

# Agenda – Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee room 3 – Senedd  
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 6 March 2025

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

**Robert Donovan**

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales)

## Hybrid

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### Private pre-meeting

09.15 – 09.30

### Public session

09.30 – 14.30

## 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions, and declarations of interest

09.30

## 2 Papers to note

09.30

### 2.1 Legislative Consent: Employment Rights Bill

(Pages 1 – 6)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership to the Chair  
of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – 7 February 2025

Letter from the Llywydd and Chair of the Senedd Commission to the Chair of  
the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – 13 February 2025



Letter from the Chair to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – 13 February 2025

## **2.2 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2025–26**

(Pages 7 – 8)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the National Training Federation for Wales – 11 February 2025

## **2.3 Meeting of the Inter–Ministerial Standing Committee (IMSC)**

(Pages 9 – 13)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – 13 February 2025

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – 26 February 2025

## **2.4 Meeting of the Inter–Ministerial Group for Business and Industry**

(Page 14)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – 17 February 2025

## **2.5 Meat Promotion Wales / Hybu Cig Cymru**

(Pages 15 – 16)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to Stakeholders – 18 February 2025

## **2.6 Lord of the Manor Titles**

(Pages 17 – 18)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs – 21 February 2025

## **2.7 Follow-up to the Committee meeting held on 5 February 2025**

(Pages 19 – 20)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs – 24 February 2025

## **2.8 Follow-up to the Committee meeting held on 12 February 2025 – Apprenticeship pathways**

(Pages 21 – 23)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning – 25 February 2025

## **2.9 Apprenticeship pathways**

(Pages 24 – 31)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru (RTPI) – 14 February 2025

Letter from the Chair to the Joint Chairs of the Apprenticeship Cross Party Group – 25 February 2025

Letter from the Chair to Estyn – 25 February 2025

Letter from the Chair to the Welsh Independent Schools Council – 25 February 2025

## **2.10 Future of Welsh Steel**

(Pages 32 – 35)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Secretary of State for Wales, UK Government – 25 February 2025

## **2.11 Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure – additional evidence**

(Pages 36 – 40)

Attached Documents:

Federation of Small Businesses Wales (FSB)

Logistics UK

## **3 Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure – Panel 1 – Ports**

09.30 – 10.30

(Pages 41 – 67)

Richard Ballantyne, Chief Executive, British Ports Association

Ian Davies, Government Affairs Stena Line, Stena Line Ports

Anna Malloy, Communications and Marketing Director, Port of Milford Haven

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Evidence paper – Stena Line Ports

## **Break**

10.30 – 10.40

#### **4 Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure – Panel 2 – Trade and Logistics**

10.40 – 11.40

(Pages 68 – 73)

Martin Reid, RHA Policy Director for Wales, Road Haulage Association

Liam Lacey, Director, Irish Maritime Development Office

Eugene Drennan, Manager, Irish Road Haulage Association

Professor Andrew Potter, Professor in Logistics and Transport, Cardiff University

Attached Documents:

Evidence paper – Road Haulage Association

Evidence paper – Professor Andrew Potter

#### **Break**

11.40 – 11.50

#### **5 Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure – Panel 3 – Business and Local Government**

11.50 – 12.50

(Pages 74 – 79)

Christian Branch, Head of Regulation and Economic Development Service, Isle of Anglesey County Council

Sarah Bailey, CEO, West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce

Howard Browes, Chair, Cybi Business Forum, and Holyhead Business Owner

Attached Documents:

Evidence paper – Isle of Anglesey County Council

## **Lunch break**

12.50 – 13.30

## **6 Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure – Panel 4 – Welsh Government**

13.30 – 14.30

Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, Welsh Government

Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Welsh Government

Duncan Hamer, Director of Operations – Business & Regions, Welsh Government

Steven McGregor, Deputy Director – North Wales, Welsh Government

Stephen Rowan, Deputy Director – National and International Connectivity, Welsh Government

## **7 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting and for items 1, 2 and 3 of the meeting on 12 March 2025**

14.30

## **Private session**

14.30 – 14.45

## **8 Consideration of evidence following the meeting**

14.30 – 14.45

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref JS/10689-24

7 February 2025

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 31 January on behalf of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee on the Employment Rights Bill and legislative consent.

I am pleased to provide further information on the Bill to inform the Committee's consideration of the legislative consent memorandum and supplementary legislative consent memorandum I laid on 5 and 19 December respectively.

The Senedd Commission's inclusion in the scope of clause 26 results from its listing in Part 1 of Schedule 19 to the Equality Act 2010 (under the heading of "Parliamentary and Devolved Bodies"). The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body is similarly within scope. For the purposes of the 2010 Act and connected legislation, these parliamentary bodies are distinct from other devolved Welsh and Scottish public authorities.

The requirement that a Minister of the Crown consult the Welsh Ministers before making regulations under the new section 78A applies only where the regulations apply to a body listed in Part 4 of Schedule 19 to the 2010 Act. The requirement to consult does not apply in respect of regulations that apply to the Senedd Commission because it is listed in Part 1 of the Schedule, not Part 4.

Concerning clauses 49, 52 and 54, these provisions have regard to devolved matters in accordance with Standing Order 29. We therefore assessed that the consent of the Senedd was required.

Regarding clause 25, regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under the new section 83C of the Procurement Act 2023 will be subject to the affirmative procedure in the Senedd (as per the amendments to section 122(10) of the 2023 Act).

Please note the numbering of clauses used above is that of the Bill at introduction, for consistency with your letter and with the legislative consent memorandum and supplementary

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

legislative consent memorandum. The version of the Bill published on 27 January following amendment in Committee stage uses an updated numbering.

I am copying this letter to the Llywydd and Chair of the Senedd Commission, the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JACK SARGEANT". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath the name.

**Jack Sargeant AS/MS**

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership

Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
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13 February 2025

Dear Mike,

### **Employment Rights Bill**

Thank you for your letter of 31 January on behalf of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in relation to the Employment Rights Bill and legislative consent.

Having reviewed clause 26 of this Bill which inserts a new section 78A into the Equality Act 2010 we note that the Senedd Commission will be caught within the scope of this new section. The new section 78A, if enacted, will enable the making of regulations requiring certain employers and public bodies to prepare and publish an “equality action plan” dealing with matters of gender equality.

We confirm that we have not been consulted or had any engagement with the UK Government in relation to this provision. Due to the limited nature of the information available, we are unclear as to what any future regulations would contain. We would therefore like to see the Bill amended so that the Commission is included as a statutory consultee to allow us the opportunity to comment on any proposals for any subsequent regulations.



Please let us know if we can be of any further assistance to the committee.

Kind regards,



Elin Jones MS/AS

Llywydd and Chair of the Senedd Commission

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



Mike Hedges

Chair

Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

13 February 2025

Dear Mike,

### **Legislative Consent: Employment Rights Bill**

The Business Committee has referred the Employment Rights Bill LCM to our Committee, and we intend to publish a report on the policy matters in due course. However, during our consideration of the LCM, we were so concerned by Clause 26 of the Bill, as referenced in the LCM, that the Committee felt it appropriate for me to write to you and raise our views.

As you will be aware Clause 26 inserts a new section 78A into the Equality Act 2010 which enables the making of regulations requiring certain employers and public bodies to prepare and publish an "equality action plan". We note that, whilst most devolved Welsh public bodies are excluded, the Senedd Commission is covered by this provision. We were also particularly surprised to see that, while Clause 26 states that a Minister of the Crown must consult the Welsh Ministers before making regulations that apply to certain non-devolved public bodies operating in Wales, there is no such requirement when making regulations that apply to the Senedd Commission.

We feel it is entirely inappropriate for the UK Government to take powers that allows it to impose requirements on the Senedd Commission on how it operates, particularly in light of the fact that such requirements will not apply to other devolved Welsh authorities. In our opinion, the Senedd Commission should be answerable and accountable to the Senedd not to UK Government Ministers.

We will be including some detail on this within our report. However, as the Committee that leads on constitutional issues, we felt it was also appropriate to raise these concerns with you.



I have copied this letter to Joyce Watson MS, in her role as Senedd Commissioner for Equalities, Jack Sargeant MS, as the Minister responsible for the LCM, and the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee, who are also considering this LCM.

Kind regards,

Andrew RT Davies

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

CC: Joyce Watson MS, Senedd Commissioner for Equalities

Jack Sargeant MS, Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership, Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

# Agenda Item 2.2



## **To the Members of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee,**

I am writing on behalf of the National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) in response to your scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget. We appreciate the Committee's thorough examination and would like to echo your findings while highlighting some critical points from our perspective.

As identified within the report additional investment is essential to help with the cost-of-living increases, develop new apprenticeships, and support critical sectors such as Health and Social Care and Construction. This investment is crucial to meet government priorities and support the NHS and drive economic growth.

## **Challenges Faced by Apprenticeship Providers highlighted in the scrutiny report:**

1. **Cost of Living Crisis:** The ongoing cost of living crisis continues to put pressure on the apprenticeship provider network, with delivery costs increasing in line with inflation. This financial strain makes it challenging to maintain the quality and accessibility of apprenticeship programs.
2. **Loss of European Structural Funds (ESF):** The actual outturn for the apprenticeship programme for 2023-24 included significant funding from ESF, which is no longer available. This loss has led to a reduction in the overall budget, further exacerbating financial pressures on providers.
3. **Inflationary Pressures:** The cost of delivering apprenticeship services is increasing due to inflation, adding further financial strain on providers. Without additional investment, it will be difficult to sustain current programs and develop new ones to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.

