

Review into support for Publishing and Literature in Wales

The wide ranging review, which was commissioned by Ken Skates in September 2015, and Chaired by Professor Medwin Hughes considered the main aims of the Welsh Government in supporting publishing and literature in Wales, and looked at whether these aims remain fit for the 21st Century.

The review also considered the current support for publishing and literature in Wales, the relationships between those bodies responsible for delivering it, the impact of digital developments on the publishing industry and the administration arrangements for the Welsh Government's support of a Welsh language, daily online news service.

Speaking in the Senedd, the Economy Secretary welcomed the contribution of partner organisations and the public into the review and said it demonstrated the importance that was attached to Wales' rich literary tradition and vibrant publishing industry.

Ken Skates said:

"I have now received the report of the independent review into Welsh Government support for publishing and literature in Wales which summarises the range of evidence that was received from key partner organisations, the industry and the public.

"The panel recognised significant good practice and effective support for publishing and literature that should be continued and built upon for the future.

"It identified areas where support needs to evolve to meet the changing needs of the digital age, and it also found clear evidence of real problems in some areas, related to strategic planning, priority setting, governance, risk management, spending and in ensuring that activities are effective in delivering the outcomes we need.

"The report that I am publishing today sets out a series of recommendations. Some of these are for the Welsh Government, others are for the industry and the key delivery organisations.

"Given the significant weight and compelling nature of the evidence received, I am minded to accept the main recommendations and the Welsh Government will now work with the relevant organisations to implement them."

In its report the panel makes a strong case for the Welsh Government to continue to provide appropriate financial support for Wales' bi-lingual

literary tradition, so it can enable it to thrive in the 21st century, ensure its global reach and support access and participation across Wales.

It makes the case for a strong, innovative publishing industry that provides high-quality jobs, competes internationally and allows professional writers of all backgrounds to develop career pathways in Wales.

The report includes a series of recommendations which the Welsh Government will respond formally to in due course.

One recommendation is that the Welsh Government should seek agreement from the Welsh Books Council to take on some of Literature Wales' current functions, including Book of the Year (aiming to increase its commercial impact), bursaries, literary events and Writers on Tour and provision for children and young people.

The Economy Secretary added:

“Some of these recommended changes are extensive but they are in response to specific needs in a specific area of activity. They are in no way a reflection of the wider good work of the Arts Council or Literature Wales including the excellent delivery of major events and activities linked to our themed years, which will remain unchanged.

“I am persuaded that these steps are needed to create a support structure for publishing and literature which is more effective and fit for the future.

[Ministers celebrate success of outstanding health professionals who have achieved 'Grand Slam' of nursing and midwifery award triumphs in 2017](#)

Wales swept the boards at nursing and midwifery awards earlier in the year; today the First Minister and Health Secretary met:

Melanie Davies, from Morriston Hospital in Swansea, who was named RCNi Nurse of the Year, for her work making far-reaching changes to the care of vulnerable patients with learning disabilities.

Health Visitor Lead Sharon Fernandez, for Powys' Perinatal Mental Health services, who won the Journal of Health Visiting Awards 2017, Health Visitor

of the Year Award.

Bereavement midwife, **Laura Wyatt**, from Cardiff and Vale UHB, who has been awarded the Emma's Diary Mums' Midwife of the Year 2017 for Wales. The award is one of the Royal College of Midwives Annual Midwifery Awards, recognises the remarkable work done by inspiring midwives across the country.

And, **Cemlyn Roberts**, from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, who has won the RCNi- UK Healthcare Assistant Award Winner 2017. Cemlyn won the award for improving care for people with learning disabilities through an individualised, gentler approach to taking blood.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

"It was an absolute privilege to meet this outstanding group of health professionals today. They are shining examples of what our health service in Wales does on a daily basis – helping those who need it most.

"They have proved themselves to be the best at what they do in the UK. It is important that we celebrate success and I congratulate them on their fantastic achievements. I hope they inspire other health professionals across the country to reach the heights of what they've achieved this year."

