

# “Wales’ close relationship with the US will continue despite challenges” – First Minister

He will also hold high level talks with senior representatives of the British Embassy to express his serious concerns about the potential impact US tariffs will have on the Welsh steel industry.

Since becoming First Minister in 2009, Carwyn Jones has visited the US 8 times to meet with businesses looking to invest in Wales, discuss trade with political representatives and raise Wales’ profile across the pond.

During that time, US firms have created or safeguarded over 12,800 Welsh jobs, bringing the total number to almost 50,000 – a record high.

With 260 American-owned companies in Wales, the United States is by far Wales’ largest inward investor and most important global business partner. Meanwhile, the value of Welsh exports to the USA continues to rise and was worth £2.3 billion in 2017, meaning that the USA is Wales’ third largest export destination.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Wales and the United States enjoy a strong and prosperous relationship, which has gone from strength to strength during the past decade. Today, the US is Wales’ single most important global business partner.

“Barack Obama was president when I became First Minister of Wales in 2010 and I had the pleasure of welcoming him to Wales when we hosted the Nato Summit in 2014.

“Since then, I have visited the US 8 times meeting with politicians, business leaders and potential investors to talk to them about all Wales has to offer. A great deal has changed over the past nine years, but the bond between Wales and the US remains strong. In recent years, American investment in Wales has reached an all-time high and US exports are now worth over £2 billion to the Welsh economy each year.

“While our 2 administrations do not agree on everything, we have worked together to the benefit of our countries, our businesses and our people.

“Any suggestion of a return to the protectionism of the past misunderstands the challenges faced by Wales and the USA today. I want to see fewer obstacles to trade, more cooperation, more internationalism, to help our economies continue to grow.

“It is, therefore, extremely disappointing that the US is pressing ahead with tariffs on EU steel and aluminium imports. This is a short-sighted measure that will have wide ranging implications for business, defence and diplomacy right across the globe. It could also harm the Welsh steel industry, which we have fought so hard to protect.

“Despite this, we remain committed to promoting international trade, which is vital to ensuring the prosperity of Welsh people and communities.

“I have always said that we cannot promote Wales from behind a desk and have actively promoted Wales to the world over the past 9 years. Trade missions, major events and international visits will become even more crucial if we are to make the most of future trading opportunities as the UK leaves the EU.

“Wales is an outward looking, innovative and welcoming country – and that is the message I am once again proudly taking to the States on my final visit as First Minister of Wales.”