## **The Need for Additional Investment:**

While we appreciate the efforts to protect the apprenticeship budget, a cash flat budget does not account for the rising costs and the need for expansion. Additional investment is necessary to:

- **Support the Cost-of-Living Increase:** Ensuring that apprenticeship providers can continue to deliver high-quality training despite rising costs.
- **Develop New Apprenticeships:** Creating new apprenticeship opportunities in emerging sectors to meet future workforce demands.

- **Support Critical Sectors:** Investing in apprenticeships for Health and Social Care, Construction, and other critical sectors to address skills shortages and support economic growth.

### **Impact on critical apprenticeship sectors**

The health and social care sector is an integral part of Wales's society, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Despite its significance, the sector faces persistent challenges, including recruitment and retention issues, skills shortages, and the increasing complexity of care needs. Apprenticeships have been identified as a vital solution to these problems, providing accessible pathways to skilled roles and long-term careers in the sector.

Yet, immediately after last year's cut to the apprenticeship budget, there was a 34% reduction in starts on Level 2 Health and Social Care apprenticeships – the critical qualification needed to work in the sector. This dramatic decrease was highlighted in the latest apprenticeship data published by the Welsh Government, covering Quarter 3 of 2023/24 (Feb-April 2024).

The Cebr report, commissioned by NTFW and ColegauCymru, further underscores the severe impact of these funding cuts. The report highlights that nearly 6,000 fewer apprenticeship starts were recorded in Wales this year, with a £50.3 million short-run impact on the economy. The health and social care sector, along with construction, has been disproportionately affected, exacerbating existing challenges in these critical areas. Additionally, the funding cuts have disproportionately impacted the most deprived communities in Wales, further widening the socio-economic gap.

It is likely that this trend will continue, potentially undermining the additional £649m investment the Welsh Government is making in the health and social care sector.

In conclusion, we urge the Welsh Government to consider the unintended consequences of a cash flat apprenticeship budget and the need for additional investment. By addressing these challenges, we can ensure that apprenticeship programs continue to thrive, supporting the NHS and driving economic growth in Wales.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Yours sincerely,



Lisa Mytton

Strategic Director

NTFW

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs

Ein cyf/Our ref: PO/HIDCC/0058/25

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
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13 February 2025

Dear Mike,

Further to my letter of 2 December 2024, I represented the Welsh Government at the seventh meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on 3 December 2024. A communique regarding this meeting is expected to be published on the [UK Government website](#) in the normal way.

The meeting was chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, the Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP.

The other attending ministers were:

From the UK Government: Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security, the Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP; Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP; and Secretary of State for Scotland, the Rt Hon Ian Murray MP.

From the Scottish Government: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic, Kate Forbes MSP.

From the Northern Ireland Executive: First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA; and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly MLA.

The agenda enabled discussion of a range of issues including: resilience and the responses from each government to the Module 1 report of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry which focused on pre-pandemic planning; and the Common Frameworks Programme and the UK Internal Market Act (2020).

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In relation to the discussion on resilience and each government's response to the first report of the UK Covid-19, I highlighted that it is important for this report and also future reports that we work together as governments across the UK. Whilst the Welsh Government broadly supports the recommendations in principle, I raised the importance of responses to the recommendations taking into account differences in the devolution settlements across our nations. In addition, the absence of Barnett consequential funding for civil contingency matters is a constraint on investment in this important agenda. I also outlined that the Welsh Government would like there to be strengthened cross-UK engagement on resilience at Ministerial level.

As part of the discussion relating to the Common Frameworks Programme, I highlighted that, where currently embedded, Common Frameworks are a positive example of effective intergovernmental working and have created space for innovation within devolved competencies. Regrettably, however, over recent years the Welsh Government's experience of the UK Internal Market Act (2020) is that it has undermined the purpose of Common Frameworks. Therefore, the interplay between the two must be placed at the centre of discussions on these issues.

In this context, the Committee also discussed the UK Internal Market Act (2020) and the plans for the statutory review in 2025. I emphasised our hope that this work will provide a platform for reform to address the serious constitutional issues with the Act. I highlighted the Welsh Government's focus on growth and the important role a well-functioning internal market can play, but made clear that the Act as it stands is not the right approach. I offered to work with the UK Government and other devolved governments on an approach to reforming governance of the UK internal market in a way which embraced devolution. I looked forward to working together on these issues as the Act undergoes statutory review in 2025.

An agenda item on the Sewel Convention and UK legislation was not discussed due to time constraints, and I therefore expect these issues to feature in future meetings.

The next Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee is expected to take place in early spring 2025, with chairing arrangements to be determined.

I have copied this letter to the First Minister, the Rt Hon Eluned Morgan MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, the Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, the Counsel General and Minister of Delivery, Julie James MS, and to the Chairs of the Finance Committee, the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee.

Yours sincerely,



**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: PO/HIDCC/0094/25

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
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26 February 2025

Dear Mike,

I am writing in accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement to notify you of the seventh meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee (IMSC), which will take place on 27 February 2025.

The Standing Committee will be co-chaired by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. I will represent the Welsh Government at this virtual meeting. I anticipate the meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the use of technology in public service reform as well as other key issues of mutual interest.

I have copied this letter to the Chairs of the Finance Committee, the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee.

I will provide an update after the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

# Agenda Item 2.4

Rebecca Evans AS/MS  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Our ref: DC-RE-10655-24

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee  
Senedd Cymru

[SeneddLJC@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddLJC@senedd.wales)

17 February 2025

Dear Mike,

Further to my letter of 16 January, I have issued a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) summarising discussions at the most recent meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Business and Industry, held on 21 January 2025. A communique regarding this meeting will be published on the [UK Government website](#).

The Terms of Reference were agreed at the meeting and will be published on the [UK Government website](#).

I will be chairing the next Business and Industries IMG in line with rotating chair arrangements. I will write to the Committee confirming the date once it has been agreed.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Finance Committee and the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely,

**Rebecca Evans AS/MS**

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

18 February 2025

Dear stakeholder,

It has been nearly ten years since a review was undertaken into the body known as Hybu Cig Cymru and the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee has decided to undertake a short inquiry into Hybu Cig Cymru / Meat Promotion Wales (HCC). The Committee is reviewing the effectiveness of HCC in delivering on its priorities and providing value for money to levy payers. Members agreed to focus the inquiry on:

- HCC's performance in delivering against its current priorities.
- The appropriateness of HCC's purpose, priorities and activities, and whether they should be revised.
- The relationship between HCC and the farming and meat processing/exporting sector, including whether HCC is delivering value for money to levy payers.
- The relationship between HCC and the Welsh Government, including whether the Welsh Government should have more oversight.
- Whether HCC is the most effective vehicle for developing, promoting and marketing red meat from Wales, and whether a red meat levy is the most effective means of funding this activity.

As the Committee intends this to be a specific, focused inquiry, we will not be opening a public consultation. However, we have decided to write to key interested parties for their views.

We would be keen to hear your views on the above terms of reference. We would also welcome any other information or evidence on the issue that you see fit.

Thank you in advance for your engagement. If possible, I would appreciate your contribution by 12 March.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew RT Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs

21 February 2025

Dear Huw,

## **Lord of the Manor titles**

On 5 February we **raised the issue** of Lord of the Manor titles with you and offered to write with further details. This is an issue Hefin and I have **raised with your predecessor** and Natural Resources Wales in our constituency capacities.

There is a long established right to farm common land across Wales. However, we are aware of situations where individuals have purchased the title of 'Lord of the Manor' and then have used medieval laws to take over, and force farmers and grazers off tracts of common land. This of course does not just impact farmers but also, once the land is taken over, will stop other residents being able to enjoy their local commons.

The Committee is concerned that the combination of increased property prices, potential agricultural subsidies and the possibility of installing renewable power installations may make this sort of action more attractive.

Both Hefin and I have heard from constituents who have been affected by this issue that they have been passed from pillar to post between their local authority, NRW and Welsh Government. The Committee would like Welsh Government to take a leadership role and create some clear policy or guidance to support farmers, grazers and communities impacted. Especially, as commons are an important part of the Government's proposed sustainable farming scheme.

As part of our consideration of the matter, we would be interested to know:

- The current Welsh Government position on the issue people using Lord of the Manor titles to take over common land;
- Is there any policy work the Welsh Government could undertake to make buying these titles less attractive;
- Which organisation(s) has responsibility for this issue and who should be supporting people affected;
- Have the Government given any consideration to how it might be able to safeguard graziers rights over common land when Lord of the Manor titles are purchased on the open market?  
And;
- Has this issue been considered as part of the development of the SFS.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs

24 February 2025

Dear Huw,

### **Follow up to meeting of 5 February 2025**

Thank you for attending the ministerial scrutiny session on the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) on 5 February. During discussion afterwards, the Committee identified several points it would like to bring to your attention.

Firstly, whilst the Committee fully appreciates that there are many moving parts to bringing the SFS proposal to a conclusion, we wish to emphasise that the timeliness of an announcement is essential - it's important that everything is worked through and ready by the announcement in the summer to ensure clarity for farmers. In addition to this, we would like to stress the importance of securing sufficient funding over multi-year budgets which will make the scheme enticing to farmers and provide certainty given the long-term nature of farming practices. We have heard evidence from environmental organisations and farming unions highlighting that, if the scheme does not offer an attractive financial reward, farmers will not join up, and the scheme's ambition will not be achieved, no matter how well it is designed.

We also identified a number of points raised during the session we would appreciate clarity on, as set out below:

- The Committee recognises there is no 'plan B' for the scheme's design, as discussed during the session, which we appreciate provides clarity to farmers. However, we would be keen to understand whether any plans are in place in the event that the economic impact assessment shows poor outcomes for farmers or the environment? We are mindful it will only be a matter

of months between the scheme being finalised and its launch. This is particularly pertinent in the context that the previous economic impact assessment was a key issue that sparked the public protests based on the 2023/4 consultation.

