

Migration top of the agenda as Finance Secretary meets with UK and Scottish Brexit Ministers at latest meeting of European Joint Ministerial Committee

Besides a discussion of the state of negotiations with the EU27, there will be a strong focus on migration issues following the Prime Minister's recently announced plan to reduce low-skilled immigration from the EU. Home Office Minister, Caroline Nokes will also attend along with the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Dominic Raab and Scottish Government Ministers.

Speaking in advance of the meeting, Professor Drakeford said:

"It is simply wrong, as the Prime Minister did at the Conservative Party Conference, to pretend that migration policy can be discussed in a vacuum, when the rights of British citizens to live and work elsewhere in Europe and vice-versa will be a critical part of the negotiations on a future relationship with the EU. The Migration Advisory Committee's recent report has shown that we will continue to need – and benefit from – migration into the future. It would be foolish in the extreme to put at risk our access to the single market by insisting on ending freedom of movement only to have to increase inward migration from other parts of the world.

"More generally, we need a migration policy that allows us to attract workers into the right areas; both in terms of the type of work and the locations. We need a migration policy that works for the whole of the UK, not just for South East of England.

"For Wales, access to lower skilled labour is crucial, and should not be inhibited by an arbitrary salary threshold.

"Given the importance to our economic prosperity, and the interconnectivity between migration and our devolved responsibilities for public services such as education, health and local government, we are seeking assurance from the UK Government that we will be given the opportunity to share our views with them and that they will be taken on board, before the UK government sets out its future immigration policy later in the year."

The meeting comes a week ahead of a crucial meeting of the European Council on the 17 October and 6 months ahead of the UK leaving the European Union in March 2019.

The Finance Secretary continued:

“A sensible deal is within reach but we want the Welsh Government to be fully engaged on the content of the political declaration on the future relationship before it is agreed with the EU. Chequers was a step in the right direction, but the government will have to move more decisively in the direction set out in our White Paper Securing Wales Future, if a satisfactory outcome to the negotiations is to be achieved.”

[Funding announced for Pembrokeshire Library during Libraries Week](#)

The funding comes from The Transformation Capital Grant Programme which supports museums, archives and libraries to transform services for users, and ensure their future sustainability.

The project will see the creation of a new build extension as part of a wider development project which will transform the Neyland Athletics Club into a community hub. This would transform the library into a multi-use facility, making it more financially sustainable and improving performance; it will also help the library to engage with the community, and assist it to deliver a professional library service.

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“I’m delighted to be able to announce this funding during Libraries Week – and I’ve been able to see first-hand the improvements this fund has already made in creating bright, modern and welcoming spaces for everyone.

“While Libraries Week is a great chance to discover the range of things you can do at your library, from play and learning for children, to managing your health, to accessing free wifi and games, to finding a job, the focus this year on wellbeing allows us to consider the wider role libraries can play to strengthen our communities. And this new development at Neyland will be a great asset for the whole community. Many libraries are at the centre of people’s lives and they have the potential to transform those lives by allowing a space for experiences to be shared and for promoting learning opportunities.”

Paul Miller, Pembrokeshire County Council’s Cabinet Member for Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Culture – who is also the Councillor for Neyland West – said:

“Two years ago our community was faced with the prospect of all but losing its library service with proposals under consideration to reduce opening hours to a maximum of two days a week.

“Now, thanks to this partnership between Neyland Community Interest Company, Pembrokeshire County Council and Welsh Government the community can look forward to a brand new, purpose-built library incorporating the latest technology and open seven days a week.

“It’s a great outcome for everyone and the new Community Hub remains on track to open its doors before the end of 2019.”

Wales’ curriculum to put “citizens first” – Kirsty Williams

The curriculum – which is being co-constructed with teachers, universities, international experts and civic society – will be available for testing and feedback, with all schools having access to the final curriculum from 2020.

This will ensure schools are fully ready and prepared for statutory roll-out in September 2022.

Delivering the 2018 Raymond Williams Memorial Lecture at the Norwegian Church in Cardiff, Kirsty Williams said:

“I believe that the Welsh education system must be a ‘citizens first’ system. That’s why, on taking office, I re-affirmed the Government’s commitment to a new curriculum that as well as raising standards of literacy and numeracy will also develop ethical and informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.

“The curriculum will represent what we want – what we expect – the citizens of the future to become, to know, and to have gained from their teachers.

“But the process of working together to shape that curriculum also represents what we want from our education system.

“A profession that collaborates; that is open to new ideas; that is always learning and that seeks to raise standards for all pupils.

