

## Welsh exports up by £1.8 billion

The statistics show that Welsh exports to EU countries increased by £1.1 billion (11.9 per cent), while exports to non EU countries increased by £743 million (12.9 per cent).

In 2017, Welsh exports to EU countries accounted for 60.3% of Wales' exports which was more than 10 percentage points above the UK figure of 49.6%.

Germany was the top destination for Welsh goods, with over 19% of total Welsh exports going there. Meanwhile 53.2% of exports were classified as "Machinery and Transport Equipment."

Welcoming the statistics, Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

"This £1.8 billion increase in Welsh exports really is excellent news. It is evidence of a great deal of hard work and tenacity by our exporting companies who are succeeding in their efforts to increase their share of overseas markets.

"Exporting really does have the potential to transform a business and take it to next level, which is why increasing the value of exports and the number of exporters remains a key Welsh Government priority.

"This is more important than ever as we prepare to leave the EU, and the Welsh Government is working hard to provide exporting companies with the support they need at this challenging time.

"Our new Economic Action Plan is clear about our commitment to prioritising exports and trade, and to helping businesses retain their existing trading partners while supporting them to branch out into other global markets.

"In a few days I will be travelling to China with 25 Welsh companies who are working with Welsh Government to grow their share of the Chinese market.

"We know that Welsh exports to China have grown significantly from nearly £194m in 2012 to nearly £313m in 2017 but I want to see those figures grow further.

"My visit to Hong Kong and Shanghai, and the accompanying trade mission is all part of our work to further strengthen our trade links with a country that currently boasts one of the strongest economies in the world and providing our companies with the tailored support packages that they need to reach their exporting goals."

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## **Finance Secretary discusses EU withdrawal with UK and Scottish Brexit Ministers at latest meeting of European Joint Ministerial Committee**

Professor Drakeford will meet with David Lidington, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Mike Russell, Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe to discuss the UK's Brexit Bill which as currently drafted, would allow the UK government to take control of devolved policy areas.

The meeting follows this week's vote by the National Assembly to press ahead with the Welsh Government's Continuity Bill as a fall back option which would provide legal certainty for businesses and individuals in Wales while safeguarding devolution.

Mark Drakeford said:

"Our concerns about the UK government's EU Withdrawal Bill remain. As currently drafted, it allows Whitehall to take control of devolved policy areas, such as farming and fishing, once we have left the EU.

"We urgently need to reach an agreement that protects devolution and we believe this can be achieved through the right amendments and that is why we continue to talk to the UK government on this issue.

"However, the clock is ticking and the parliamentary timetable is against us. It is vital that an agreement on our devolution settlement post-Brexit is achieved as soon as possible."

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## **Minister celebrates International Women's Day and National Apprenticeship Week with female**

# engineers of the future

Recently published statistics show that just 5.8% of apprentices who started an engineering course last year (2016-17) were female and even fewer – just 2.9% – began an apprenticeship in construction.

The Minister spoke as she visited Wylfa Newydd on Anglesey where she met second year apprentices Nia James and Sophie Wright who are currently on Horizon's Technical Apprenticeship Scheme. This week is also National Apprenticeship Week.

Originally from Dolgellau, Nia moved to Bangor at the age of 16 to undertake her apprenticeship.

She said:

"I have a passion for engineering and finally being able to put this passion into use has been amazing. I'm enjoying learning new skills and getting to know new people. Moving away from home at 16 wasn't easy but I was willing to do for this opportunity to work and train in such an interesting and fast moving environment.

"Doing an apprenticeship means I am earning while I learn and I'm gaining experience and skills in a field that will bring opportunities for years to come. For me, it is an exciting time. I'll get to see the power station through all the stages of development and will get to work there when it opens."

Sophie, who grew up on Anglesey, studied chemistry, physics and maths in sixth form before joining Wylfa's Apprenticeship programme.

She said:

"I have always had an interest in these subjects since I was a child and this led me to engineering as I could learn how things work. When I heard that Horizon Nuclear Power was aiming to build a Nuclear Power Station close to where I live I jumped at the chance to apply for an apprenticeship as I could carry on my dream of becoming an engineer while still be able to live on Anglesey.

"My dream once I finish my apprenticeship is to become a control room operator because that's the job that keeps the lights on. I'd recommend it to any young women who enjoy a practical, hands-on career."

The Minister said:

“Nia and Sophie are both excellent examples of young women forging rewarding and interesting careers for themselves through studying STEM subjects and undertaking apprenticeships. They are both embarking on careers in a highly skilled and technical environment with lots to offer in terms of progression, variety of work and job security.

“Unfortunately, however, they are a rare breed and this is something I am eager to address. There are no reasons why a woman should not actively pursue a career in the STEM field and apprenticeships are an excellent way of doing this. Encouraging girls and young women to study STEM subjects is vitally important if we are to ensure that employers can find employees with the skills they need for their businesses to thrive and that women have the same career options available to them as men. I hope Nia and Sophie’s experiences will inspire other young women to undertake apprenticeships or higher education in STEM subjects.”

The Apprenticeship Programme is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund.

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## **“We must listen and learn from survivors of abuse” – Julie James**

Based in Bangor, the Centre has received more than £173,000 of Welsh Government investment to buy and renovate their new building, and the Leader of the House will tour the building and speak to members of staff there.

Julie James said:

“International Women’s Day is a chance to celebrate the impact of women in all fields of life, but also to talk more about how to tackle sexual violence and supporting survivors.

“This centre offers a vital service, which is why the Welsh Government has invested in the facilities here in Bangor.

“We are committed to ensuring that the voices of survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual abuse are heard, and that they inform and shape our work.

“We are developing a National Survivor Engagement Framework, which will outline the ways in which survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence will influence our work and

advocate for themselves to educate their peers, communities and colleagues on their experiences.

“I want to encourage survivors to give their views and work with us to develop this; it is absolutely crucial that their voices influence this work.”

Yasmin Khan, one of the Welsh Government’s National Adviser Violence against Women, Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, said:

“Survivors of abuse must be front and centre of the work Welsh Government is doing to end violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. I have had the privilege of meeting a survivor who has contributed to this framework recently and we have so much to learn from those who have lived through this type of abuse.

“It is imperative we learn lessons and use this information to shape future provision and identify unmet needs. Our commitment is to listen and learn from survivors; the National Framework is highlighting the very issues we must address for those who have suffered and those at risk of harm.”

Lisa-Marie, a survivor of abuse said:

“I have worked with the Welsh Government over the past year on several projects. It is crucial that those with lived experience of abuse are able to advise on what work is needed. Nobody is in a better position to speak about abuse than those who have lived through it. It is paramount that our voices are not only heard but listened to”.

The consultation document and survey are available on the Live Fear Free website.

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## **[Lesley Griffiths visits Holyhead Marina to see Storm Emma damage](#)**

During the visit, the Cabinet Secretary will meet representatives from the Marina, the Harbour Authority and NRW to hear about the clean up operation underway.

Over 80 vessels were damaged and booms have been put in place to contain the diesel and debris to the perimeter of the dock.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Cabinet Secretary said:

“The images of the damage to Holyhead Marina were shocking and my thoughts are with all the businesses and individuals affected.

That is why I wanted to visit the site today to see first hand the damage caused and the impact on the local community and environment.

“The Marina, supported by the Harbour Authority and NRW, is working hard to assess the damage caused by the storms and undertake the clean up operation and I am being kept updated on the situation.

“The damage has undoubtedly caused distress and has financial implications. We would encourage those affected, if they have not already done so, to get in touch with their insurers.”