

Stop playing politics with Brexit” – First Minister Carwyn Jones

To mark Europe Day, the First Minister will address an event at the European Commission in Cardiff. It will be the last time the European Commission Office in Wales hosts an event to celebrate Europe Day, which has taken place in the capital for the past 42 years.

The First Minister will talk about the bonds that have developed between Wales and the EU over the last half century and look ahead to a positive relationship with our European partners over the next 50 years. He will say:

“Not more than 70 years ago, Europe emerged from one of the most bloody conflicts the world has ever seen. What grew out of the wreckage of war was a new resolve and political will that the next generation would not have to endure the bloodshed and sacrifice of the last.

“That period of stability has endured and, while there are many reasons for that, perhaps most important of all has been political will. A will shown through new partnerships and economic union – including the EU – which has made our lives more peaceful, prosperous and stable than they have ever been.

“In 2016 the UK decided to leave the EU and, as a government, we have played our part in the national debate about our future outside those political structures.

“Just recently we were able to agree with the UK government a sensible and rational position to protect devolved powers after we leave the EU. We’ve taken flack for that, negotiating as we have done with a government of a different political stripe, but we’ve done it because it’s the right thing for Wales and our economy.

“There are arguments that we are yet to win and we will not give up on them. But, Europe Day is about something more. As important as the position papers, constitutional arrangements and trading borders are, what we are debating as we leave the EU is something much more fundamental. It is about the kind of country that we want to leave to our children.

“Just as the generation after 1945 made tough political choices to forge a new future, I believe that a choice of similar magnitude faces us now. There is more that unites us than divides us. Europe is, to borrow a famous phrase, more than a collection of red states and blue states. We are a continent wanting, fundamentally, the same things; peace, prosperity and a better tomorrow.

“And that’s my simple message on Europe Day 2018. We are leaving

the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe. I believe that the UK can choose this opportunity to re-engineer our relationship with our European partners in a way that safeguards common bonds and, in doing so, help us make real our ambition of a kinder, fairer politics.

“By putting in place a deal to leave the EU that maintains the ability for business to trade freely with its European partners for the good of both. A deal that enshrines the rights of young people to travel, to work and to study freely with Europeans like them. By putting in place a deal that continues to invest and build fairness into the regional periphery of Europe that can tackle the injustices of deindustrialisation and economic injustice.

“I am, therefore, challenging every political party in Wales and the UK to put politics aside and see Brexit through a wider lens.

Let us work together in a new spirit of partnership to build a more positive relationship with our European partners over the next twelve months and achieve a settlement which the next generation can be proud of.”

[PaCE scheme is example of our commitment to getting parents back to work – Eluned Morgan](#)

Ahead of her appearance at the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee to give evidence to their inquiry into pregnancy, maternity and work, the Minister visited The Hair Den in Barry and met Julie Coulthard, who has been helped by the £13.5 million Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) programme.

Julie has four children, aged 26, 19, 6 and 4 years. After the birth of her youngest daughter, a relationship breakdown meant Julie, who had always balanced work and caring for her children, couldn't work and was receiving benefits. With the help of her PaCE adviser, Julie started to train as a hairdresser with ACT Training – a career she had always wanted to pursue. PaCE paid for her childcare and training, and now two years on, she is fully qualified and working 16 hours a week at the salon.

Figures show Julie's case is far from unusual. In Wales 19.1% of women who are economically inactive say it is because they are looking after family or home, compared with 6.8% of economically inactive men¹. Meanwhile, the average price of a part-time nursery place for a childcare under two comes to £116 per week in Wales – double what Welsh families spend on groceries in a

year.2

PaCE targets parents who face childcare barriers which prevent them accessing education, employment or training opportunities. Jointly delivered by the Welsh Government and the Department for Work and Pensions, there are 43 PaCE advisers in community settings, helping people find a variety of solutions to overcome childcare barriers so that they can move towards and into sustainable employment.

Eluned Morgan said:

“Our Employability Plan recognises that different people experience different barriers which prevent them entering work. For parents – and mothers in particular – we know these include the availability of jobs with flexible or suitable working hours and the cost of quality childcare, especially if they lack the skills to find work that pays enough to make these costs worthwhile.