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

"Our grand slam of nursing and midwifery award triumphs shows just how exceptional our healthcare staff truly are.

"It was a great to meet the group today. Each one is an ambassador for this country. I hope nurses, midwives and other health professionals from across the UK will look to Wales as a place where they would want to pursue a career in the future.

"I have said it before, Wales is a fantastic place to train, work and live; a place where we will continue to offer NHS Bursaries for eligible student nurses, midwives and allied health professionals in 2018/19. It's a place where we will continue to support professional development. We continue to invest in nursing and midwifery education, and the number of nurses working in NHS Wales continues to increase year on year.

"Melanie, Laura, Sharon and Cemlyn should be very proud of what they've achieved for themselves, their families and the NHS as a whole in Wales; we certainly are."

£2m investment by MicroPharm set to make West Wales key production centre for anti-venoms

MicroPharm Ltd develops immunotherapy products to target infectious diseases and acute toxic conditions and currently produce two anti-venoms for the treatment of snakebites from the European common adder and the carpet viper in West Africa.

Its planned £2m expansion, supported by £150K from the Welsh Government, will see it open new facilities at Cilgerran while retaining its base in Newcastle Emlyn. The investment is expected to create 15 jobs and safeguard a further 14, bringing the total headcount to 51.

It means that MicroPharm will become a leading supplier of high quality anti-venoms to Europe and Africa, like Protherics UK Ltd, a BTG International group company based in Llandysul, who provide antivenin for North American pit viper envenomation in the USA.

The unique West Wales cluster includes Ig-Innovations Ltd, also based near Llandysul, which produces antibodies for supply to the research, diagnostic, biotech and pharmaceutical sector including MicroPharm, as well as direct sales.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“It is a considerable achievement that this small area of rural West Wales is a world leader in what is an extremely specialised, highly competitive and highly valued field. It once again illustrates the breadth of expertise we have in Wales within the life sciences sector.

“MicroPharm is a key contributor to Wales’ expertise and I am delighted Welsh Government support will enable its planned expansion to go ahead immediately. The investment will provide the additional facilities required to meet the growing global demand for its products. It will also enable the company to capitalise on opportunities to increase its product range and support its on-going research to provide treatments for devastating diseases like Clostridium difficile Infection (CDI) and Ebola.

“This very important expansion project will further embed a

specialist pharmaceutical R&D and manufacturing company in West Wales and provide opportunities for local people to access high quality jobs.”

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James added:

“Wales’ life sciences sector has gone from strength to strength over recent years and this latest announcement is welcome news for both the local community, wider Welsh economy and global pharmaceutical marketplace.

“As a relatively small country Wales punches well above its weight when it comes to scientific developments and world-class research and this government remains committed to supporting innovative companies like MicroPharm to ensure this vitally important sector continues to grow in Wales.”

MicroPharm’s CEO, Ian Cameron, commented:

“We have outgrown our existing facilities in Newcastle Emlyn and the new manufacturing facility at Cilgerran will provide a platform for the long term growth of the company. The Welsh Government has supported the growth of MicroPharm since its inception and we are grateful for the continued support”.

MicroPharm’s expertise lies in producing a range of immunotherapeutic products for clinical use – designed to treat acute, life threatening emergencies and required urgently either because no alternative exists or any alternatives are unsafe or ineffective.

In addition to anti-venoms, MicroPharm is also working on developing a ricin antitoxin having been awarded a contract, valued at up to £7m, last year by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). It involves the production of ovine antibodies to ricin and their further processing and manufacture into a product suitable for human use. Ricin is a deadly poison with no antidote currently available.

MicroPharm has a product pipeline of several new immunotherapeutic products for human and veterinary use ranging from early stage opportunities to clinical trials stage which are expected to come into the market from 2018-2021.