“We are setting an international example on how progressive education reforms can be undertaken through collaboration, creativity and confidence.

“A curriculum and education system that, as Raymond Williams wanted, provides everyone with the opportunity to “grasp the real nature of our society”.”

During the lecture, the Education Secretary made the case that the Welsh Government’s ‘national mission of education reform’ was “stepping forward in the spirit of a Raymond Williams’s long revolution”.

Covering issues such as identity politics, social mobility and human rights, the Education Secretary quoted not only from Raymond Williams, but a range of thinkers including Ted Kennedy, Mark Lilla and Orson Welles.

She said:

“I want an education system that seeks to build a common culture and ideas of shared citizenship, from our new curriculum through to adult education.

“A common endeavour that encourages questioning and challenge. To challenge the established ways of thinking and of organising.

“But also to challenge definitions and differences where appropriate. To be curious about others and the wider world beyond your own identity – however you choose to define.

“A common set of purposes, but based on combining the knowledge and skills that enable individual citizens to become part of that process of social change.

“Education itself should be a common effort and for the realisation of a common good.”

[Welsh success in top EU awards](#)

Nant Gwrtheyrn, a Welsh-language and cultural heritage centre, in Gwynedd, won the top award in the Investing in Culture Heritage category and Swansea University’s ASTUTE (Advanced Sustainable Manufacturing Technologies) project was shortlisted in the Supporting Smart Industrial Transition category.

Nant Gwrtheyrn beat competitors from across Europe to win the 2018 RegioStars award. The project has helped to transform a former quarry village on the Llyn Peninsula into a thriving education centre and visitor attraction. Around 45,000 visitors a year visit the local area and 600 people attend residential Welsh language courses at the centre, providing a significant boost to the local economy.

ASTUTE and the follow-up ASTUTE2020 programme promotes collaboration between universities and the Welsh manufacturing industry. More than 250 companies and eight universities have engaged with ASTUTE, resulting in more than £200m of economic impact; 383 new products; 174 jobs and the creation of 10 new enterprises.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“I’m delighted to see these exceptional EU-funded projects in Wales being recognised in Europe.

“Nant Gwtheyrn is an inspirational example of how EU funds have a positive impact on a local area, attracting visitors and creating jobs to drive forward the economy.

“ASTUTE has achieved high levels of innovation through its industry and academia collaboration.”

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan added:

“Nant Gwrtheyrn is an icon of Welsh culture and has helped thousands of people to learn Welsh.

“I am delighted its contribution to the local community and to Wales as a whole has been recognised at a European level. Llongyfarchiadau!”

[“The future of Welsh is ‘in good hands” – Minister](#)

The Minister was responding to the results of National Survey for Wales 2017-18, published today, which show that more 16-24 year olds say they can speak Welsh or have some Welsh speaking ability than any other age group.

While the Census is the main source of information about the proportion of people who can speak Welsh the National Survey is used to monitor trends for adults between censuses and asks questions about confidence and attitudes towards the language as well as ability.

The Minister also welcomed the fact that that 62% of those who couldn’t speak Welsh would like to be able to speak it, and 85% of those with some ability in Welsh wanted to speak it better. She said:

“The Welsh language belongs to all of us, whether we’re fluent speakers, can just get by, are starting to learn or can manage a “Iechyd Da” with a drink. It’s great news that so many people would like to learn or improve their Welsh and it’s even better news that the help you need is out there.

“When it comes to learning or improving, there is something for everybody, whether that’s an online course, a taster session, a Clwb Cwtsh course where you can learn alongside your children or grandchildren, work based courses or courses that lead to formal qualifications. There are so many different ways to learn and I would encourage anyone in that 62% or 85% to find the right course for them and to give Welsh a go.”

The survey also revealed that, unsurprisingly, those who can speak Welsh fluently and those who use the language daily are the most confident when speaking, while those who are less fluent or who don’t speak Welsh as often are most likely to lack confidence and to fear of being judged as the main barrier to speaking the language.

The Minister added:

“When it comes to languages, using them regularly is key to learning, improving and feeling confident so I would urge all those who have some Welsh to use the language every day to build their skills and confidence. Fluent Welsh speakers can also play their part, either informally by encouraging learners they know to use their Welsh or by volunteering for the ‘Siarad’ scheme, which pairs fluent speakers and learners for a minimum 10 hours of chatting over a coffee or a pint.

“With so many opportunities for adults to learn and the language being strongest amongst 16-24 year olds, the future of the language is in good hands.”