

Keolis and Amey to open new Welsh headquarters and design hub and create 130 new Welsh jobs

Following award of the contract for the Wales and Borders rail service and South Wales Metro to KeolisAmey, Keolis UK has announced it will move its headquarters from London to a new office in Wales by 2019, and will relocate its global rail division from Paris to Wales by 2020.

Meanwhile Amey will open a new design hub in Wales where it will offer consultancy services and further jobs will be created when the companies open a shared services and customer contact centre providing services to both businesses.

These jobs are in addition to the 600 jobs and the 30 apprenticeships a year announced earlier this week.

Ahead of a meeting with Alistair Gordon and Nicola Hindle from Keolis and Amey, Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“In line with our Economic Contract, public investment with a social purpose is right at the heart of our new approach to rail, and I am delighted the new rail contract will be delivering tangible and significant economic benefits for Wales.

“The decision by internationally recognised companies Keolis and Amey to between them locate two headquarters and two new offices to Wales is a real coup, and a move that we predict will provide a significant economic boost, beginning with the creation of a further 130 high quality jobs. These are in addition to the 600 jobs announced earlier in the week.

“KeolisAmey has also committed to becoming a Living Wage employer by 2021 and they will ensure that the Real Living Wage is cascaded throughout the significant supply chain

“On top of news earlier this week that the majority of the new trains will be assembled in Newport by Spanish company, CAF, who will be bringing their new manufacturing base to Wales, there is no doubt that the new rail contract will deliver not only improved train services but also very real economic benefits for Wales.”

Alistair Gordon, CEO of Keolis UK, said:

“Being selected as Transport for Wales’ partner for the next 15 years means that we’ll be a part of the fabric of Wales for almost

a generation. Moving our headquarters here underlines our commitment and embeds us within the communities we'll be serving.

“Wales is a great place for any company to base itself. As part of the procurement process, KeolisAmey was exposed to both business and life in Wales and we were impressed with the commitment, skills and quality of life Wales offers. This, coupled with the extensive and innovative nature of Transport for Wales' ambitions, means that Wales is an obvious location for us.”

Mr Gordon also confirmed that Keolis' new HQ will become a centre of excellence, working closely with the shared service centre to become a centre of knowledge which can be utilised by all Keolis' subsidiaries.

It will also support the further development of Keolis' businesses in the UK with new developments in parking, cycling, buses and technology all being led from Wales.

Nicola Hindle, Managing Director of Consulting & Rail at Amey, said:

“As part of our long-term commitment to Wales, and building on our existing presence with over 300 employees delivering services for the Welsh people, we will be investing in a new Amey Consulting design hub in Wales.

“This new office will be a fantastic addition to our strategic network of consultancy hubs across the UK in Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Motherwell, Edinburgh, Belfast and Crawley.”

Extended Pupil Development Grant to reach well beyond the classroom

The new fund, [announced today](#) by Education Secretary Kirsty Williams, will also cover equipment for activities within the curriculum, such as design and technology.

In addition, parents will also be able to access funding for equipment for out of school hours trips, including outdoor learning.

The new fund, which will be in place ahead of the new academic year in September, will become another element of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) and will be known as PDG – Access.

As well as making funding available for new uniforms and activities both in

and outside the classroom, PDG – Access will be available to a wider range of pupils than the previous School Uniform Grant and attract a higher per pupil funding level of £125.

For the first time, learners in both Reception and Year 7, who are eligible for free school meals will fall within scope of the funding. Unlike the previous school uniform grant, all looked after children in these year groups will also be covered.

As with the previous scheme, the funding will be distributed via local authorities. The Welsh Government has worked with local authorities to develop the grant and will continue to do so to make sure that the funding is being used effectively and that good practice is being shared amongst schools.

Announcing PDG-Access today, Kirsty Williams said:

“Reducing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is at the heart of our national mission to raise standards.

“The Pupil Development Grant has already been described as “invaluable” by schools. PDG – Access will allow us to go that step further in supporting our disadvantaged learners to reach their full potential and narrowing the attainment gap between those learners and their peers.”

In addition to the grant, further consideration is also being given to current non-statutory school uniforms guidance and how it can be strengthened.

Welsh and UK Governments host key Brexit meeting with farmers, the fishing industry and business

During the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary will outline her commitment to actively promote the interests of these sectors to ensure they continue to thrive and so we can safeguard and enhance on our environmental achievements after leaving the EU.

The meeting, which is being held in Cardiff, will discuss the practical issues facing the sectors as we approach EU exit, the preparation being undertaken and how powers returning from the EU should be exercised in the

future.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, Cabinet Secretary said:

“It is now under a year before we leave the European Union. Brexit brings with it both challenges and opportunities and this is particularly the case for our valued rural economy. That is why it is so important that we engage and listen to partners as we prepare to leave the European Union.

“Today’s meeting is an important opportunity to look at the interests of Wales in relation to those sectors across devolved and non-devolved areas. This engagement builds on the regular roundtable discussions I have held with key partners over the last two years.

I am committed to working with partners as we develop proposals for land management post-Brexit so we can ensure a resilient and thriving industry in Wales after we leave the EU.”

[Plans to grow Welsh research published in Reid review](#)

Julie James emphasised the Welsh Government’s commitment to implement the proposals with funds secured alongside the UK Government as part of the post-Brexit settlement.