- During the session, there was a discussion on the recent Welsh Government mapping of the land that would be suitable for tree planting. Specific percentages for the outcomes of this could not be provided at the time, so we would be grateful if these could now be provided, as committed to.
- As also discussed during the session, the Committee would welcome being provided the full report on the work of the carbon sequestration panel, including the results of the exercise to score different carbon sequestration options, when it is available..
- The Committee would like to take up the offer to receive a timetable of developments on the scheme, when firm details are available.

The Committee also welcomes the fact that Optional and Collaborative actions, which will be available from 2026, will be published with the scheme in the summer, as well as a timetable for when the other Optional and Collaborative options will be available during the Transition Period.

Finally, whilst the Committee recognises all political parties in the build-up to the 2026 election will have different manifesto positions, the ability to seek some form of political consensus to give confidence in the scheme will be paramount to its success. We hope you would agree this is a key priority, and will try to the best of your endeavours to get cross-party political buy-in to your proposals.

Kind regards,



Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Rebecca Evans MS  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning

25 February 2025

Dear Rebecca,

### **Follow up to meeting of 12 February 2025**

Thank you for your time and the evidence you gave to Committee on 12 February as part of our inquiry into **Apprenticeship Pathways**.

Due to time constraints and that the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership was unable to attend, there are some areas the Committee wants to follow up on.

These questions may fall outside of your remit or in the area of another Ministerial portfolio so I am happy to receive a response from the Minister you feel is best suited to reply. Therefore, we have copied in the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, and the Minister for Further and Higher Education.

Please could you set out the Government's response to the following questions.

The Vocational Qualifications for Wales Steering Group's Report recommended the Welsh Government develops a national strategy for vocational education and training which should form part of a wider post-compulsory education and training strategy. The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation and said that a short, action-focused policy statement on post-16 education will be developed:

- What progress has been made in developing this policy statement?

Role of advice and information, and work experience for learners to understand their options:

- Are you content with the advice and information that learners are provided with regarding apprenticeship opportunities, in particular the service provided by Careers Wales?
- How aware are you that there has been a drop off in meaningful work experience in schools since Careers Wales stopped performing a central co-ordinating role in 2015? To what extent could this be a barrier to learners understanding their options as far as apprenticeships and work-based learning goes?

Apprenticeship pathways and the ability to map out clear progression routes from lower level to higher level apprenticeships and vertical integration:

- To what extent are you aware that learners are being put off from pursuing an apprenticeship or from continuing to the next level due to difficulties in mapping out clear pathways? Are the opportunities available for learners to progress through the levels if they wish to?
- How can there be more flexibility within the system to allow apprenticeship pathways to respond quicker to the changing needs of fast paced and emerging sectors?

Role of employers and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage with the apprenticeship programme:

- There are a number of obstacles that smaller businesses face regarding the apprenticeship programme, such as limited administrative capacity and a lack of awareness about the benefits of apprentices. Who should be addressing these challenges and how?
- What more can be done to encourage employers, in particular smaller businesses, to engage with the apprenticeship programme and provide apprenticeships?

Role of the Welsh Government:

- A number of reports have been published in recent years with recommendations to the Welsh Government, and other key stakeholders, regarding apprenticeships. How confident are you that these interlinked recommendations are being taken forward and who is monitoring them?
- During the meeting you committed to writing to the Committee on the progress of, and funding for, the implementation of recommendations made in Sharron Lusher's **Review of Vocational Qualifications in Wales** and Hefin David's **Transitions to Employment report**.

Thank you again for your time in Committee. I would be grateful if you could reply to the above points by Friday 14 March.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the Children, Young People and Education Committee in relation to its inquiry into Routes into post-16 education and training.

Kind regards,

Andrew RT Davies

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

# Agenda Item 2.9



Royal Town Planning Institute  
Cymru (RTPI Cymru)  
Studio 107  
Creative Quarter  
8a Morgan Arcade  
Cardiff  
CF10 1AF  
Tel +44 (0)20 7929 8197  
email [walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk)  
[www.rtpi.org.uk/wales](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/wales)

14 February 2025

e-mail response sent to: [SeneddEconomy@Senedd.Wales](mailto:SeneddEconomy@Senedd.Wales)

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **RTPI Cymru's position on apprenticeships and bursaries**

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional body for town planners in the UK and Europe and represents around 27,000 members in over 80 countries worldwide, with approximately 1,300 members in Wales. The Institute has been shaping planning policy and raising professional standards for over 100 years and is the only body in the UK to confer Chartered status to planners, the highest professional qualification. The RTPI champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. Our ambition is to promote healthy, socially inclusive, economically and environmentally sustainable places.

We note the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee is undertaking an inquiry into apprenticeship pathways. While we are not providing evidence to this Inquiry, the Committee maybe interested in our current position in relation to apprenticeships and bursaries and our future work in this area, set out below.

RTPI Cymru welcomes discussion on the introduction of apprenticeships, bursaries, and other options to support the future pipeline of planners in Wales.

There are lessons to be learned from other nations where apprenticeships and bursaries have proven popular.

- In England there are approximately 850 apprentices on the Level 7 Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship programme. Up to 70% of apprentices work in local authorities, providing much needed resource within the public sector and an opportunity for local authorities to grow their own talent via this route.

- In Scotland the Future Planners Bursary has been running for a couple of years. This is for students studying a planning degree (usually post-graduate degree). The Scottish Government has recently announced it will be awarding 30 bursaries of £5k to students this coming academic year (25/26).

The RTPI has experience of running bursary programmes and has found that these are important in encouraging those from underrepresented groups into the planning profession and those who cannot afford tuition fees. Bursaries need to be of a significant value to be a genuine enticement and support. They can be aimed at undergraduates or postgraduates on RTPI-accredited programmes, this ensures that graduates have a solid grounding in core spatial planning. All accredited degrees have a route to Chartered status (fully accredited degrees via the Licentiate route; partially accredited by the Associate route). Bursaries for fully accredited postgraduate study are also useful in encouraging those who have completed undergraduate degrees in other subjects to convert to planning at postgraduate level.

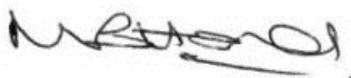
Both Welsh Government and Westminster Government have recognised the need to ensure planning services are properly resourced. The RTPI is working with a number of stakeholders including our accredited universities to grow the pipeline of planners. The recent announcement of cuts at Cardiff University, which is home to Wales' only accredited planning school, is particularly concerning and could be detrimental to achieving the shared goal of improving planning service delivery, which is essential to deliver the Welsh Government's ambitions including the delivery of 20,000 social homes for rent.

Over the coming months, RTPI Cymru will be gathering up-to-date evidence and views on early career pathways into planning, as part of a wider exploration of capacity, recruitment, and resources within the planning system in Wales, with the aim of informing a pathway into planning for early career planners that is of a scale and nature to fit the planning system and industry in Wales.

The Welsh Government have recently consulted on Promoting a resilient and high performing planning service, setting out proposals to increase planning application fees in Wales. Moving towards cost recovery provides an opportunity for Local Planning Authorities to reinvest that additional income in additional staffing capacity, providing long term employment for apprentices or students completing bursary funded schemes.

If you require further assistance, please contact RTPI Cymru on 020 7929 8197 or e-mail Mark Hand at [walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk)

Yours faithfully,



Mark Hand MRTPI  
**Director**

Luke Fletcher MS

Chair

Apprenticeships - Cross Party Group

Joyce Watson MS

Chair

Apprenticeships - Cross Party Group

25 February 2025

Dear Luke and Joyce,

### **Apprenticeship pathways**

I am writing to you in your capacity as joint Chairs of the Apprenticeships Cross Party Group. You will be aware the Committee is currently holding an inquiry into [apprenticeship pathways](#). We felt that the CPG could have some valuable insight into the issues we are examining. We would welcome any information the Group may wish to provide on the issues we are examining, namely:

- Pathways between apprenticeship levels: The extent to which there are challenges in mapping out career routes through the different apprenticeship levels, such as from a junior apprenticeship to a degree apprenticeship. Whether this is more difficult in some careers/sectors than others.
- Economy: The extent to which apprenticeship pathways support the needs of Welsh businesses and contribute to filling skills gaps in the Welsh economy.
- Employers: The engagement of employers in facilitating these pathways and attracting apprentices. Is specific support needed for micro, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage with the apprenticeship programme.

- Information about apprenticeships: Good practice between careers services, schools, colleges and employers in terms of promoting apprenticeships and the provision of meaningful work experience.
- Equity of support and access for learners: The extent to which apprenticeship pathways are made open to all young people in Wales and any barriers facing specific demographic groups or geographical areas.
- The Welsh Government's role: How policies support apprenticeship pathways and any barriers that need addressing in that regard. The role of the Welsh Government, Regional Skills Partnerships and other stakeholders in identifying and communicating economic and skills needs to inform apprenticeship frameworks and the delivery of qualifications.

Thank you for your time considering this request. I would be grateful if you could reply by Friday 14 March.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew RT Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

**Andrew RT Davies MS**

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Owen Evans

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales

Estyn

25 February 2025

Dear Owen,

### **Apprenticeship pathways – work experience**

Thank you for providing written evidence to the Committee's inquiry into apprenticeship pathways. Members have found your response and a number of your published reports interesting and useful.

One of the areas Members are particularly interested in is work experience. We have identified targeted and tailored work experience as potentially an important element that will help students make an informed choice about if they would like to pursue an apprenticeship.