“PaCE advisers have been very effective in finding a variety of solutions to overcome childcare barriers, including encouraging employers to consider employing PaCE participants on a part time basis to accommodate childcare commitments and helping with childcare costs so parents can undertake training to improve their employability. This is exactly the sort of individualised approach the Employability Plan is advocating.”

Julie said:

“I’ve always worked, so when I was claiming benefits after my youngest was born I wanted to do something about it but didn’t know how to get out of the rut I found myself in. My PaCE adviser was so helpful and supportive and, rather than just finding any job, really worked to help me train to get the job I always wanted and that paid enough to make childcare affordable.

“My older two children always saw me working so I really want to make sure my youngest two see that as well. My eldest two now have decent jobs themselves and I also help look after my two grandchildren whilst my daughter is at work.”

[Why waste waste? A new sustainable hub](#)

for production in South Wales

Using a model designed to help businesses interested in setting up in Wales, the Welsh Government made a former RAF workshop available on the Welsh Government's Picketston Business Park in St Athan. They agreed a 10 year lease at a competitive commercial rent that reflected the work needed to convert the building to make it fit for purpose.

The workshop boasts a total of 4,550 sq m (49,000 sq ft) of indoor space, as well as a further 13,380 sq m (144,000 sq ft) of outdoor filming space. It also features a number of additional facilities, including unit bases and storage and rooms and offices which can be adapted to suit a productions needs.

Dresd have operated in the film and TV industry offering sustainable services to productions since 2012. Their work to reduce waste in the industry has allowed up to 99% of sets to be recycled and reused, while saving money for the productions they have worked with.

Their aim is for the studios to lower the carbon footprint of productions. Those who film at the studios are able to benefit from their cost-effective, unique and sustainable services.

Since Dresd moved in, the studios have already hosted filming for Requiem, a recent co-production by BBC One and Netflix. In the past they have accommodated TV productions such as Doctor Who, Torchwood and Sherlock, and features such as Mr. Nice and The Killer Elite.

They regularly employ workers registered with local employment agencies, and are looking forward to welcoming two more into their team when the positions open this year. They are also regularly in touch with local colleges and students who are looking to gain experience in the creative sector.

Managing Director Lynn McFarlane said:

"We aim to provide a sustainable hub for television and film productions, where filmmakers can access used materials for their work, reducing the need to build brand new sets.

"Most of the salvaged items would have ended up in landfill, but they now form part of a reclaimed prop house for the production industry, not only film and television, but theatrical productions, events and the interior design industry as well.

"We are grateful for the Welsh Government's assistance in helping us to set up in the premises with the room we need to be able to offer our services to companies across the creative industries."

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This is an excellent example of the support we can give new and established businesses that recognise the benefits we have to offer here.

“I am delighted the Welsh Government could help Dresd come into Wales.

“Over the last five years, film and TV productions shot in Wales and funded by Welsh Government have spent in excess of £100m in Wales. This is investment into local economies, providing hundreds of Welsh businesses and individuals with high quality work. Without a doubt there is a place within the creative sector for the sustainable services Dresd can offer.

“These studios will allow the company to move into a new phase of work, focused around providing a new, sustainable hub for the recycling of production sets, and will be the first of its kind in Wales. It’s a commendable idea and an admirable achievement, and I wish them every success in the future.”

[Welsh Government investing a further £25m in Tech Valleys by 2021](#)

In a meeting with Blaenau Gwent Council leader, Nigel Daniels, Economy Secretary, Ken Skates confirmed the Welsh Government would invest £25m in its Tech Valleys programme between 2018 and 2021, as part of the commitment to invest £100m over the next ten years. This is on top of Welsh Government investment to date in Tech Valleys, and will see Welsh Government support for the programme exceeding £30m by the end of 2021.

The investment will stimulate job creation and leverage public and private sector investment in the area whilst accelerating the development of high value, advanced technologies that support cutting edge industry.

The £25m has been allocated under the Welsh Infrastructure and Investment Plan and is part of the £100m the Welsh Government pledged to invest in the Tech Valleys project between 2017 and 2027 in order to support the creation of more than 1500 jobs, predominantly within new technologies and advanced manufacturing.

