

Welsh exports up by over 4%

The latest export statistics – published this week – show that the value of Welsh exports stood at £16.6 billion in the year to June 2018, representing an increase of £0.7 billion on the same period in the previous year.

Of those Welsh exports 61.3% went to EU countries. This is more than 11 percentage points higher than the UK share which stands at 50%.

The figures also show that Welsh exports to the EU countries increased by £643m, an increase of 6.8% on the previous 12 months. Meanwhile exports to non-EU countries went up by £20m (0.3%).

Germany continued to be the top export destination for Welsh goods and services with 19.9% of total exports finding their way there, while 52.1% of Welsh exports fell into the category of Machinery and Transport Equipment.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“Huge congratulations to businesses across Wales who have helped to deliver this £663m increase in Welsh exports.

“These figures are testament to their hard work and determination in what are challenging and uncertain economic times.

“Our 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. We will continue to work closely and proactively with the business community to support their export programmes and ambitions.

“Of course these statistics again magnify the economic importance of our excellent trading relationships with EU countries, which currently account for 61.3% of our total exports.

“We call again on the UK Government to ensure that Wales enjoys full and unfettered access to the Single Market and the ability to participate in a customs union, post Brexit, so that we can maintain and build on the successes businesses across Wales are having in increasing their share of the overseas market.”

Lesley Griffiths writes open letter to all Welsh farmers on why reform of the Basic Payment Scheme is vital

In July, the Cabinet Secretary launched a consultation, [Brexit and our Land](#), which proposes a new Land Management Programme to replace the BPS in Wales once the UK leaves the European Union. The consultation is open until 30 October.

Loss of tariff-free access to the EU's market and potential competition from other parts of the world once the UK begins to sign Free Trade Agreements will mean Welsh farmers having to compete in the global marketplace.

The current BPS is insufficiently targeted to respond to these challenges as it is solely an income support scheme. The sustainable way to compete is to improve productivity, reduce costs through greater efficiency and reduced waste and diversify to meet market needs. These are all areas in which the Welsh Government wants to focus support through the new schemes proposed in the consultation.

The proposed Land Management Programme will consist of two large and flexible schemes – the Economic Resilience Scheme and the Public Goods Scheme.

The Cabinet Secretary is writing to all farmers to explain the need for change following a recent FUW campaign to reject the proposals in the consultation and retain BPS.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“The Basic Payment Scheme has provided vital support to Welsh farmers. But it will not protect farmers and communities in the future.

“Brexit means we have to do things differently. Simply maintaining current payments cannot offset the negative impacts from leaving the European Union. Keeping the system would leave Welsh farmers worse off.

“There is no debate on whether we should support farmers: we will and we will continue to protect the funding. But we need to provide support in a different way to keep farmers on the land.

“I am open to new ideas and this is a genuine consultation. But I am clear that ‘business as usual’ is not an option.

“Our new Land Management Programme will consist of two new large flexible schemes to support Welsh farmers post-Brexit – the Economic Resilience Scheme and the Public Goods Scheme.

“Over the summer, I have taken the opportunity to meet with farmers in agricultural shows and during other visits to discuss the consultation. We

need farmers to engage properly with us to help make this work, so the recent misleading FUW campaign is not helpful. That is why I am today writing to all farmers to reiterate the case for change. I have also shared with them a [myth-busting factsheet](#). I urge all farmers to get involved and share their views with us.”

[Encouraging start for new HIV prevention drug in Wales](#)

Health boards in Wales started providing Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in July last year through sexual health clinics as part of a three year study. The antiretroviral medication can be provided to at risk, uninfected people to prevent them getting HIV.

The Welsh Government asked Public Health Wales and an independent HIV expert group to run the study to provide evidence for the acceptability and effectiveness of PrEP in HIV prevention.

In the first year of the study (July 2017 to end of June 2018) 559 people have started the treatment and no-one on PrEP has contracted HIV.

The national approach to PrEP and HIV prevention in Wales contrasts with England, where a national approach is not being taken and a charity is looking to raise funds for PrEP treatment.