We are keen to hear Estyn's views and findings on the current provision of work experience across Welsh schools so we can take it into account as part of our inquiry. We are particularly interested to hear your views on the following:

- Do all schools offer sufficient meaningful work experience opportunities? If not, what are the barriers and what can be done to address them?
- Is there any specific best practice that should be replicated across Wales?
- To what extent are parents or carers having to secure work experience placements due to the lack of capacity, or ability, to do so within schools?
- Are there any barriers for specific learners that needs to be addressed, for example learners with disabilities or additional learning needs, or from disadvantaged areas?

Thank you for your time considering this request. I would be grateful if you could reply by Friday 14 March.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew RT Davies

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Emma Verrier  
Chief Executive Officer  
Welsh Independent Schools Council

25 February 2025

Dear Emma,

### **Apprenticeship pathways – work experience**

The Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee is currently holding an inquiry into apprenticeship pathways. Amongst other issues, the Committee is looking at the information about apprenticeships provided to learners. This includes good practice between careers services, schools, colleges and employers in terms of promoting apprenticeships and the provision of meaningful work experience.

I am aware of research that indicates pupils at independent schools benefit from better careers advice and are much more likely to secure work experience placements than their peers in state schools. We are keen to hear the Independent Schools Council's views on careers advice and work experience so we can take it into account as part of our inquiry.

In particular, we would like to hear your views and experience on the following:

- How is careers advice and guidance provided in independent schools?
- How are learners informed about all of the choices available to them upon leaving school?
- What other factors influence the choices learners make?
- Is there standard practice in providing meaningful work experience for learners?

Thank you for your time considering this request. I would be grateful if you could reply by Friday 14 March.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew RT Davies

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

# Agenda Item 2.10

Wales Office  
Swyddfa Cymru

Ref: 010SOS25

**Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP**  
Secretary of State for Wales  
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

T: 0292 092 4212  
E: Correspondence@ukgovwales.gov.uk

## **Paul Davies MS**

Chair Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN  
Email: [SeneddEconomi@senedd.cymru](mailto:SeneddEconomi@senedd.cymru)

25 February 2025

Dear Paul,

## **Re: The future of Welsh Steel**

Thank you for your letter and for the opportunity to discuss the future of Welsh Steel with the Committee on 20 November 2024.

Since I spoke to the Committee, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade published a Green Paper on 16 February to inform the development of the Steel Strategy. The Strategy will establish a clear and ambitious long-term vision for the steel industry rooted in establishing competitive business environment in the UK with the aim of attracting new private investment to expand UK steelmaking capability. I urge all interested parties to respond to this ahead of the 31 March deadline.

## **Transition Board funding**

You asked about preparations to respond to an increase in demand for the support initiatives available for workers, business and the supply chain.

In my role as Chair of the Tata Steel UK / Port Talbot Transition Board I announced in December 2024, shortly after I attended your Committee session, the doubling of funding to the Employment and Skills and the Supply Chain Transition Funds to up to £30 million to meet current and anticipated demand during the remainder of 2024/25 and during 2025/26. Prior to this, as I mentioned to the Committee, in November of 2024 I also announced a £13 million Business Start-Up, Growth and Resilience Fund, which is now live for applications, with thanks to partners in Business Wales.



Early this month I also announced the first growth and regeneration project to be supported by £8.2 million Transition Board funding. The South Wales Industrial Transition from Carbon Hub (SWITCH) project will help build on South Wales's steels and metals innovation with the development of a new facility to help industry in the region create a low-carbon future, and will support over 100 jobs.

You also asked for an update on what data is currently being collected and what further data is planned to be collected in relation to the support available.

To ensure interventions serve local people and provide value for money a 'Monitoring and Evaluation Framework' has been agreed between UK Government, Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot Council in their roles as the accountable bodies responsible for the funds. As part of this framework, a formal quarterly reporting process has been established to collect and evaluate data. This includes:

- *Employment and Skills Fund:*
  - Types of intervention delivered e.g. training type and qualification level.
  - Information on outcomes following the training course/accreditation e.g. how many people were able to find new employment.
  
- *Supply Chain, Business Start Up, Resilience and Business Growth Funds:*
  - Nature of support provided – e.g. business grant, advice etc.
  - The outcomes from the provided support e.g. number of jobs safeguarded, number of businesses set up etc.

Further data and intelligence to support an independent evaluation of the programme at the relevant point will be sought from DWP (e.g. TSUK workers that become benefit claimants/move into new employment) and HMRC respectively. The key economic impact indicators to be measured will include:

- Local rates of unemployment/disability benefit/inactivity/retirement
- Average/median local wages
- Rates of self-employment
- Industrial composition of local economy
- Business outcome indicators – e.g. GVA, business birth and death rates etc
- Health and wellbeing indicators

### ***Floating Offshore Wind***

You also asked about how the UK Government is working alongside the Welsh Government and business to secure opportunities for Welsh steel to be used in the floating offshore wind turbines that will be needed in the Celtic Sea.



Wales Office  
Swyddfa Cymru

Ref: 010SOS25

**Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP**  
Secretary of State for Wales  
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

T: 0292 092 4212  
E: Correspondence@ukgovwales.gov.uk

The UK Government, alongside the Welsh Government, recognises the opportunities floating offshore wind presents for Wales. We are fully supportive of The Crown Estate's Leasing Round 5, which will bring up to 4.5GW of floating offshore wind in the Celtic Sea in the 2030s. This work will be strengthened by the partnership between The Crown Estate and Great British Energy. This has the potential to leverage up to £60 billion of private investment into the UK's drive for energy independence, boosting ports and clean energy supply chains.

Last year, The Crown Estate launched a £50m Supply Chain Accelerator Fund to catalyse UK supply chain capacity and capability for offshore wind. The Crown Estate confirmed that funding will proceed for 13 diverse projects that can support FLOW in the Celtic Sea.

The UK Government's £160 million Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme (FLOWMIS) is providing grant funding to support the development of port facilities for large-scale floating offshore wind deployment. Port Talbot is on the FLOWMIS primary list, meaning we are taking the project forward for detailed due diligence, subsidy control assessment and negotiation of grant terms. Subject to the outcome of this process, final grant offers are expected in the coming months.

The UK Government's Steel Green Paper makes clear the opportunity for the Welsh steel industry to provide plate steel and other products for the offshore wind market. We are committed to working collaboratively with the Welsh Government in growing the steel industry in Wales, which is why we have re-established the Steel Council.

## **Celtic Freeport**

You asked when the Freeport will become fully operational as well as plans with the Welsh Government for investment in the Freeport sites and the creation of sustainable, well-paid jobs.

The Celtic Freeport is a flagship example of the UK Government working hand-in-glove with the Welsh Government in driving investment and jobs into South Wales. The Freeport aims to generate £5.5 billion of new investment, create 16,000 jobs by mid-2030 and increase GVA by £900 million by 2030.

The Freeport is already open for business following the activation of two tax sites in November 2024. My officials are working closely with the Welsh Government, DBT, Office for Investment, the Freeport and individual investors to create new well-paid jobs. UK Government and Welsh Government officials are working at pace to appraise the Full Business Case so that the Freeport will become fully operational in the very near future. I have also met with the Celtic Freeport to discuss their investment

Gwydyr House | Tŷ Gwydyr    Tŷ William Morgan House  
London | Llundain    Cardiff | Caerdydd  
SW1A 2NP    CF10 1EP  
[www.gov.uk/wales](http://www.gov.uk/wales)    [www.gov.uk/cymru](http://www.gov.uk/cymru)



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Ref: 010SOS25

**Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP**  
Secretary of State for Wales  
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

T: 0292 092 4212  
E: Correspondence@ukgovwales.gov.uk

objectives and am assured by the level of interest shown by investors, including active discussions underway to secure deals.

I hope this information adds further detail to my responses at the Committee and provides answers to your additional questions.

I am copying this letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning.

Yours sincerely,

**Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP**  
Secretary of State for Wales  
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

# Agenda Item 2.11

7 February 2025

Prynhawn da Nicole,

## **RE: Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure**

Thank you for the request to provide evidence for the committee on Holyhead port closure. Here is our response to the letter and good luck with the inquiry, as it will be important to understand the event in more detail and your findings will be of great interest to us.

As noted in previous correspondence we feel that we do not have the evidence to provide a very useful granular analysis of the effects, nor have a significant number of concerns been raised with us by members. This may be because SMEs have responded through engagement with the Local Council, in particular via the Holyhead Port closure impact survey, and for those affected otherwise through bodies dealing more specifically with logistics and direct impact (e.g. Logistics UK).

However, we would note more broadly the clear importance of Holyhead as a secure entry and exit point in the transport and logistics infrastructure. The port provides essential access for trade with Ireland, facilitating the import and export of key goods, and provides a key travel route between both countries, bringing benefits for local tourism businesses.

Maintaining confidence in Holyhead's infrastructure is therefore crucial for ensuring the stability and predictability of trade flows, especially given the uncertainties surrounding post-Brexit arrangements. If there is a general perception that this is not a one-off event, this may impact on views on the security of using the port for logistics. This could also include future access through Holyhead from Ireland and through to Europe. Alternatives may be sought, which could eventually impact on the port viability. In the context of wider proposed developments in Ynys Môn (infrastructure projects, freeport) this could be problematic. As such it is important that there is reassurance, action taken, and clear communication about how the port's resilience to disruption has been enhanced.

We would note that the closure of the port has disrupted supply chains, and so had a knock-on impact on small firms lower down those chains. Concerns have been

expressed that these disruptions may be difficult to measure and track, including for insurance purposes.<sup>[1]</sup>

We hope the Committee finds this information useful and please do approach us again for any future matters of relevance on which you feel FSB Wales could support the committee.

Diolch yn fawr,

Dr Llyr ap Gareth

Head of Policy / Pennaeth Polisi

FSB Wales

1 - <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/23116>

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<sup>[1]</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/23116>

## Submission to Senedd Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee inquiry into the Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure.

