

Health Secretary continues Q&A with NHS Wales staff in West Wales

Frontline health employees in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire had an opportunity to ask Mr Gething questions about the health service at a Cabinet Connect event.

The staff Q&A session was held at Halliwell Conference Centre, University of Wales Trinity St David in Carmarthenshire and invitations were sent to Hywel Dda Health Board, Public Health Wales and Wales Ambulance Service staff in the area.

Mr Gething said:

“I have had the great pleasure to meet many frontline health employees during visits across Wales and following a successful first event with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in March, I wanted to build on those discussions through further Cabinet Connect events.

“I want to give frontline staff the opportunity to meet me, ask me questions and discuss the issues in the health service that are important to them.”

Cabinet Connect builds on the success of the Carwyn Connect events, which the First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones has used to meet and get the views of people across Wales.

Newport selected for new £30m rail production facility creating 300 jobs

The £30m investment, with significant support from the Welsh Government, will create 300 highly skilled and well paid jobs.

More than 100 locations in the UK were considered for this major investment, with the Celtic Business Park in Newport chosen from one of 4 potential sites that were short listed.

Welcoming the news today, First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Today’s announcement is a major coup for Wales and a big vote of

confidence in our manufacturing industry. We are, once again, competing and beating others on the world stage to secure significant investment to Wales.

“This £30m investment is a major economic boost that we hope will kick-start the growth of our rail sector and create hundreds of highly skilled, very well paid jobs.”

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This significant investment from CAF and Welsh Government will underpin the development of the rail sector in Wales and places us at the heart of an industry with massive growth potential.

“As well as creating 300 high calibre jobs, it also coincides with our major Welsh Government Metro rail investment in south east Wales, details of which will be unveiled over the coming weeks.”

Richard Garner, CAF’s UK Director, said:

“CAF is an established supplier to the UK market, and we now have solid economic basis for further increasing our footprint in the UK. The establishment of this facility will serve CAF’s long-term aspirations to dominate the UK market for many years to come.”

The Welsh Government is supporting the project, which will be the first centre of its type in Wales. The site will allow for significant future expansion, providing potential for further investment and employment in the Newport area.

The new facility will enable the company to assemble, test and commission new vehicles and have capacity to undertake future manufacturing projects as well as maintenance and servicing activities.

Joint statement from First Ministers of Wales and Scotland in reaction to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill

“This week began with the Prime Minister calling for a constructive and collaborative approach from those outside Whitehall to help get

Brexit right. Today's publication of The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is the first test as to whether the UK government is serious about such an approach. It is a test it has failed utterly.

"We have repeatedly tried to engage with the UK government on these matters, and have put forward constructive proposals about how we can deliver an outcome which will protect the interests of all the nations in the UK, safeguard our economies and respect devolution.

"Regrettably, the bill does not do this. Instead, it is a naked power-grab, an attack on the founding principles of devolution and could destabilise our economies.

"Our 2 governments – and the UK government – agree we need a functioning set of laws across the UK after withdrawal from the EU. We also recognise that common frameworks to replace EU laws across the UK may be needed in some areas. But the way to achieve these aims is through negotiation and agreement, not imposition. It must be done in a way which respects the hard-won devolution settlements.

"The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill does not return powers from the EU to the devolved administrations, as promised. It returns them solely to the UK government and Parliament, and imposes new restrictions on the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

"On that basis, the Scottish and Welsh Governments cannot recommend that legislative consent is given to the bill as it currently stands.

"The bill lifts from the UK government and Parliament the requirement to comply with EU law, but does the opposite for the devolved legislatures: it imposes a new set of strict restrictions. These new restrictions make no sense in the context of the UK leaving the EU.

"We have explained these points to the UK government and have set out what we consider to be a constructive way forward in the spirit of co-operation, based on the involvement of, and respect for, devolved institutions.

"Unfortunately, the conversation has been entirely one-sided. We remain open to these discussions, and look forward to coming to an agreed solution between the governments of these islands."

First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, responds to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill

First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, said:

“Only this week, the Prime Minister pledged to listen to others about the challenges posed by EU withdrawal, calling for unity for the good of the country. Yet, today’s announcement flies firmly in face of her promises.

“I have been clear since the day of the EU referendum result – the UK is leaving the EU and we will work with the UK government to deliver a sensible Brexit and support a bill which provides clarity and certainty for businesses.

“We have repeatedly tried to engage with the UK government and have put forward constructive proposals about how we can deliver a Brexit which honours the result of the referendum, safeguards the economy and respects devolution.

“Regrettably, our attempts to work with the UK government have been flatly ignored. Instead of mature and constructive engagement, the UK government has shown astounding ignorance in the publication of this bill, which is an insult to the devolved nations.

“The UK should be entering Brexit negotiations from a position of unity so we have the best possible chance of securing a good deal with the interests of all parts of the UK at its heart. Instead, the government appears determined to provoke a constitutional conflict we do not need.

“If the bill is not amended, there is no prospect of my government recommending the National Assembly should give legislative consent to it. We will instead investigate ways in which we can use our existing legislative powers to help defend devolution. We will also work closely with the other devolved administrations; indeed, the Scottish First Minister and I will issue a joint statement today, in which we will make clear that we cannot support the bill in its current form.”

Taskforce to support Tesco workers meets for first time

Tesco announced last month that it planned to close its Customer Contact Centre in Llanishen, Cardiff with the potential loss of 1100 jobs.

In response, Economy Secretary, Ken Skates pledged to establish a Taskforce to ensure that workers affected by this news could access the very best support.

And today the Economy Secretary chaired the very first meeting of the Taskforce and was joined by the Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, representatives of Careers Wales, the Welsh Contact Centre Forum, DWP, Public Health Wales, Trade Unions and Welsh Government officials to discuss the practical support that could be given to workers to mitigate the impact of this decision.

Ken Skates said:

“News of Tesco’s proposal to close its Llanishen contact centre has come as a devastating blow and our priority now must be to support those workers affected.

“I am confident that the establishment of a Taskforce – which is a tried and tested approach and was hugely helpful in assisting workers affected by the Murco closure in Pembrokeshire – will enable us to pool our resources and provide first class support to the 1100 Tesco staff who face losing their jobs.

“I am pleased to welcome a range of partners to today’s meeting. Collectively we will do all we can to support affected worker to find new employment, to retrain and upskill, and to access any health and well being support they need. This will include reaching out to local employers and examining how we can assist them with their recruitment.

“Let’s not forget these are highly skilled and award winning workers. This Taskforce is committed to working collectively to ensure that the impact of Tesco’s decision on those workers’ lives is kept to an absolute minimum.”

At the meeting, Taskforce delegates agreed to establish four work streams to help provide targeted and effective support.

The Training and Skills work stream will look at the skills needs of staff facing redundancy and will include representatives from USDAW, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus.

The Business Support work stream will look at the skills and recruitment needs of employers and consider support that can be given to encourage them to employ displaced Tesco employees. This work stream will include representation from Business Wales, the Welsh Contact Centre Forum and Welsh Government officials.

The Health work stream will gather and share information on the personal support available to workers and their families and ensure that such support is accessible. It will include representatives from Public Health Wales and USDAW.

Finally the Research work stream will look at the key risks and trends in the call centre sector including the impact of technological developments . It will be co-ordinated by the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services.