PrEP is only part of the strategy to reduce new infections of HIV. The reduction in new infections continues to fall, with the latest data (May 2018) showing that new cases of HIV fell by 24% in the last quarter of 2017 compared to the last quarter of 2016.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said: “I am pleased that sexual health services in Wales have embraced the opportunity that PrEP provides and the early results from the study are encouraging. No new cases of HIV have been reported in those who have started taking the medication.

“Wales has seen a sustained decrease in new HIV cases. There is no doubt that PrEP reduces rates of HIV infection when taken correctly and supported by wider, preventative sexual health services. It can help to reduce overall HIV transmission and infection rates. I look forward to seeing further results as they emerge.

“Making PrEP available in Wales is only one aspect of our wider approach to HIV and STI prevention in Wales. To help implement the recommendations in Public Health Wales’ recent sexual health

review, I have approved funding for a number of interventions to improve sexual health in Wales including a pilot for online STI testing and a project to provide self-sampling HIV tests to those attending for PrEP clinics. This work will provide valuable insight into the acceptability and logistics of on-line and self-testing and will help inform future developments in sexual health service provision. ”

Re-appointment of Chair of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse

She has been re-appointed as Chair of the Panel from 14 August 2018 to 13 August 2019.

The Panel’s remit is to advise on measures to prevent or reduce substance misuse including the associated health and social harms and review implementation of the Welsh Government’s Substance Misuse Strategy.

Vaughan Gething said:

“I am very pleased that Caroline Phipps has agreed to continue her role of Chair of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse. Her experience, knowledge and expertise will help us deliver our commitment to tackling and reducing the harms associated with substance misuse in Wales.”

Caroline Phipps is Chief Executive of Barod and has fulfilled this role since 2007. Prior to this, Caroline worked in a number of roles throughout the sector including a secondment to Merthyr Tydfil Substance Misuse Action Team.

First Minister opens Welsh Government office in top export destination

The Welsh Government’s new offices in Berlin and Dusseldorf will ensure Wales is able to develop strong trade links post-Brexit. It forms part of an expansion of the Welsh Government’s overseas operations to protect existing markets, pursue new investment opportunities and promote Wales to the world.

Germany is Wales' top export destination, with the value of Welsh exports to Germany standing at £3.2 billion in 2017, a significant increase of 7.8% on the previous year.

Wales has achieved record levels of inward investment for the past 3 years, while Welsh exports also continue to soar. In 2017, Welsh exports stood at £16 billion, which is an increase of £2.39 billion on the previous year. Almost 60% of Welsh trade is sent to countries within the European Union.

There are 90 German-owned companies based in Wales, employing around 13,500 people. These include Arvato Bertelsmann in Swansea, Continental Teves in Ebbw Vale, Ensinger in Tonyrefail, RWE in Dolgarrog, Aberthaw, Pembroke, Port Talbot and Llandudno, and Siemens in Caernarfon, Caldicot and Bridgend.

The Welsh Government helps Welsh companies develop their export businesses in Germany. As a direct result of Welsh Government support, last year alone 21 Welsh companies secured German trade deals amounting to £5.23 million.

The First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, said:

“Germany is of central importance to the Welsh economy; not only is it our top export destination for Welsh goods, it is an important inward investor, with Wales attracting almost 6% of all Germany's investments into the UK.

“Opening these 2 new offices in Germany sends a loud and clear signal to our European partners – Wales is open for business and we are determined to see our positive relationship with the EU continue post-Brexit.

“Increasing Wales' presence in Germany will allow us to pursue new trade and investment opportunities, build networks and boost Wales' profile. This has never been more important as we face a future outside of the European Union.

“We also want to welcome more German students to our fantastic universities. Our 2 new offices in Germany will enable us to better support interested students and help us to develop this reciprocal relationship – it's a win-win.”

There are approximately 680 German students studying at Welsh universities and colleges. 2 of Wales' award-winning universities, Swansea and Aberystwyth, already have over 15 partnerships with universities across Germany.

Plans are progressing for the Welsh Government to open 2 further offices across the globe this year; in Doha and Paris.