### Summary

- Logistics UK welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry by the Senedd Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee into the Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure.
- The closure of Holyhead Port and the Holyhead Dublin route had a significantly negative and costly impact on the haulage and logistics industry at what should have been their busiest time of the trading year.
- This incident highlighted the critical gaps in communication and coordinated contingency planning, the fragility of the port network, and the importance of ensuring port infrastructure and the port network serving the UK and its trading partners is resilient in the face of increasing extreme weather events and emergency incidents.
- Logistics UK believes there is important learning from a contingency and resilience perspective to be drawn from this situation which will require a devolved nation and wider two islands response in partnership with industry.

### About Logistics UK

Logistics UK is one of the country's largest business groups, and the only trade association which represents all of logistics. Our mission is to support, shape and stand up for safe and efficient logistics. Our membership of more than 20,000 includes global, national and regional businesses and SMEs spanning road, rail, inland waterways, sea and air as well as the customers of freight services, such as retailers and manufacturers. We deliver services, representation and thought leadership, helping members and policy makers to seize new opportunities for the sector and the economy as a whole.

### The logistics sector

Logistics underpins our economy and is fundamental to our way of life. It supplies our hospitals, schools, factories and shops with everything they need, everywhere, every day – nothing moves without it.

In Wales, more than 90,000 people are employed in logistics roles, which equates to 6.7% of the Welsh workforce, and there are over 8,000 logistics businesses making, selling and moving goods. Wales exported goods to the value of £20.5 billion in 2022, enabled by the logistics sector.

The efficiency of logistics and the productivity of the economy are completely intertwined. Due to this relationship, Oxford Economics found in 2023 that getting the policy and infrastructure environment right for logistics would unlock up to £8 billion a year in UK productivity-led growth by 2030.

However, we are not currently going in the right direction. The UK fell from 4th to 19th place in the World Bank Logistics Performance index over the past decade, largely as a result of border friction and underinvestment in transport corridors.

Logistics is a major sector in its own right. It contributes £185 billion to the economy each year (12% of UK non-financial GVA), is one of the UK's largest employers, providing good jobs with strong career progression – 2.7 million people (8% of the UK workforce) are employed in logistics roles, and its key hubs provide a catalyst for further growth and investment, helping places to thrive.

Logistics has transformed the UK and is now delivering for the future. It helped deliver the country's canals, roads, railways, airports and ports, has driven revolutions in global trade and e-commerce and is now innovating to deliver decarbonisation and even greater efficiency.

## Consultation response

Logistics UK welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into the Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure. Holyhead to Dublin is a strategic trading route between Great Britain (GB) and the island of Ireland with approximately 5 million tonnes of goods moving this way every year. The impact of the closure of Holyhead Port from 7 December to its partial reopening on 16 January 2025 had a significant, negative impact on the haulage and logistics industry across both islands. It has also highlighted the critical gaps in communication and coordinated contingency planning, the fragility of trading gateways, and the importance of ensuring port infrastructure and the port network serving the UK and its trading partners is resilient in the face of increasing extreme weather events and emergency incidents.

### Impact of closure

From the announcement of the closure of Holyhead Port due to storm damage, Logistics UK worked closely with our members in Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, as well as FTA Ireland (our Trade Association equivalent in the Republic of Ireland), on the ongoing impact on the industry and trade across both islands. The closure of this strategic port and the Holyhead Dublin trading route resulted in significant additional cost and disruption to the logistics sector at what should have been its busiest time of the year. The impact was most acute on Great Britain to Republic of Ireland (RoI) freight but there was a severe knock-on impact on other ports, and GB to NI freight, as this traffic diverted to find alternative crossings and displaced other accompanied and unaccompanied freight which regularly use these routes. While additional capacity was at a later point provided, crossings were unpredictable as the normal booking process was suspended by ferry operators and replaced by a first in first out process.

We know from member feedback that haulage and logistics companies had to absorb significant additional costs, and reluctantly pass on unabsorbable costs to customers, as a result of increased driver wages and higher fuel bills as freight had to travel longer routes to alternative ports and wait in lengthy queues for access to slower crossings. It was particularly challenging for businesses to get unaccompanied loads on crossings. With the sector already operating on extremely narrow margins, often only 2.5%, delays, dead mileage costs and ferry surcharges added further cost pressures to operators. Haulage companies had to bring forward their last import date to ensure they could get drivers home in time for Christmas, and many reported having to turn down work because they could not guarantee timely delivery.

Drivers were the cohort most negatively impacted. Logistics UK is aware of cases where drivers were parked up for up to 36 hours, in winter weather, waiting to get a confirmed booking with little to no rest room and welfare facilities. This lack of access to basic human welfare would not be accepted if it was a reality in any other industry and we should not expect our drivers, who provide a critical national service, to have to endure these conditions. Logistics UK continues to make the case for improved, safe and secure driver welfare facilities across the UK, and provision of adequate driver facilities must also be a priority action within future contingency planning for exceptional events.

### Communication

Members reported a largely chaotic situation for the first 4/5 days in the aftermath of the port and Holyhead – Dublin route closure due to a lack of clear communication on the scale and extent of closure and details of the alternative systems in place. Members also expressed concern about the flow of information from authorities to drivers, many of whom arrived at ports only to be turned away by officials or police with no clear guidance or information on where they could stay.

Changing dates in respect of the port's reopening hindered businesses' ability to plan ahead and conflicting messages on the expected period of closure appeared to be coming from the Welsh government and Irish government. The extent of the damage caused and the timeline for the repair and reopening of the second berth in Holyhead is still not clear, which Logistics UK understands is for insurance reasons.

Logistics UK welcomed the action taken by Isle of Anglesey County Council in launching the *Holyhead Port closure: impact survey* to understand the impact that the unplanned closure of Holyhead Port had on businesses. While appreciating the remit of this local authority, Logistics UK's view is that restricting this survey to Welsh based businesses only was a missed opportunity to gather a fuller picture of the impact given the effect this closure, and resulting diverted traffic, also had on logistics and haulage businesses based in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

While statements were made by both the Welsh and Irish governments and the port operator, this incident and its direct and knock-on impact on trade has highlighted the need for a wider logistics forum to be established involving all key stakeholders in the supply chain to facilitate critical information sharing and contingency planning coordination to ensure the efficient movement of freight when an emergency situation arises.

## Contingency planning

The transport and logistics sector remains concerned that damage at one port caused such disruption to supply chains. One of the key learnings to take from this incident, given the increasing prevalence of extreme weather events and the threat from unforeseen events, is the need for comprehensive contingency planning in the event that one or more of the UK's strategic trading gateways goes out of operation. This is not an exhaustive list, but Logistics UK would propose that this contingency planning includes consideration of the following elements.

- All key stakeholders are involved in the development of strategic planning.
- There is clarity on the definition and levels of 'emergency' to trigger contingency actions.
- There is a clear and coordinated communication strategy which includes activation of a wider logistics stakeholder forum involving governments, ports, carriers, local authorities and the haulage and logistics industry to coordinate the response and facilitate information sharing.
- Advance scenario planning includes options for access to alternative ports and deployment of additional ferry capacity to ensure suitable routes can be made swiftly available to keep goods moving.
- Adequate driver welfare facilities and safe and secure parking is provided.
- Policing and traffic management plans are prepared that are informed by learning from previous incidents and ensure there is clear information frequently communicated to drivers/haulage operators.
- There is a clear, published policy determining which vehicles/loads gain priority access to ports and ferries.
- Regulatory support can be quickly provided where it is appropriate and safe to do so (e.g.) temporary relaxation of drivers' hours rules.
- Temporary customs solutions can be quickly provided where appropriate (e.g.) Goods Vehicle Movement Service (GVMS) flexibilities.

It is imperative that when contingency plans are activated, that they clearly set out the aligned actions required by governments, port authorities, ferry operators, local authorities, traffic management and policing authorities and industry to support the efficient movement of freight.

## Infrastructure and port network resilience

Another critical issue brought into sharp focus by this incident is the importance of ensuring there is a long-term resilience investment plan for Holyhead Port, other key ports and the wider port network to mitigate risks and facilitate the trading ambitions of Wales and the UK.

Logistics UK welcomes the announcement by the Welsh government that it is establishing a government led multi-stakeholder task force, jointly with the Irish government, to develop a new strategy for the future of Holyhead to ensure that the port will meet the future needs of both nations. On behalf of members, we have requested participation in this task force, and we are keen to see it established as a matter of urgency.

Given the interconnectedness and the fragility of the port network exposed by this single incident, there is also a need for co-operation on the issue of ports resilience between all devolved governments, the UK and Irish governments, and logistics industry. As well as ensuring resilience in ports infrastructure, this also necessitates investment in the infrastructure and key transport corridors connecting to these strategic trading gateways, including the provision of safe and secure parking and appropriate driver welfare facilities.

For these reasons, Logistics UK is also calling for the establishment of a cross-government taskforce to focus on and progress these issues given the critical national importance of the port network and the increasing frequency of extreme events.

Contact details.