A key enabler will be Tech Valleys’ support for the development of advanced skills, both within the current workforce and future generations to deliver better jobs closer to home.

In 2017 the Welsh Government announced it would invest £100m in the Tech

Valleys project over ten years, in order to support the creation of more than 1500 jobs, predominantly within new technologies and advanced manufacturing.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“Ahead of this evening’s Blaenau Gwent Business Awards I am pleased to confirm that as part of our commitment to economic regeneration within Blaenau Gwent and the surrounding areas, we are committing £25m to the Tech Valleys project over the next three years. I am optimistic it will work to accelerate progress of this important programme, build up local skill levels, and leverage in a raft of additional private and public sector investment.

“This £25m is on top of the significant investment we have made in the area to date in property development and funding for dedicated interventions such as composite material training that will help future proof the current and future local work force for the types of jobs we are looking to attract.

“In line with our new Economic Action Plan, Tech Valleys will have the principles of growth, fair work and decarbonisation at its heart while seeking to spread the fruits of economic growth to areas that have not fared so well in recent years.

“And we are currently in discussions with a number of companies who are interested in being part of Tech Valleys and all that it represents. Our focus now is on working to convert that interest into tangible, high quality and sustainable jobs.”

Blaenau Gwent Council Leader, Nigel Daniels said:

“We recognise the opportunities presented by the changing nature of global production and technology and we welcome the engagement with Welsh Government and other partners to ensure the Tech Valleys approach delivers on these exciting developments. We support the announcement of the investment of £100m over 10 years in Blaenau Gwent and specifically the £25m for the next three years, with the early focus on skills which will be the key to securing the long term benefits offered by the advances in technology.”

Chair of Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone, Mark Langshaw said:

“I am delighted to hear the announcement of £25Mn funding over the next 3 years for the TechValleys project. This comes on the back of the publication of the TechValleys Strategic plan and demonstrates a clear commitment from Welsh Government to the economic regeneration of Blaenau Gwent. I am convinced that this will be an important enabler to attracting employers to the area and

contribute towards the ambition of creating 1500 high quality sustainable jobs over the next 10 years.”

Economy Secretary Ken Skates will attend the inaugural Blaenau Gwent Business Awards on Wednesday 9th May to celebrate the achievements of local companies and talk more broadly about his ambitions for the area.

On the same day the Welsh Government will publish its Tech Valleys Strategic Plan which builds on the Vision Document published in December 2017 and includes a particular focus on skills.

[Help to Buy-Wales homebuyers will see energy efficiency loan benefit](#)

The Welsh Government is the first organisation in the UK to put this in place.

Speaking to the UK Finance Annual Cymru Mortgage Lunch, she will explain how [Help to Buy-Wales](#) equity loan applicants will be able to borrow more money for a more energy efficient home.

Rebecca Evans said:

“From this June, the Help to Buy-Wales equity loan affordability calculator will include an energy efficiency element. This means when people look to see how much they can afford they will be given different options depending on the energy efficiency of the property they are looking to buy, and loans will be adjusted according to the energy rating of the home they choose.

“A more energy efficient home costs less in bills, so buyers will potentially be able to afford to borrow more. We know that energy spending can be a major household outgoing, which is why we want to make energy efficiency part of the consideration when people look to buy a home in Wales.

“We have worked closely with the Building Research Establishment on the LENDERS project which modelled this work, and we are the first government, indeed the first organisation in the UK to put this into practice.

“Whilst there is no obligation on mortgage lenders to change existing practices or their own affordability assessments, we hope to see them follow our lead and make energy efficiency part of the mortgage consideration for all homebuyers in Wales.”

Andrew Sutton, Associate Director, BRE Wales, said:

“This announcement is a great step for the LENDERS project outcomes and fantastic news for first-time buyers in Wales. The more accurate forecasting provided by the research will help many onto the housing ladder who might have struggled to obtain a mortgage previously, and the research we will do in parallel with the adoption should help other financial institutions better understand the practicality of implementing.

“I am delighted to see the LENDERS project translated from research into reality and I hope to see other mortgage lenders follow suit.”