

'No deal' cannot be an option – First Minister Carwyn Jones

Setting out the potential repercussions of 'no deal', the First Minister said that walking away from the negotiations would cause chaos and lasting damage to the UK's economy and future security.

In the past month, a series of expert organisations' have warned of the impact of no deal:

- The BMA says it would potentially result in delays to cancer diagnosis and cancelled operations
- The British Airlines Pilots Association says UK airlines could find they have to stop flying
- The British Retail Consortium says reverting to WTO tariffs might mean UK shoppers paying up to a third more for everyday food items, while customs controls would create enormous disruption and have a potential impact on the availability of food on the shelves
- The Freight Transport Association says a cliff edge solution would send costly shockwaves through EU trade flows and supply chains;
- The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board models a 'Fortress UK' scenario where we trade on WTO terms as one which would see upland farms become economically unsustainable
- Dutch bank, Rabobank estimates that 'no deal' could lead to a level of GDP 18% lower in 2030 than it would have been had we remained in the EU.

Speaking in the Senedd, the First Minister said:

"The UK government and the gung-ho Brexiteers must wise up and listen to what the experts are saying. No deal is unthinkable. It would be impossible to mitigate the effects of such a disastrous conclusion to the Brexit negotiations.

"Preventing this outcome, not preparing contingency plans, is what we must focus on. To do otherwise would be like a passenger on the Titanic who, upon seeing an iceberg, chooses to find his lifejacket and pack his things, rather than rushing to the bridge and desperately attempting to alert the captain of the disaster ahead.

"The UK government must concentrate on reaching a credible position on our exit terms so that the December European Council can move negotiations into the second phase and very rapidly thereafter agree a transition phase of at least 2 years."

Projects developing 'homes of the future' announced

Launched in February, the Innovative Housing Programme aims to create demonstrator schemes to help inform the Welsh Government, Housing Associations and Local Authorities about the type of homes it should support in the future to help address supply and environmental demands.

Initially funded by £10m per year over the next two years, the fund has been increased to nearly £19 million for this year because of the quality schemes that have come forward. This will not affect the amount of money available in later years.

The projects include:

- homes that double up as power stations, that save residents money and have the potential to create income by producing power
- a development in mid Wales where locally grown timber is used to provide quality, low energy homes
- homes made from recycled shipping containers as short term or 'meanwhile' living solutions for people in the most urgent housing need; and
- a new 40 bed Extra Care project for older people in the Valleys, built using modular techniques which offer major opportunities to increase both the speed of construction and the quality of homes.

The projects will also contribute to the 20,000 affordable homes target the Welsh Government aims to provide over this term of government.

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement while visiting Wernick Buildings Ltd. The company will join forces with Valleys to Coast Housing association to create a development of modular homes in Sarn and Tondy. The homes will be built at Wernick's factory on Kenfig Industrial Estate and delivered to the site on lorries, meaning the high quality structures can be produced and delivered very quickly.

Mr Sargeant said:

"The housing sector in Wales is facing many challenges. Increasing the number of homes available, the rate at which they're delivered and their affordability, while reducing their impact on the environment are the most obvious.

"The projects funded by the Innovative Housing Programme will help us learn what works best and why, both in terms of what we build and how we build them.

"Building homes delivers important benefits beyond simply putting a roof over people's heads. Alongside the well-documented health and

education benefits that good quality housing provides for children and families, building homes of all tenures has a significant positive impact on the Welsh economy and on our communities. These projects will also demonstrate how we can use the Welsh supply chain to unlock massive opportunities for growth and innovation in housing.”

Investing in the skills of the future for an Ambitious and Learning Wales – £50m capital boost for FE and HE and £260m for apprenticeships

Ahead of the publication of the Welsh Government’s departmental spending plans later today, the Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams, announced £50m of capital funding for Further Education and Higher Education sectors to improve facilities and learning environments for students.