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# Agenda Item 3

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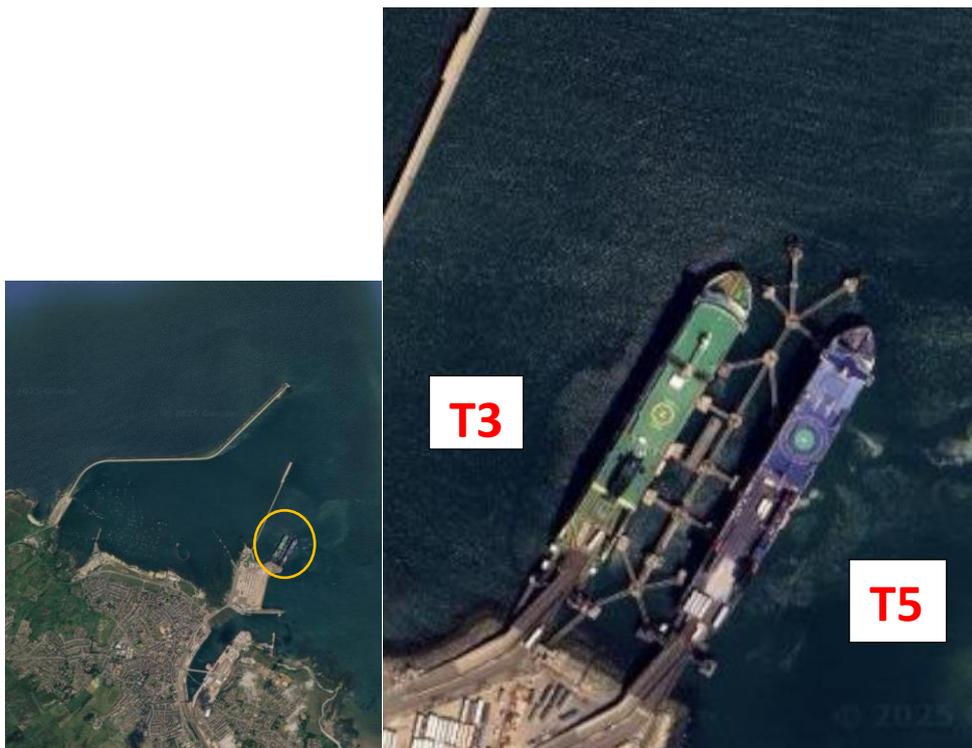
## Submission to Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee, Welsh Parliament by Stena Line Ports.

### Holyhead Port.

Stena Line Ports has owned Holyhead Port for over 30 years. During this period the port has grown to meet the needs of UK and Republic of Ireland trade. There has been continuous investment by the ferry operators in newer, larger ferries and, likewise, by the port in the infrastructure required to service them.

The port currently handles 1.8 million passengers, 400 cars and 400,000 freight units annually.

Holyhead Port has two Roll on Roll off ferry berths: Terminal 3 (T3) and Terminal 5 (T5).



The two berths are constructed from a series of steel monopiles which are secured into sockets in the seabed. There is a total of 20 steel monopiles in the associated structure, broadly arranged in three parallel rows. The outer rows are the berth faces, fitted with large wooden faced panels, against which the ferries berth. Between the wooden faced panels and the monopiles are large rubber fender cones which are designed to absorb contact energy of the vessel.

The monopiles are capped with steel reinforced concrete platforms. On top of these piles are mooring stations and hooks which take and hold the vessels mooring ropes.

The central spine of monopiles allows pedestrian access, via walkways for mooring teams to handle the mooring ropes. Some of these central monopiles are also fitted with mooring hooks.

These berths are used by two ferry companies, Stena Line Ferries and Irish Ferries, which each operate two large RoPax vessels to Dublin. The ferries vary in size but are approximately 200m long. They can carry up to 3,000 metres of freight/cars and 1,000+ passengers. The ferry crossing is approximately 3 hr 15min, with each ferry performing two round trips a day, seven days a week. In addition, Irish Ferries operates a seasonal fast craft during the summer months.

T3 is predominantly used by Irish Ferries. T5 is predominantly used by Stena Line.

**Causes:** *the factors contributing to the severity of the damage.*

On 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024, there were two berthing incidents, which rendered Terminal 3 berth unusable. Storm Darragh was forecast; however, these incidents immediately preceded the peak of the storm when the red weather alert was in place.

The berthing incidents involved two different vessels contacting monopile D2.2 on successive calls, resulting in a collapse of the monopile immediately following contact by the second vessel. The first incident was while manoeuvring on arrival at T3, the second contact was as the vessel departed the berth.

No person was injured during the berthing incidents or the subsequent collapse of the monopile.

Immediately after the collapse of the monopile the port was closed by the Harbour Master due to Storm Darragh and to allow time to assess the damage to the T3 berth.

The berths had to be inspected, including the underwater and intertidal sections which required divers. Storm Darragh and the subsequent poor sea conditions delayed the start of the diving operation until 10<sup>th</sup> December. Thereafter, the dive surveys suffered numerous delays either because sea conditions made it unsafe to dive or poor visibility meant the inspections had to be repeated.

Due to the interconnecting nature of the piles, we were advised by engineering advisors that it was necessary to check the complete structure, in order to properly satisfy ourselves as to the condition of the berths.

Only when all these inspections were completed could a programme to safely reopen T5 berth be developed.

The incidents and damage caused are now subject to an ongoing insurance claim and potential recovery action. As such no further details can be provided at this time so as not to prejudice this process.

**Communication:** *the approach to communication during and after the storm, including communication with port users, communities and businesses affected by the closure as well as between Governments*

Stena Line Ports had ongoing direct dialogue throughout with both ferry operators. The ferry operators have direct relationships with their freight and passenger customers who use Holyhead Port.

The initial closure after the incident was communicated to the ferry companies as is routine for weather disruption. At that time, while it was evident that T3 was damaged, the nature of incidents, the damage and the extent that safety checks would be required prior to resuming service could not be fully evaluated. Stena Line Ports fully appreciated the magnitude of the situation and the potential effect it could have on port users and associated parties. However, safety for those directly involved in the terminal operations was paramount throughout.

As more information became available, updates were communicated to both ferry operators and directly to political stakeholders, and media statements were released. Care was taken to ensure that everyone received these updates at the same time. This allowed the ferry companies to take appropriate measures and to clearly communicate to their customers.

However, there were occasions when individuals made speculative statements to the media which was very unhelpful. Where Stena Line Ports were given the opportunity by the media, we were able to correct these.

Throughout this time, there was an open dialogue with Welsh Government. On 13<sup>th</sup> December Stena Line and Irish Ferries were invited and attended a meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December, hosted by Minister Skates with Minister Ryan and Minister of State, James Lawless of the Irish Government.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December Stena Line Ports had gained enough of an understanding from the inspection, dives and the engineering analysis undertaken to give an update on the closure. Stena Line Ports reported that the port would remain closed until at least the 15<sup>th</sup> of January for ferry traffic. Stena Line Ports informed both ferry operators and held a meeting with political stakeholders to directly relay this information and answer questions from interested parties.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, the expected opening date of 16<sup>th</sup> December was confirmed and reaffirmed again a week prior to opening. Ferry operators, political stakeholders and media were informed directly at each stage by Stena Line Ports.

Holyhead Port reopened the T5 berth on 16<sup>th</sup> January. The reopening has allowed both ferry operators to run a full schedule, with the same number of sailings and capacity as was previously operated. There are now departures every 3 hours.

Work continues to reopen T3 as soon as possible once it is safe to do so.

**Remediation:** *the speed of response in assessing and repairing the damage, including the support provided by Government.*

With the type of structure and nature of the damage, it was deemed prudent by engineering advisors to undertake a full inspection of all the piles and linking structures.

Due to the size of the task and the challenging sea conditions, additional diving teams were brought in for a 24/7 operation. However, throughout the weeks that followed the diving operation was hampered by a combination of rough seas (typical December / January weather) and accompanying poor underwater visibility. As the underwater sections were dived, structural engineers evaluated the findings.

Only when all were satisfied as to the structural integrity of the remaining piles were we able to plan the reopening of T5 berth safely. It was frustrating that this took so long but safety was of utmost importance throughout. Despite everyone's best efforts, there was also unavoidable delays due to availability of personnel and resources being impacted by the festive period.

Welsh Government support was offered but none was needed, as Stena Line had all the internal capability and external specialists required.

Support was sought and given by HMRC and Border Force when the ferry operators wished to move vessels to other ports, such as Fishguard, to create new temporary routes to Dublin. This allowed new routes for GVMS and for Border Force officers to be deployed as and when required.

There were regular meetings with Welsh Government on matters in Holyhead Port and related issues such as displacement of freight, rail passengers etc to other ports.

**Impact:** the impact of the closure, as well as the extent and effectiveness of the steps being taken to mitigate the impact.

Holyhead Port was closed to ferry traffic for a total of 40 days.

Both ferry companies quickly sought to relocate their Holyhead vessels to other ports. Stena Line Ports were able to accommodate 2 extra services to Dublin from Fishguard, one by Stena Line for

freight & passenger services, and another for Irish Ferries, who did not previously operate from the port. Similarly, one Stena Line vessel relocated to Birkenhead operating a service to Dublin.

This was only achievable by the goodwill of Holyhead staff who relocated to both ports to provide much needed resources and by Fishguard staff's flexibility with work patterns.

Both Fishguard Port and Birkenhead terminal were operating at freight maximum capacity throughout this period.

The Fishguard and Birkenhead ferry services to Dublin where double the distance and therefore only able to perform 1 round trip per day.

Stena Line Ferries utilised spare capacity on its services between UK and Northern Ireland and Fishguard to Rosslare. In addition, a vessel was chartered by Stena Line to operate a temporary service between Heysham and Dublin.

## Closure of Holyhead Road Haulage Association (RHA)

### About the RHA

1. The RHA is the leading trade association representing over 8,500 road haulage, van, and coach companies across the UK, 85% of whom are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Our members are operators of vehicles who, between them, operate around 250,000 HGVs (half of the UK fleet) out of 10,000 operating centres and range from a single-truck company to those with thousands of vehicles. Our growing coach membership of around 150 operators run mostly non-scheduled passenger services. 81% percent of all freight movements are by road and road freight is directly involved in the transportation of 98% of agricultural products.

