

Success of Welsh Ports requires all hands on deck

With Welsh Government support, the Welsh Ports Group has organised a reception during London International Shipping week to offer ports professionals a unique opportunity to network and promote Welsh ports and their services, as well as promote Welsh ports to the international community.

Speaking at the event, Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Ports in Wales are uniquely placed to be a driving force for economic wealth by supporting economic growth and jobs throughout Wales, as well as bringing added value to local communities.

“This is an important transitional year for Welsh Government as we look forward to the devolution of ports related functions from next year under the Wales Act 2017. Devolution will bring exciting opportunities for us to enhance our working relationships with the sector and support the key role it has to play in achieving a prosperous, secure united and connected Wales.

“ Collaborative working with the ports sector and businesses throughout Wales on the unique risks and opportunities Brexit represents is crucially important to ensure solutions which maximise the economic contribution ports make to our communities.

“I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to provide funding and speak at the Welsh Ports Groups’ reception for London International Shipping Week. This event further enhances the already strong engagement we have with the sector, Government and businesses stakeholders which are reliant on strong ports links.”

Callum Couper, Chair of the Welsh Ports Group, said;

“Ports in Wales handle some 55 m tonnes of cargo each year, over 10% of UK trade, and are essential infrastructure to support energy, manufacturing, construction, mining, agriculture and retail sectors of the economy both within Wales and the UK nationally. Ports are powerful facilitators of investment and employment and also support environmentally sustainable modes of cargo transport, reducing carbon emissions.

“The Welsh Government has long recognised the substantial contribution ports make to the economy of Wales. Together, the Welsh Ports Group and the Welsh Government are ensuring Wales’ ports are ready to meet the challenges and capitalise on the

opportunities ahead.”

The Welsh Ports Group comprises of leaders from the majority of ports across Wales. Coordinated by the British Ports Association and the UK Major Ports Group, it provides regular advice and briefing to the Welsh Government and key decision makers across the planning, transport and maritime sectors.

[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.