

## [Finance Secretary talks Brexit and Welsh/Irish trade links at Killarney Economic Conference](#)

The Finance Secretary will join a panel of political figures, prominent academics and Irish business leaders including Arlene Foster, Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party and Micheál Martin, Leader of Fianna Fáil to discuss Brexit and the challenges it poses for business, the legal issues that will arise, how it will shape future politics and the impact it will have on daily life.

The conference will also provide an opportunity to discuss Welsh/Irish trade links post-Brexit and the progress being made with the current 2014-2020 Ireland Wales programme which is providing a €100m investment benefiting our businesses and communities.

Mark Drakeford said:

“We highly value our relationship with Ireland and 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 through continued participation in co-operation programmes.

“We place great value on the European Territorial Co-operation (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.”

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## [Consider Credit Unions this January – Housing and Regeneration Minister](#)

## **Rebecca Evans**

The Minister has launched an open and competitive grant application process for credit unions in Wales to apply for over £840,000 of Welsh Government funding for financial inclusion activities. This work helps to ensure people aren't excluded from accessing safe savings products and affordable loans.

Minister for Housing and Regeneration Rebecca Evans AM said:

“Credit Unions in Wales deliver financial awareness education to adults and children in Wales; they help to equip people to make responsible financial decisions, and to avoid irresponsible high-interest doorstep, online and illegal lenders. Crucially, they also work to help people to overcome the problems that come with spiralling debt.

“This January, as people think about their finances after Christmas, it's worth considering whether your local credit union can help you to meet your savings goals.

“I have launched a competitive grant scheme for credit unions in Wales to bid for £844,000 of Welsh Government funding from April this year for the next two years.

“We fund credit unions to deliver on our financial inclusion goals, so that everyone in Wales has access to appropriate and affordable financial services.”

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## **Wales and Europe must work together to face global cyber security challenges**

The Memorandum of Understanding reflects the importance of continuing collaboration across Europe to address global challenges, such as cyber security, in the face of the changing political landscape as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

While in Brittany, the First Minister will visit the Cyber Pole of Excellence, which focuses on training, research and supporting SMEs working in the cyber industry.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Cyber security and the prevention of cyber attacks is a global challenge and one which we can only face by working collaboratively with international partners. Cyber attacks, like last year’s WANNACRY strike, can have a wide ranging impact on national security and demonstrate the importance of working collaboratively to prevent further attacks.

“I am proud that Wales is the UK centre for cyber security and home to the Britain’s largest Cyber Security Cluster of SMEs and internationally renowned companies such as Airbus, General Dynamics, Alert Logic and CGI.

“It is crucial we remain at the cutting edge of technology. This can only be achieved by continuing to collaborate with global partners and participating in European research and innovation programs.

“Leaving the EU may also create challenges for this the cyber industry and we must take steps now to ensure this important sector is able to continue to develop and thrive. Placing restrictions on EU citizens working in the cyber industry will further restrict the sector that is already affected by a shortage in skilled labour, while restricting the UK’s access to the single market and could damage the UK’s position as market leader.

“I am committed to continuing to work in partnership with our European friends and partners to face future global cyber security challenges.”

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## **Number of stroke survivors in Wales continues to increase**

The report shows that the number of people in Wales who died after suffering a stroke has decreased by 6% since 2011.

It also identifies improvements in the performance of Welsh hospitals when treating stroke patients.

More hospitals are now reaching the higher levels “B” to “D” against the Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme (SSNAP) than in 2013-14, where the majority of Welsh sites were achieving the lowest grade “E”.

Improvements in performance can be linked to a number of achievements in patient care, including effective pre-assessment of stroke patients.

Stroke patients are now receiving quicker access to brain scans upon

admission to hospital. The percentage of patients receiving a CT scan within 1 hour in Wales increased from 41.6% in 2015-16 to 50.6%, in line with guidelines set by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP). Excellent progress has been made in ensuring that patients are scanned within 12 hours, with 91% of Welsh sites performed better than the audit average of 94%. Over 95% of Welsh patients were scanned within 12 hours.