### Opening comments

2. The RHA welcomes the opportunity to provide a written response to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee ahead of giving oral evidence remotely on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> of March.

### The Closure of Holyhead Port

3. The closure of Holyhead Port caused significant disruption of supply chains from the island of Ireland to mainland England, the effects of which are still being felt in some cases.

Martin Reid, Policy Director for Scotland, Wales, and Ni was initially contacted by Transport Scotland on the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> of December to let us know that Holyhead had shut, and Operation Overflow would be in place at Castle Kennedy. Hauliers had to make the choice to go north to Cairnryan and Stranraer or south to Fishguard and Pembroke, particularly as Liverpool made it clear that they were fully booked until they got an additional vessel on the following week. This meant that significant numbers made their way to the other ports without bookings hoping to pick up standby slots.

RHA were invited on to the partnership calls with Transport Scotland, Police Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway Council and other key stakeholders at 9.30am on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December and almost every day after that in the run up to Christmas.

Hauliers therefore faced the additional cost of driving to the new port, the additional cost of another booking but perhaps the biggest problem faced was around the additional driving time required. HGV drivers have to work to two clocks, the Working time Directive, and EU Drivers Hours regulations. The closure of Holyhead meant that trucks, trailers, and drivers were no longer

going to be back at base when their mandated weekly rest needed to be taken.

Drivers are required to take a weekly rest of 45 hours. This can be reduced to 24 hours provided at least one full rest (45hrs) is taken every fortnight. Regardless of whether a haulier chose to go south or north following the closure then there was another day driving required, this meant that the truck, trailer, and driver were now 24 hours away or 45 hours away depending on where they were in the rest cycle. This meant that tomorrow's load had to stay in the depot and in some cases, they day after's loads too. Although the additional costs the industry had to face were incredibly unwelcome, the displaced hardware and people was more of a cost and concern.

By liaising with DfT over the weekend from the 13<sup>th</sup> of December RHA was able to secure a relaxation of drivers hours which would allow a driver to work an additional day before taking their weekly rest. This allowed more rest periods to be taken back at base, so the trucks and trailers were where they needed to be in the run up to Christmas. The relaxation ran from 00:01 Sunday 15 December 2024 until 23:59 on Friday 20 December 2024 and was subsequently extended to 23.59 on Monday 23 December.

Throughout this period, we were kept informed of movements through the Scottish ports with regular calls with Transport Scotland around the overflow parking, Police Scotland, P & O and Stena line regarding capacity at the ports all of which I could disseminate to the members in NI.

For context, for the four days from the 11<sup>th</sup> of December to Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> there was a 25% increase in HGV traffic using the A75 and 486 HGV's were sent to Kennedy during Operation Overflow. The usage peaked on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December when 163 HGV's were parked at Castle Kennedy. This number reduced to 37 a week later as by that time there were additional sailings at Liverpool and the southern ports, in addition to the relaxation of driving hours previously mentioned in this submission.

Unfortunately, we do not have any similar data for port usage at Pembroke or Fishguard as the first time the Welsh civil service contacted RHA was on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December which was long after the worst had passed, and the relaxation of drivers hours had ended.

There are many individual and anecdotal examples of how the closure affected companies which we would be happy to discuss in the oral evidence session along with any other questions the committee may have for us.

**RHA**

[policy@rha.uk.net](mailto:policy@rha.uk.net)

**Date 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

# Evidence for Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry on Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure.

## Context

Holyhead plays a key role in UK to Ireland freight movements, with the consequence that it has become the second largest roll-on, roll-off (Ro-Ro) port in the UK. The port is operated by Stena Line Ports Ltd., which is a separate business area from Stena Line ferry services.

In terms of trade volumes, there are around 100,000 units per quarter handled through Holyhead, compared to approximately 115,000 units per quarter in 2019, a 13% drop. Post-Brexit, volumes had stabilized at around a 20% drop so there has been a slight recovery since early 2023. By comparison in Wales, Pembroke and Fishguard combined have continued to remain at around 60-70% of pre-Brexit levels. Comparing to English ports offering services to Ireland, volumes through Liverpool are similar to pre-Brexit levels, while Cairnryan continues to see growth.

Day-to-day operations at Holyhead involve 8 sailings to Dublin per day, four operated by Irish Ferries and four by Stena Line. Both companies use two vessels on the route, and the timetable is based around commercial priorities. This means both ferry operators have similar departure times from Holyhead and Dublin. In the summer peak, Irish Ferries operate additional services using a high-speed ferry.

These sailings use two berths at the port – Berth 3 is normally dedicated to Irish Ferries and Berth 5 is used by Stena Line. Both berths are constructed with berthing dolphins, freestanding structures that are fixed to the seabed. These are fitted with fenders to absorb the energy from a moving ship, and connected by walkways.

## Storm Darragh and the immediate impact on the port

Storm Darragh hit the UK on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December, with many sailings across the Irish Sea cancelled. However, some services did operate between Holyhead and Dublin, and during this time there were two berthing incidents at Berth 3. The exact details of what happened have not been disclosed by either Stena Line Ports or Irish Ferries (as the ferry operator involved), and a recent evidence session of the Welsh Affairs Committee in Westminster revealed that an ongoing insurance claim limited what could be revealed.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) also note the incident occurring, and state “A [Ro-Ro] vessel was using a piling to assist departure when it collapsed. [T]he vessel was undertaking a standard departure manoeuvre that is used in strong onshore winds. Whilst the stern was resting on a dolphin and the bow thrust off, the dolphin gave way and collapsed into the harbour.” However, it appears from their website that the incident is not subject to a full MAIB investigation.

Also in the MAIB data is information about two other incidents at Holyhead involving the berthing dolphins and their fenders, one in 2023 and the other in 2024. Again, there is only limited information but both involved manoeuvring in strong winds.

Following the incident in December 2024, the port was closed and sailings cancelled. For users of the port, and especially freight users, this initial closure may not have raised concerns – storms in Irish Sea are not uncommon and services may be cancelled at short notice.

## Response to the closure

As it became apparent the closure was going to be longer, a number of actions were taken by the ferry operators.

- Stena Line: Both vessels used on the Holyhead route were redeployed by 13<sup>th</sup> December, with one operating an additional service to Liverpool and the other on a new service to Fishguard. To provide further capacity, an additional vessel was chartered to operate between Heysham and Dublin. All of these services were on a daily basis due to the extended sailing times compared to Holyhead.
- Irish Ferries: On 11<sup>th</sup> December, Irish Ferries redeployed a larger vessel from the Holyhead – Dublin route to Rosslare – Pembroke, and on 20<sup>th</sup> December started an additional daily service from Dublin, firstly to Fishguard carrying passengers only and then in early 2025 this switched to Pembroke, with freight capacity available as well. A larger vessel was also used on some Ireland – France services.

With these additional services, capacity across the Irish Sea from Welsh ports was no more than 50% of what would have been offered with a full Holyhead schedule.

For freight users of the port, many switched to alternative ports. This displacement occurred to all ports offering ferry services to Ireland, with road congestion noted around ports from Pembroke to Cairnryan as a result of the extra traffic. There was also the need to recover trailers from Holyhead where they had arrived before it became clear the port would be closed in the longer term, incurring additional costs.

Many shippers noted delays in delivering goods to/from Ireland although much of the freight had cleared by Christmas. In some instances, freight switched to air cargo between the UK and Ireland.

The UK and Republic of Ireland governments eased driver hour restrictions for freight between the two countries, which helped to facilitate these movements.

## Recovery to normal service

Holyhead port reopened on 16<sup>th</sup> January with just Berth 5 available to use. The temporary services put on by ferry operators were withdrawn. The reopening of Berth 5 has required a coordinated timetable to allow eight departures per day, with departures at three hour intervals alternating between Stena Line and Irish Ferries.

There are risks in operating with a single berth and the same intensity of service as normal, and delays could quickly propagate. However, operations do appear to have largely operated as planned albeit during a quieter time of the year for freight traffic. The next peak in volumes is likely to be around Easter, and particularly for passenger movements. At this time, the seasonal fast ferry service also resumes. This increase in services and traffic volume will test how effective the new working arrangements are at Holyhead.

With the full port reopening on 1<sup>st</sup> July, it could be assumed that services will return to their previous arrangements and a more commercially focused timetable with departures not coordinated between operators.

## Potential long term impact

While there has been a short term impact on port volumes, with a full timetable of services returning since January, there is now the opportunity for traffic to return to passing through Holyhead. Publicly available data is not yet available but it seems likely that volumes will return relatively quickly to expected traffic levels.

Thankfully, port closures are relatively uncommon but when they do occur, the impact can be significant. While much larger than Holyhead, ports in Durban, Houston and Baltimore have all had unscheduled closures in recent years and traffic volumes have returned quickly. Closures that are short term and one off do not generally lead to long term changes to the supply chains through ports.

With Holyhead now also being a freeport area, there is a need to ensure that lessons are learnt from the closure, and that all stakeholders are engaged in developing

resilience plans going forward. The announcement by the Cabinet Secretary of a taskforce to look at the resilience of Holyhead is welcome, especially as it is planned to involve stakeholders from both sides of the Irish Sea. What is needed is clarity as to the scope and timeframe of its activities, as well as the stakeholders invited to participate.

**The Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee**

**Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure**

**Isle of Anglesey County Council Written Evidence**

**February 2025**

**Status: Official**

## 1.0 Introduction to the Evidence

- 1.1 The Isle of Anglesey County Council (the Council) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry being conducted by the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee on the Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure.
- 1.2 This written evidence should be considered in conjunction with the oral evidence that the Council's Head of Service for Regulation and Economic Development will present to the Committee on the 6th of March 2025.
- 1.3 The Council notes the inquiry's Terms of Reference. Our evidence will focus on the impact of the Port's closure, as well as the extent and effectiveness of the steps being taken to mitigate the impact.