Last year, we asked Professor Graeme Reid of University College London to lead the review to look at the strengths, gaps and future potential to sustain and grow strong research and innovation activity in Wales.

The aim of the review was to look at the Welsh Government’s overall investment into research and innovation and consider how it is making a difference and what we can do to improve things for the future.

The review builds upon and is informed by two previous reviews (Diamond and Hazelkorn) and provides clear analysis of current and future challenges and opportunities in Wales and across the UK. The report makes three recommendations including the establishment of;

- a new Welsh Research and Innovation Office in London to increase the visibility and influence of Welsh research;
- an additional fund of £30m a year, to incentivise researchers to win greater funding from business and from outside Wales; and
- a single overarching brand for its research and innovation funding to

increase the visibility, coherence and impact of Welsh Government-funded research and innovation in Wales.

The Leader of the House said Welsh Government would accept the report's recommendations in principle and will consider how they can be implemented alongside responses to the current technical consultation on the new proposed Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales, as well as the post-Brexit funding settlement for the nations and regions of the UK, and the UK Government's plans to rebalance science spending across the country in pursuit of accelerating regional growth and productivity.

Julie James said,

"I would like to thank Professor Reid for his hard work in producing this extensive piece of work and would pay tribute too to the distinguished panel of advisers who assisted him.

"I was pleased to read that Professor Reid found research and innovation in Wales to be strong, with many examples of national and international impact and success. It is essential that we build on this success and grow the sector, as we respond to the changing UK research landscape and the potential consequences of Brexit.

"We do acknowledge however that, working across sectors, we can do more to increase the visibility and influence of Welsh research. We will therefore take forward the recommendation on a dedicated London presence to promote Welsh Research and Innovation immediately."

Professor Reid said,

"Given continuing pressures on public finance, significant reforms to higher and further education, and fast-approaching changes in UK and EU funding, this was an opportune moment to review Government-funded research and innovation in Wales, and I was delighted to have the opportunity to lead that work.

"The growing UKRI budget now presents major opportunities for Welsh businesses and universities to win sizeable amounts of additional funding, which can help ensure Wales increases its competitiveness in the research and innovation sector."

Brexit funding gap could hit Welsh colleges

The Minister was speaking following a visit to Coleg Gwent's Newport campus on Monday where she met those who have benefitted from EU funded courses and projects.

Over the past 10 years alone, FE Institutes in Wales have reported¹ that they have been involved in the delivery of EU funded projects worth a total value of nearly £600m, made up of EU funds and match funding from public and private sources.

These involve EU backed programmes and projects which

- enable FE Institutes to deliver subsidised training to employers to support employees jobs and growth;
- support college and school learners at risk of becoming NEET
- support rural skills training; and
- give learners the opportunity to gain work experience or learn abroad.

Over the last decade, projects supported by EU funds in Wales have helped 81,400 people into work and supported 282,600 people in Wales to gain qualifications. The projects include the £19m Upskilling@Work scheme backed with EU funding of £10.8m which is led by Coleg Gwent and Coleg Y Cymoedd. It provides work-based training programmes to develop the skills and careers of over 8,000 employees in companies across South East Wales.

In addition, FE institutions are helping to deliver much of the training for the Welsh Government's Apprenticeship programme. Backed by EU funding of £206m, Apprenticeships are helping people to learn while they earn a wage and gain the skills and competences they need in the workplace.

The Welsh Government wants guarantees from Whitehall that EU funding will be replaced after the UK leaves the EU and for decisions on how it is invested to continue to be made in Wales.

The Welsh Government has also called for the UK to participate in a range of European co-operation programmes after Brexit including ERASMUS+, an EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, to support learning from best practice in Europe and beyond.

Eluned Morgan said:

"Further Education Institutions are central to Wales' communities, providing the training and skills that are essential to the growth of our economy. Over the past decade Welsh colleges have benefitted from hundreds of millions of pounds of EU investment that has made a real difference to people's lives.

“The UK voted to leave the EU, but no one in Wales voted for our colleges to lose funding that supports people, businesses and the economy. The UK Government needs to give a guarantee that this vital EU funding is replaced and continues to support people through our colleges, many of which are in some of our most disadvantaged communities.

“Our FE sector faces a double Brexit whammy – losing EU funding and having to meet the challenge of meeting potential skills gaps and changes to our economy as we leave the EU. The Welsh Government will back the sector all the way, but the UK Government needs to meet the promise made that Wales would not lose a penny due to Brexit.”

Iestyn Davies, Chief Executive of ColegauCymru, said:

“There has never been a more important time to make sure that Further Education Colleges continue to receive the levels of funding that allow them to invest in learners, communities and facilities to face the challenges ahead.

“As the UK prepares to leave the EU, the life-changing opportunities for learners to experience work placements in European partner countries via Erasmus+ must be maintained.

“In the absence of a clear outline of the UK Government’s proposed ‘Shared Prosperity Fund’, the EU funding that Wales would have received must be replaced and guaranteed in full by the UK Treasury. Likewise, assurance must also be given by the UK Government that all mechanisms relating to this funding will stay in Wales to ensure continuity. This will provide the assurances necessary to business, institutions, and most importantly learners and apprentices.”