Over the next two years, £10m will be allocated for FE institutions to invest in industry-standard training equipment and a further £10m for essential maintenance to ensure safe learning environments.

An additional £30m (£10m in each of the next three years) will be allocated to support higher education estate rationalisation. This will expand the successful 21st century schools and education programme to include a ring-fenced fund for higher education estates; reducing surplus capacity and creating a more energy-efficient estate across Wales.

The Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, also confirmed today that £260m will be invested for apprenticeships over the next two years (£130m in each year) to support the Welsh Government’s commitment of creating 100,000 all-age apprenticeships over the life of this Assembly term.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

“Our £50m capital investment for the FE and HE sector will enable them to provide state of the art facilities, improving learning environments for students and satisfying local employer needs. This investment is crucial both for our learners and for the wider economy.

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James said:

“We are committed to raising skills standards across the board in Wales and through our draft budget are putting investments in place to do just that.

“Apprenticeships are the start of an exciting and rewarding career, giving people an opportunity to gain on the job experience while gaining all the skills and qualifications they need.

“We are already delivering one of the most successful apprenticeship programmes in Europe – the £260m we’re investing over the next two years will build on this and enable us to deliver our commitment of creating 100,000 all-age apprenticeships over the life of this Assembly term.”

£2.7m supply teacher project announced

The new funding will support 15 local authorities to create new supply teacher arrangements across 86 schools. The project will support the appointment of around 50 recently qualified teachers who will work across groups of schools, covering teacher absence and supporting wider school improvements and learner outcomes.

This approach will nurture recently qualified teachers whilst also ensuring cover within schools. The pilot project will run during the current and next financial years and follows recommendations from the Supply Model Taskforce report published earlier this year.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Supply teachers form a significant and important part of our teaching workforce. It is vital that they are an informed part of our system, so they are ready and able to support our national mission of education reform.

“I want to improve the way that our system currently employs, manages and supports our supply teachers. I am committed to ensuring that teachers who work flexibly in this way are well equipped, appropriately rewarded, and integrated into the teaching profession.

“This new funding is about being more flexible and innovative in our approach to covering teacher absence. Under our plans, our supply teachers will be supported in the same way that permanent teachers are.

“This approach will invest in and nurture recently qualified

teachers whilst also ensuring that there is sufficient cover within schools to meet demands for ALN delivery and other specialist teachers including Welsh-medium teachers.”

The Welsh Government aims for any savings identified from school supply budgets to be re-invested to build capacity in the system to support schools to manage their supply needs in a more co-ordinated, collaborative and sustainable manner.

Childcare providers asked to #TalkChildcare

The first phase of the campaign aimed to understand the current barriers parents face in accessing childcare and what’s important to them about the new offer. The second phase will ask providers including childminders, nursery owners, cylchoedd meithrin and sessional care providers for their experiences in delivering childcare through online questionnaires, focus groups and direct consultation.

The campaign coincides with testing of the Childcare Offer in seven local authority areas. These pilots are currently testing all aspects of the new Childcare Offer for Wales to ensure it will be accessible to parents, deliverable for providers and sustainable in the long-term once rolled out across Wales.

The Welsh Government is also supporting the Childcare Works project which aims to support unemployed young people into a career within the early years and childcare sector. This will help to build the capacity of the sector to meet the increased demand as a result of the Childcare Offer.

Communities and Children Secretary Carl Sargeant said:

“The Childcare Offer for Wales is one of the biggest developments in the sector for many years.

“We are keen to work with Childcare providers across Wales to ensure that there is a good awareness of the Childcare Offer, and to seek feedback on their experiences delivering childcare provision. The next phase of our #TalkChildcare campaign will not only help inform our Childcare Offer, but will help us learn about how the sector can be supported to thrive across Wales.

“I urge all providers across the sector, from childminders, day nurseries, cylchoedd meithrin, sessional provision and clubs, , to

have their say and share their knowledge and valuable experience with us to help us shape our new Childcare Offer for Wales.”