre for respiratory disease in the UK.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Improving the respiratory health of the people of Wales is a major challenge for our healthcare services. In 2016-17, 8% of the Welsh population reported having a respiratory condition, and respiratory diseases caused just over 15% of deaths in 2016. This new centre will identify promising new ideas to prevent, diagnose and treat respiratory disease and help develop them into products and services that can be used by the health service.”

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates added:

“Wales’ life sciences sector is punching well above its weight on a global stage and we have a wealth of academic and entrepreneurial talent here. This investment will help bring together the academic and business world to create new products and services to help

tackle respiratory disease. In the long-term this will help create highly skilled jobs and grow an industry that is already worth around £2bn to the Welsh economy.”

[Have your say on A55 Junctions 15 and 16 improvement plans](#)

The consultation which begins on Monday 4 June and runs until Friday 24 August looks at possible options to remove the two roundabouts at junctions 15 and 16, and replace them with separated junctions.

There are nine options being considered, five for Junction 15 and four for junction 16.

The new junctions will result in safer travel for road users along the A55, and for people using the route to travel to and from Dwygyfylchi, Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr. It will also improve journey times and the road's resilience.

Active Travel is integral to the A55 junctions 15 and 16 improvement scheme and the options proposed seek to improve current active travel routes which will increase opportunities for walking or cycling.

Public Consultation Exhibitions are being held for people to see the options being considered in detail and the timescales involved. These will take place at St Gwynin's Parish Hall, Dwygyfylchi on 12 June, Penmaenmawr Community Centre on 13 June and Llanfairfechan Community Centre on 14 June. All take place between 10am and 8pm. The exhibitions are free to attend and everyone is welcome.

Economy and Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“The A55 Junction 15-16 improvement scheme is a significant development in North Wales and a prime example of the action we are taking to invest in and improve our transport infrastructure.

“The A55 is a key strategic route linking Wales with Ireland, England and the rest of Europe and this scheme will deliver many benefits including better traffic flows and journey time reliability as well as improving safety.

“People's views on the options being considered will form a vital part of the decision process and I encourage everyone with an interest to contribute to this consultation.”

“Wales’ close relationship with the US will continue despite challenges” – First Minister

He will also hold high level talks with senior representatives of the British Embassy to express his serious concerns about the potential impact US tariffs will have on the Welsh steel industry.

Since becoming First Minister in 2009, Carwyn Jones has visited the US 8 times to meet with businesses looking to invest in Wales, discuss trade with political representatives and raise Wales’ profile across the pond.

During that time, US firms have created or safeguarded over 12,800 Welsh jobs, bringing the total number to almost 50,000 – a record high.

With 260 American-owned companies in Wales, the United States is by far Wales’ largest inward investor and most important global business partner. Meanwhile, the value of Welsh exports to the USA continues to rise and was worth £2.3 billion in 2017, meaning that the USA is Wales’ third largest export destination.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Wales and the United States enjoy a strong and prosperous relationship, which has gone from strength to strength during the past decade. Today, the US is Wales’ single most important global business partner.

“Barack Obama was president when I became First Minister of Wales in 2010 and I had the pleasure of welcoming him to Wales when we hosted the Nato Summit in 2014.

“Since then, I have visited the US 8 times meeting with politicians, business leaders and potential investors to talk to them about all Wales has to offer. A great deal has changed over the past nine years, but the bond between Wales and the US remains strong. In recent years, American investment in Wales has reached an all-time high and US exports are now worth over £2 billion to the Welsh economy each year.

“While our 2 administrations do not agree on everything, we have worked together to the benefit of our countries, our businesses and our people.

“Any suggestion of a return to the protectionism of the past

misunderstands the challenges faced by Wales and the USA today. I want to see fewer obstacles to trade, more cooperation, more internationalism, to help our economies continue to grow.

“It is, therefore, extremely disappointing that the US is pressing ahead with tariffs on EU steel and aluminium imports. This is a short-sighted measure that will have wide ranging implications for business, defence and diplomacy right across the globe. It could also harm the Welsh steel industry, which we have fought so hard to protect.

“Despite this, we remain committed to promoting international trade, which is vital to ensuring the prosperity of Welsh people and communities.

“I have always said that we cannot promote Wales from behind a desk and have actively promoted Wales to the world over the past 9 years. Trade missions, major events and international visits will become even more crucial if we are to make the most of future trading opportunities as the UK leaves the EU.

“Wales is an outward looking, innovative and welcoming country – and that is the message I am once again proudly taking to the States on my final visit as First Minister of Wales.”

[12 year old transplant recipient climbs Snowdon to mark 10 years after surgery](#)

Before setting off on her journey with family, friends and supporters, Ella said:

She wanted to mark this important milestone in her life by climbing the highest peak in Wales and England to raise awareness of the importance of organ donation, and to encourage everyone to think about and share their decision on giving the gift of life.

After suffering from liver disease as a baby, Ella Noon received her life saving liver transplant when she was only 26 months old. Ella was very lucky as she was on the waiting list less than a week when an organ became available.

“I have always wanted to do something challenging to show the world

that having a transplant doesn't stop you from doing exciting and challenging things. I thought it was important to mark 10 years since my transplant because without it, I wouldn't have survived. The liver I received gave me another chance at life so I'm determined to live it in honour of my donor."

Joining her on the trek, Ella's mother Andrea Noon said:

"When Ella fell seriously ill as a baby, we were told that she needed an urgent liver transplant. We were so lucky a liver was found in time; sadly, not all families are so lucky. I think it's so important for families and loved ones to discuss their organ donation decision, especially now as the law has changed in Wales, deciding to donate has such a huge impact on someone's life."

Following a social media campaign, Ella found her donor's mother, who is also amongst the climbers. Lindsey Adderson said;

"Today is about celebrating Ella's life, and remembering my daughter Jessica, whose tragic passing saved her life."

Jessica died when she was 17 years old, and had discussed her organ donation wishes with her mother a few weeks previously. Lindsay added:

"That conversation came back to me when the subject of organ donation came up. It was an easy decision for me to make, however other members of the family weren't so sure. I'm proud I was able to stick to my guns and help fulfil Jessica's wishes to become an organ donor.

"Just by asking 'would you donate your organs?' can start a really important discussion that could help save a life, like Jessica saved Ella's."

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

"Ella is a truly remarkable girl, determined to make the most of her life after her transplant and highlights the importance of organ donation. I also want to commend all donors and their families, without their generosity and support people like Ella will not get the transplant they so desperately need.

"We want to encourage everyone across Wales to talk with their loved ones about their organ donation decision. We know awareness and understanding is increasing, but it is really important we reach as many people in Wales as possible.

“We have seen huge improvements in our consent rates, in March 2013 they were just 50% but in March 2018 they increased to 70%, however while there are people dying waiting for their transplant we must work harder to further increase the consent rate to have a significant impact on reducing transplant waiting lists.

“Your family will be involved in any discussions about organ donation if, when you die, you are in a position to donate your organs. This could make an already difficult time more stressful if families have never discussed organ donation.

“I encourage everyone across Wales to talk to their loved ones about their organ donation decision to ensure they will honour it.”

Simply having a chat can help benefit the people of Wales and the UK by reducing the number of people dying whilst waiting for a suitable organ to become available, and transforming the lives of others.

You can register a decision at any time by calling 0300 123 23 23 (Calls to this phone line will be answered by NHS Blood and Transplant) or visiting www.organdonationwales.org or by telling your family (and friends).