

Finance Secretary meets his Irish counterpart to discuss Ireland/Wales trade links post-Brexit

The 2014-2020 Ireland/Wales programme is providing €100m (with €79m coming from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support collaborative projects in the areas of innovation, adaptation to climate change and tourism, heritage and culture across the Irish Sea.

For more than 20 years EU funding has successfully fostered partnerships across the Irish Sea, to address economic and environmental challenges and to support sustainable development.

The Welsh Government is now looking to develop a successor programme of activity with the Irish government beyond 2020 as outlined in its policy paper "Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit".

Mark Drakeford said:

"We highly value our relationship with Ireland and we are committed to deepening our engagement outside the EU given the close bond, common values, trade and cultural links between the 2 nations.

"As an outward facing nation, we want to maintain and build on our international networks, including through continued participation in co-operation programmes. We place great value on the ETC programmes, including our cross-border programme with our nearest neighbours.

"They provide the means to find real solutions to shared challenges which transcend borders. We must ensure that we do not lose, but rather sustain, the excellent and creative partnerships which have been built up across the maritime border with Ireland."

Following talks with his Irish counterpart, the Cabinet Secretary will visit University College Dublin where he will meet representatives of a number of organisations that have benefitted from the Ireland/Wales programme including:

- Acclimatize – a project led by University College Dublin in partnership with Aberystwyth University which aims to combat the effects of pollution on bathing waters, helping to boost tourism and support marine activities
- Ecostructures – a project led by Aberystwyth University, in collaboration with University College Dublin, Bangor University, University College Cork and Swansea University which is developing new methods of enhancing the quality of coastal structures, including sea-

- walls and tidal lagoons, through more ecologically-sensitive design
- CALIN (Celtic Advanced Life Sciences Innovation Network) – a project delivering a pan-Ireland-Wales platform for industry driven innovation in the area of Nanohealth via a collaboration between Swansea, Cardiff and Bangor Universities in Wales and UCD, Dublin City University, Trinity, Cork (Tyndall) and Galway Universities in Ireland.
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75% of alcohol in Wales is drunk by just over a fifth of the population – new report

Within this – the 3% of the population who are harmful drinkers, account for 27% of all alcohol consumed.

In October 2017, the Welsh Government unveiled a new Bill that will, if passed by the National Assembly for Wales, introduce a minimum price for the sale of alcohol. The Bill is designed to reduce hazardous and harmful drinking in Wales.

The report published today by the Sheffield Alcohol Research Group at the University of Sheffield concludes the greatest impact of a minimum unit price would be on the most deprived harmful drinkers – those groups at greatest risk of experiencing harm due to their drinking.

The report reveals the population of Wales buys 50% of its alcohol for less than 55p per unit, 37% for less than 50p per unit and 27% for less than 45p per unit. It finds heavier drinkers are more likely to buy alcohol sold below these thresholds.

The Sheffield Alcohol Research Group at the University of Sheffield were commissioned by the Welsh Government in June 2017 to update the 2014 model-based appraisal of the likely impact of a range of minimum unit pricing policies in Wales.

The research also shows:

- Moderate drinkers consume an average of 211 units of alcohol per year compared to 1,236 for hazardous drinkers and 3,924 for harmful drinkers.
- Harmful drinkers spend an average £2,882 a year on alcohol compared to £1,209 for hazardous drinkers and £276 for moderate drinkers.
- Alcohol-attributable deaths and hospital admissions are concentrated in hazardous and particularly harmful drinkers who are more deprived.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“People who drink alcohol at hazardous and harmful levels drink 75% of the alcohol consumed in Wales. The introduction of a minimum unit price would be effective in reducing alcohol consumption among these groups, as well as reducing the number of alcohol-related deaths and hospitalisations.

“The report shows the greatest impact of a minimum unit price would be on the most deprived harmful drinkers, while moderate drinkers would experience only small impacts on their alcohol consumption and spending. This is because moderate drinkers tend to buy alcohol which would be subject to little or no increase in price under the policy.

“If passed, this law will potentially save lives.”

[Cabinet Secretary officially christens FPV Catrin, Wales' latest high speed patrol boat](#)

The Cabinet Secretary was in Conwy Marina to officially christen the new vessel FPV Catrin, named in memory of Catrin Glyndwr, a prominent woman in Welsh history, and the daughter of the last Welsh-born Prince of Wales, Owain Glyndwr.

FPV Catrin will provide a high speed response capability to ensure Wales continues to effectively enforce fisheries and marine laws. The new vessel will proudly fly the prestigious Welsh Government Marine and Fisheries enforcement flag, manufactured in Swansea.

FPV Catrin is the first new vessel constructed by ship builders Marine Specialised Technology (MST). During the visit the Cabinet Secretary met MST staff involved in its design and construction.

FPV Catrin is the first of three new patrol vessels. FPV Rhodri Morgan and FPV Lady Megan are currently under construction in Pembrokeshire and are scheduled to be delivered to Welsh ports later in the year.

Speaking prior to cutting the ribbon, offering champagne as a toast and placing green leaves on the vessel for a safe return, Lesley Griffiths said:

“I am delighted to be here in Conwy to celebrate the christening launch of our new Fisheries Patrol Vessel Catrin.

“Our new vessel will ensure we can continue to effectively enforce

fisheries and marine laws. It will help us meet our commitment to manage our fish stocks sustainably and safeguard Wales' fishing industry and our coastal communities in the years ahead.

"I would like to thank MST – without their dedication and efforts this day would not have been possible."