Tell us about your broadband needs

Businesses, homes and communities have an opportunity to take part in a [consultation on the next stage of fast broadband rollout in Wales](#), Minister for Skills and Science Julie James has said today.

The consultation, published today, outlines the premises that cannot currently access superfast broadband and where telecommunications companies have no plans to reach in the next three years. This follows a detailed Open Market Review and discussions with the industry to establish, premises by premises, where the next stage of the rollout needs to take place.

The Welsh Government's current Superfast Cymru project continues to make good progress. At the end of March 645,000 premises across Wales had been given access to fast fibre as a result of the programme. BT has confirmed it expects to deliver 30Mbps download speeds to around 690,000 premises before the programme closes at the end of December 2017.

The consultation will inform the next stage of the rollout to take place in early 2018 in order to reach the final few hard to reach premises. It has identified a list of over 98,000 premises. The rollout will be backed by a public sector budget of around £80m.

Minister for Skills and Science Julie James said:

"I am keen to hear the views of both the telecoms industry and residents and business owners on whether any further premises should be included or whether any premises currently on the list should be excluded.

"The consultation will help us to further refine the list of unconnected premises. The more responses we receive, the more comprehensive the list will be.

"If there are communities that have an interest in driving their own solutions, I want to hear from them. If there are views on how we should lot the procurement, I want to hear them. If there are views on how we should prioritise or target the funding, I want to hear them.

"We have already transformed the situation in Wales through Superfast Cymru. The most recent Ofcom report showed that Wales has the best superfast broadband availability amongst the devolved nations, with over eight out ten premises with access. This compares with just over half in 2014.

"But the work does not end when Superfast Cymru ends. We want to reach the final few premises. There will be further engagement with the industry and key stakeholders over the summer to refine the procurement approach with a view to invite formal tenders to

deliver the new project in September with the new project beginning in early 2018.

“I am committed to achieving our ambitions in Taking Wales Forward to offer fast reliable broadband to every property in Wales.”

The Prime Minister must not gamble with people's jobs and livelihoods

The First Minister said the outcome of the General Election means the UK Government has no mandate to put barriers in the way of continued full and unfettered access to the Single Market and has called on the Prime Minister to convene an urgent meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee to agree the UK's Brexit negotiating position.

The First Minister has also said the JMC meeting should include the leaders of the Democratic Unionist Party and of Sinn Fein, even if such a meeting takes place before the formation of a new Northern Ireland Executive.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

““It is clear from the election that the UK Government has no mandate for the ‘hard Brexit’ championed by the Prime Minister.

“The Prime Minister has already lost one gamble. I will not allow her to gamble with the Welsh economy and with people's jobs and livelihoods. She must now listen to what we have been saying from the outset; full and unfettered access to the Single Market is central to Wales' – and the UK's – future prosperity and must be our first priority in the forthcoming negotiations.

“The leaders across Great Britain and Northern Ireland must meet face-to-face to jointly consider how to take forward the Brexit process. This is why we urgently need a meeting of the JMC.

“I have made repeatedly clear my Government's willingness to work with the UK Government and the devolved administrations to agree common approaches – through discussion, not diktat – to prevent friction within our own internal market.

“If the Prime Minister accepts this approach, she will find us reliable and constructive partners. If she does not – and, instead, attempts to ride roughshod over devolution and impose a more monolithic and centralised UK upon the devolved nations, we will have no choice but to oppose such steps.

"I have told her bluntly, this is a fight which she does not need.

"Later this week, we will publish a paper on our proposals for responding creatively to the challenges Brexit poses for the devolved nations and the future governance of the UK."

The First Minister also questioned whether the Brexit deal would now be possible during the two year deadline because of the current political situation.

He added::

"Given the uncertainty following the General Election, it will be impossible to both negotiate a withdrawal agreement and put in place the basis for a future relationship with the EU within two years. This means it is essential we agree within the UK now, and seek the agreement of our EU partners early in negotiations, the form of transitional arrangements to come into effect in April 2019."