During 2016-17, 50.8% of Welsh patients were directly admitted to a stroke unit within the 4 hour guidelines set by the RCP. Compliance against this measure has continuously improved, increasing by 12.3% since 2015-16, reducing the likelihood of other associated complications.

The SSNAP report indicated that 83.4% of applicable patients received a joint health and social care plan when they are discharged from a Welsh stroke unit. This is as a result of a cooperative approach between doctors, nurses and therapists working alongside the patient and their family, to achieve the best levels of recovery.

The Welsh Government and Stroke Implementation Group have also invested in clinical research through funding of a Stroke Research Hub. This collaboration with Cardiff Metropolitan University provides an opportunity to stimulate new research which will benefit both stroke sufferers and those most at risk of stroke.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Time is critical to treating anyone suffering from a stroke, so the faster an individual gets expert help, the better their chances are of making a full recovery.

“It’s great to see that more people in Wales are accessing high quality, urgent care during their treatment, and afterwards through rehabilitation, psychological and at times social care provision. I credit all the healthcare professionals for their dedication to improving services for patients in Wales.

“We strive for everyone to have the lowest possible risk of having a stroke, and, when it does occur, to have an excellent chance of surviving, and returning to independence as quickly as possible.

“To build on this momentum, NHS organisations, social services and the third sector must continue to cooperate for all patients across all services in Wales.”

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# Poultry keepers reminded of the importance of biosecurity and to be vigilant for signs of Avian Flu

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has today announced the detection of the European strain of the H5N6 highly pathogenic Avian Influenza virus in 17 wild birds in Dorset. A local "avian Influenza protection zone" will be introduced in the affected area of Dorset which will require captive bird keepers to put in place enhanced biosecurity measures.

The risk to public health is regarded as low to very low. The Food Standards Agency has also offered reassurance that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

Wales is currently free from Avian Flu, but there is a constant risk the disease may arrive during the bird migration season.

The Chief Veterinary Officer is advising all poultry keepers in Wales, from small backyard flocks to large commercial premises, to review their biosecurity, sign up for disease alerts and register their birds with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) by contacting their GB Poultry Register Helpline on 0800 634 1112. Keepers are also reminded they must report any unexplained deaths or sickness in their birds to their vet.

The Chief Veterinary Officer said:

"Although Wales is currently free from Avian Flu, the wild bird migration season is well under way and there is a constant risk of the disease, particularly at this time.

"Finding Avian Influenza (AI) in wild birds in the UK is not unexpected at this time of year and surveillance in other Member States has identified AI throughout Europe in recent weeks.

"Detection of the disease in wild birds in Dorset emphasises the need for poultry keepers to remain vigilant and monitor their birds for any signs of disease.

"I cannot stress enough the importance of practicing the very highest levels of biosecurity and I urge all poultry keepers to review their biosecurity plans. They must be prepared and take actions for example feeding and watering birds under cover to help reduce the chance of their birds becoming infected.

"Keepers of poultry and other captive birds should ensure every effort is made to prevent contact with wild birds. The movement of poultry should be minimised, and clothing and equipment should always be cleansed and disinfected before and after their use."

If poultry keepers are concerned about the health of their birds they should seek advice from their veterinary surgeon. If they suspect their birds have AI, they should report it to their local [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) (external link) immediately.

If members of the public find dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese or ducks) or gulls, or five or more dead wild birds of other species in the same location, they should report them to the Defra helpline on: 03459 33 55 77 or email: [defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk). This service covers the whole of GB.

All keepers are encouraged to register their poultry. It is a legal requirement to register if keepers have premises with 50 or more birds. Keepers of premises with fewer than 50 birds are encouraged to [register voluntarily](#) (external link).

Keepers are advised to sign up for [disease alerts](#) (external link).

More information on Avian Influenza, the current situation in Wales and across the UK and advice for backyard keepers, including on biosecurity is available on the [Welsh Government's website](#).