Philip Hilbert, Sales Director, Marine Specialised Technology Limited said:

"MST is very privileged to be involved in this prestigious project.

"This is the largest example to date of our highly regarded High-Speed Patrol Boat series of fully enclosed wheelhouse Rigid Inflatable Boats and at 13m in length is now the flagship of our range.

"Working with the Welsh Government has been a great experience for us and resulted in an exceptional craft which we are very proud of. Our relationship has been a partnership in which we have worked together to produce one of the most comprehensive vessels of this size and type. As a result it offers unparalleled levels of innovation, technology and capability which we are sure will serve the Fisheries for many years to come."

[Lesley Griffiths outlines her vision for land management in Wales post Brexit](#)

Speaking at the NFU conference in Birmingham, the Cabinet Secretary outlined the importance of devolution and reiterated her commitment to ensure Wales does not lose a penny of funding as a result.

During the speech, the Cabinet Secretary announced the five core principles that underpin the vision for a new Welsh land management policy. They are:

- We need to keep farmers on the land. Welsh land must be managed by those who know it.
- We need to ensure our agricultural sector can be prosperous and resilient in a post-Brexit future, whatever that may be.
- Our new policy should centre on Welsh land delivering public goods for all the people of Wales.
- Our system of support should be accessible to all. That means giving

- farmers the opportunity to continue to make a living from the land.
- We must not turn our backs on food production. Where sustainable production is viable, we must help our farmers compete in a global marketplace.

Speaking at the conference, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“As we prepare to leave the EU, the case for devolution is stronger than ever. The nature of our farming is different and our rural communities are different. There is no one size that fits all.

“I stand ready to work together on areas of mutual interest with the UK Government and my Scottish and Northern Irish colleagues. But we must stand as equal partners. That means fair decisions, fair governance and above all, fair funding.

“Over 18 months on from the referendum, there is no clarity on what funding will return to Wales. I will continue to insist Wales must not lose a penny and will fight to protect funding returning to Wales from going elsewhere. We must continue this vital support.

“Farming is a vital part of our rural economy. I often have to remind people from outside the sector that over 80% of Welsh land is owned and managed by Welsh farmers, foresters and environmental bodies. We need them and the work they do to help deliver our ambitions for a prosperous Wales.

“I want to start a new phase of detailed discussion on what our new Welsh land management policy should be. Today I am setting out my emerging thinking and the five core principles for the future of our land and the people who manage it.

“Firstly, we must keep farmers on the land. Welsh land must be managed by those who know it. It’s what’s best for our rural economy, our communities and our environment.

“Second, we need to ensure our agriculture sector can be prosperous and resilient in a post-Brexit future, whatever that may be. My Roundtable group members say the status quo is not an option and I agree. While the basic payment scheme provides important support for many of our farmers, it will not help us withstand the changes brought by Brexit. We need to provide support in a different way.

“My third principle is that our new policy should centre on Welsh land delivering public goods for all the people of Wales. The diversity and richness of Welsh land means we have no shortage of public goods to provide.

“Fourthly, our system of support should be accessible to all. That means giving farmers the opportunity to continue to make a living from the land. But we will be asking our farmers to do different things in return for taxpayer support. This is vital for putting

the industry on a secure footing.

“My final principle is we must not turn our backs on food production. Where sustainable production is viable, we must help our farmers compete in a global marketplace. Food is core to Welsh farming values and is emblematic of our nation. We already have a thriving food and drink industry and this is the time to advance it.

“These principles underpin my thinking but this is just the start of the conversation. I want to start detailed discussion with stakeholders about the details and to get their input on what works.

“We must work towards a shared vision. I know farmers can adapt but it is government’s job to give them the time and tools to do so.

“The transition period must be a real one, it must be well-planned and it must take place over a number of years. There is too much at stake – economically, socially and environmentally – to not get this right.

“This is worth taking the time to get right. It is a once in a generation opportunity and I am confident we can make swift progress.”

Second phase of Innovate to Save fund launched

Applications are open for grants of up to £15,000, for organisations to test an idea that could improve services for citizens and make savings. Throughout the research and development phase, projects will receive support from Nesta and Cardiff University (through the Y Lab arrangement), and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. There is then an opportunity to apply for loan funding to implement the idea.

Organisations submitting proposals will also be able to draw on the resources and experience of Nesta and Cardiff University to expand the scope of their projects. The deadline for applications is 1st July 2018.

The Finance Secretary stated that in launching a second funding round, he wanted to continue the momentum and build on the innovative ideas and proposals which were put forward last year.

Mark Drakeford said:

“All parts of the Welsh public and third sectors are eligible to apply for Innovate to Save funding. Last year, a wide range of proposals, from the effectiveness of social prescribing to looking at new ways to assist communities threatened by coastal flooding and long-term decline, were put forward.

“We hope to see a similarly wide range of proposals coming forward this year, which will generate cash-releasing savings which can then be re-invested in services and improve outcomes for people, including their quality of life.”

Rob Ashelford, Head of Y Lab Programmes, said:

“Giving people the time and space to experiment with new ideas for public services is more important than ever before. Innovate to Save helps organisations test, evaluate and implement projects that have the potential to improve services and generate savings. We are pleased to offer a new opportunity to apply to the programme and support more innovative projects in Wales.”

Professor Rick Delbridge, Academic Director at Y Lab, said

“We are very pleased to have the opportunity to extend the number of participants in the Innovate to Save programme. The Y Lab partnership combines the innovation expertise of Nesta with the academic research of the University in ways that encourage and support innovative and effective projects which can really make a difference.”