## 2.0 Socio-Economic Importance of Holyhead Port

- 2.1 The importance of the Port of Holyhead to the local and Welsh economy cannot be underestimated. It is the second largest roll-on roll-off port in the UK (after Dover). It is the main port for freight and sea passenger transport to Ireland, and as part of European Route E22, it provides a key connection in the "land bridge" from Ireland to the rest of Europe. It remains the fastest route across the Irish Sea despite an increase in the number of direct ferries from Rosslare to mainland Europe. Nearly 60% of goods carried on HGVs travelling between the Republic of Ireland and Europe pass through the Port of Holyhead. The Port also accounts for three quarters of passenger traffic between Wales and the Republic of Ireland<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2 Annual port traffic (freight and passenger cars combined) was circa 953,000 vehicles (all types) in 2019. Traffic numbers then declined, mainly due to the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. A 38% recovery, however, took place between 2021 and 2022.
- 2.3 An economic impact study of the Port was undertaken by Royal Haskoning on behalf of the Welsh Government in 2021<sup>2</sup>. It noted that:
  - a. The Port supported approximately 670 jobs locally (circa 580 Full Time Equivalents (FTE)).
  - b. The jobs available at the Port were equivalent to 21% of the total jobs available in the Holyhead and surrounding areas, and 3% of the Island's labour market.
  - c. The Port of Holyhead contributed an estimated £78.5 million per year to the local economy (6.9% of the Island's GVA in 2019).
  - d. The transport and storage sector ranked fourth largest for employment in Holyhead, accounting for 11.3% of jobs. This is a significantly higher proportion than for Anglesey (4.3%) and Wales (3.3%).
  - e. The annual in-direct economic impact of the Port and its supply chain was estimated to be between £25.9 million and £28.4 million. The induced job numbers were estimated to be between 990 and 1370 (or 860 and 1190 FTEs).

## 3.0 Storm Darragh

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<sup>1</sup> IACC Report 'Improving reliability and resilience across the Menai Strait. Detailed evidence base'. June 2023

<sup>2</sup> Report for Welsh Government 'Port of Holyhead Strategic Economic Impact Study' July 2021

- 3.1 Storm Darragh was an extratropical cyclone which formed on the 5th of December 2024 and dissipated on 9 December 2024. The storm brought wind speeds more than 90mph, posing a risk to life.
- 3.2 The Storm affected the Island on Saturday, 7th December 2024 and Sunday, 8th December 2024.
- 3.3 The Storm had a significant impact on Anglesey, closing roads, causing damage to structures and properties and the loss of power supply. The Storm also forced the closure of Britannia Bridge (one of only two links from Anglesey across the Menai Strait) and the closure of Holyhead Port.
- 3.4 During this period the Council collaborated with partners, responded to issues and impacts, and ensured effective communication and information sharing with local residents. The following infographic summarises the Council's information sharing activity between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of December.



- 3.5 The Port experienced a total closure to ferry traffic from the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2024 to the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2025 (a period of 40 days).
- 3.6 Given that the closure was initially expected to be for a short period of time, HGVs and trailers were seen to be parking throughout Holyhead, However, once it became clear that the closure would be for longer than anticipated, HGVs were rerouted by their operators to other routes along the west coast of the United Kingdom.
- 3.7 The December closure period (7<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>), saw 22,300 fewer HGV movements on the A55 and A5 (a reduction of 12.6% in eastbound HGVs and 13.7% westbound). The January closure (1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>) saw 16,100 fewer HGVs (7.6% eastbound and 9.9% westbound).
- 3.8 The Port partially reopened on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January with one operational berth.

#### 4.0 Council Response to the Closure of Holyhead Port

- 4.1 The Council was part of a multi-agency emergency response, collaborating through formal Strategic and Tactical Coordination Group structures. This enabled effective and timely communication, information sharing, and decision making. The Council was not the decision-making body in relation to the Port of Holyhead, but was part of the response arrangements to manage the impacts (i.e. HGVs not being able to travel across the Irish Sea). The Council engaged and collaborated with the Port Authority, Welsh Government and other partners throughout the closure period to manage the impacts and ensure information was shared with residents
- 4.2 In order to understand the impacts the closure had incurred upon Anglesey and Welsh businesses, the Council launched an online survey on the 8th of January. The Survey remained open until the 31<sup>st</sup> of January.
- 4.3 A total of 62 responses were received from a range of sectors:

Sector	Number of responses
Hospitality	24
Retail	16
Beauty	6
Services supporting logistics	5
Other	5
Logistics	3

*Two responses were received from the West Midlands and one response was received from a business that was closed for the season. These responses are excluded from the figures.*

- 4.4 A statistical analysis of the responses illustrates that:
- 92% of respondents were from Holyhead/ Holy Island.
  - 54% of respondents stated that jobs were at risk due to the closure of the Port.
  - Of the jobs at risk, 74% of these included permanent roles, with only 20% being zero-hour contracts.
  - 95% felt that a reduced number of sailings from the 16<sup>th</sup> of January would impact their businesses.
- 4.5 The qualitative responses demonstrated that:
- Businesses that support logistics providers (i.e. mechanics and hotels) were amongst the worst impacted financially, with losses in the several tens of thousands of pounds.
  - Many businesses in Holyhead are reliant on the footfall ferry traffic creates (passengers and crew).
  - The drop in footfall has negatively impacted a wide range of businesses.
  - Various businesses reporting trade down 90%.
  - Concerns remain that a reduced number of sailings would impact future revenue.
  - Fears exist that there will be less confidence in the viability and resilience of the Port.
- 4.6 The following are direct quotes as provided by respondents:

- a. A truck service garage based on the Island estimates “the financial impact could be between £50,000 to £100,000”.
  - b. A trucking agency staff provider stated “December is the busiest time of year for our business transporting freight throughout the whole of the UK. As the Port is closed all the vacancies around Anglesey have been relocated to other areas of the UK, resulting in job losses. Companies will not pay the 4 hours round trip and 200 miles from Holyhead to Birkenhead so have relocated all their wagons to other ports.”
  - c. A large hotelier said “occupancy (had) gone from usually 70/80% this time of year to 15-20% causing many hours lost for housekeepers, kitchen and front of house staff”.
  - d. Another small retailer stated “we rely on the footfall which the port generates. Since its closure we have seen a significant fall in trade of roughly 60 to 70%. Not only from the passengers (but) the local who works at the port (too)”
  - e. A small retailer specialising in gift hampers has seen a 95% reduction in revenue.
  - f. A local café said “With lower footfall of people coming through the doors at the cafe, means we’re serving less people, we still have to staff the cafe regardless every day, and ultimately less footfall means less income generated. This poses a huge threat on job stability, given an already difficult period in hospitality anyway because of extraordinary high bills, staff wages; supplier costs etc, especially during the month of January. We rely on passing trade through the port to get us through quieter months. It has been considerably quieter during the closure. It definitely has posed risk of job losses.”
- 4.7 Footfall data, provided by the SMART Cymru Programme, demonstrated a drastic decline in the number of people visiting Holyhead town centre. Footfall for December 2024 and January 2025 decreased by 36% and 33% respectively compared to the same period in 2023 and 2024.
- 4.8 Between the 6th of December 2024 and the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2025, total high street footfall was 52,215 - a 37% decline from the 83,445 visitors recorded in the same period the previous year.
- 4.9 This decline aligns with the evidence provided in the responses to the Council’s business survey.

## 5.0 Summary of the Council’s Key Comments in Relation to the Inquiry

- 5.1 The Port of Holyhead is of significant economic and social value to Anglesey. It is intrinsically linked to local social, economic and community well-being, as well as identity and cultural heritage. Holyhead is a port town.
- 5.2 As the second largest roll-on roll-off port in the UK, it remains the principal port and fastest route for freight and passenger transfer to and from Ireland, handling approximately 1,500,000 passengers a year and approximately 4,000,000 tonnes of freight
- 5.3 The Port is a key employer on Anglesey, supporting hundreds of quality jobs. Many businesses benefit directly and in-directly from its operation.
- 5.4 Ensuring the prompt and safe reopening of the damaged berth must be a short-term priority - as is the need to provide support to local businesses that have been impacted by the closure of the Port.
- 5.5 The Council believes that the Welsh Government should provide additional financial support and practical measures to help mitigate negative impacts on local businesses (including transport, logistics, retail and hospitality).
- 5.6 Ensuring the long-term resilience and stability of the Port is critical to socio-economic growth and trade. The Port is critical to the vitality of the Anglesey, North Wales, Welsh, United Kingdom and Irish economies.

- 5.7 The effective operation of the Port is also directly reliant upon the resilience and reliability of the Menai Strait crossings. A symbiotic relationship exists between the infrastructure, where an issue at one location impacts the other, as well as surrounding communities and businesses. If resilience is not improved then the risk of failure will continue to increase over time.
- 5.8 Perceived and actual issues in terms of resilience and connectivity have a detrimental impact on the Island's ability to attract economic investment. This also impacts on image and profile.
- 5.9 The Port will be critical to the success of the Anglesey Freeport and the significant positive benefits which could be generated.
- 5.10 The Council welcomes the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales's announcement on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2025 regarding the establishment of a Task Force to deliver long-term stability for the Port. We are eager to better understand the purpose and scope of the Task Force, and how it will deliver tangible interventions to ensure the future of the Port.
- 5.11 The closure of the Port as a result of Storm Darragh has also demonstrated the lack of current and meaningful economic data. A new economic impact assessment to provide reliable and robust information to ensure informed, timely and appropriate decision making.