



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Paul Davies MS
Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee
Welsh Parliament
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12 December 2022

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter of 21 November in relation to how Welsh Government is supporting and promoting cyber security and the wider industry. As you reference in your letter, cyber is a fast-paced area with constant new developments and innovation. I recognise the importance of cyber security and that it spans many areas, making up an 'eco-system' which provides opportunity to bring advantages to our citizens, public services and economy. For this reason, as outlined in our [Digital Strategy for Wales](#) we are developing a Cyber Action Plan for Wales which will bring together a coherent statement of ambition and activity on cyber in Wales.

Cyber is already a great strength for Wales. We have one of the biggest cyber ecosystems in the UK, and one of the strongest in Europe thanks to our partnerships between industry, academia and government. As noted in the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee's report, the Welsh Government's International Strategy identifies cyber as one of three of Wales' centres of excellence. Following the publication of the International Strategy the '*Priority Regional Relationships and Networks 2020-2025 Action Plan*', also outlines how we will use cyber to strengthen our relations with regions that have synergies with our work.

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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.

With regards to the Second Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, we note the Committee's report and agreed actions. As you highlight, prevention, detection and investigation of crime are reserved matters. My responsibilities as First Minister do include national security, including counter terrorism and cyber security and we are taking essential steps to reduce the cyber risks to Wales. As I announced at CYBERUK22, work is underway to procure and set up a Cyber Security Operations Centre (CymruSOC) for 18 Welsh Local Authorities and 3 Fire & Rescue Services. CymruSOC will bring together these services with Government, the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), and a technical expert, enabling a level of information and resource-sharing that will allow for a strong 'Defend as One' posture.

You asked what work we have undertaken to upskill our workforce around real risk, governance and policy cyber security skills. Our Digital Strategy for Wales outlines our aim to create a workforce that has the digital skills, capability and confidence to excel in the workplace and in everyday life. We see cyber skills as an important part of delivering this aim and in developing the Cyber Action Plan, we are looking at how to leverage the benefits of our multiple existing interventions, to attract and develop the cyber skills we need as a nation by cultivating cyber talent from school age through to the workforce.

From the perspective of government and public services, we work closely with the NCSC to provide leadership to organisations across Wales, particularly in the public sector, to use and apply the NCSC's advice and guidance. This will help keep our citizens safe and protected online and, crucially, ensure our public services are secure and trusted. We are working with our public services to encourage an organisational culture where cyber is everyone's business from leadership to front line. We have been working with executive boards across the public sector, via our unique outward loan post to the NCSC, to inform them of their cyber security and resilience responsibilities. In addition to this work, we are providing a facilitated version of the NCSC Exercise in a Box model to Welsh public sector bodies and we are undertaking a pilot scheme to foster greater observance of the NCSC's Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF).

We are providing NCSC Cyber Essentials/Essentials+ certification to over 20% of Welsh law firms and this model will be watched closely to ascertain potential viability for other sectors in Wales.

At school age, you may be aware of the wider CyberFirst programme which is designed to identify and nurture a diverse range of talented young people into a cyber security career. We work closely with the NCSC to raise awareness of the cyber opportunities for learners and schools in Wales. In 2020, we supported the NCSC to pilot the CyberFirst Schools/colleges scheme. Schools and colleges from across Wales have achieved CyberFirst recognition at Gold, Silver and Bronze levels. Through our work with the NCSC we have now secured funding to support the delivery of the CyberFirst Wales for schools programme on a national basis following strong delivery in pathfinder areas of Wales. This will be implemented by the National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) in collaboration with the University of South Wales. This digital / coding initiative looking at enhancing the cyber security IT skills for learners will launch in 2023 and be delivered in schools collaboratively with Technocamps.

Wales has a strong higher education offering with partnerships between universities and industry to develop students on the pathway towards a career in cyber. Offering accredited,

world class initiatives and partnering with industry makes Wales an attractive place for students to study and follow a pathway into a career in cyber.

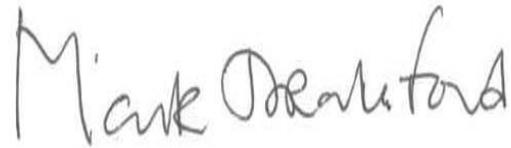
This is also supported by Cyber Security apprenticeships in Wales which respond to regional and national skills shortages and help drive awareness and interest in the sector. We have extensive IT and digital apprenticeship provision in Wales with nine sub-degree programmes (levels 2, 3, 4 and 5) and three degree level apprenticeship frameworks including a Cyber Security Degree Apprenticeship. For upskilling adults, our ReAct+ adult employability programme offers individualised support to unemployed adults 18+ which could include college and university leavers who have studied cyber security. This can help boost the employability of people in the cyber security industry post qualification.

Additionally, the Cyber Innovation Hub is supported by our £3million investment made by Welsh Government over 2 years, with £3 million of co-funding from Cardiff Capital Region and £3.5 million of in-kind match funding from consortium partners. This will strongly support both the cyber skill and employability agenda for Wales with its aims to train more than 1,500 cyber-skilled individuals and grow the cyber security sector in Wales more than 50% by 2030. The Hub brings industry, government, defence and academic partners together to grow the Welsh cybersecurity sector, enabling Wales to take advantage of the anticipated growth of the sector in the UK, and globally, by investing in a coordinated approach to skills, innovation and new enterprise creation. This initiative will support us to ensure that we have a pool of talent ready to meet the demand of a growing sector and provide people with opportunities to develop skills for a sector which could provide a lifelong career. The Hub's approach of addressing market-led innovation challenges and driving rapid development of new, innovative solutions will help support and provide opportunities in cyber and this is just one part of a strong and growing cyber ecosystem in Wales.

You also asked whether Welsh Government is taking any action to encourage more women into the cyber sector. We're aware that a critical thread through the cyber career pipeline is diversity and the importance of developing a diverse workforce, reflective of our society in Wales. We support, through engagement with our communication channels with schools, the NCSC's annual CyberFirst Girls Competition. Schools can enter teams of Year 8 girls to compete in cyber-themed challenges designed to inspire interest in technology careers and increase uptake of Computing GCSE subjects by female students. Wales also has one of the most active 'Women in Cyber Clusters' which regularly engages with UK and European conferences to discuss the subject and its work in Wales. We recognise that more can be done around the diversity of the cyber workforce and encouraging women into the sector, and this is being considered as part of the development of the Cyber Action Plan.

Finally, your letter asks about the sale of Nexperia BV's share in Nexperia Newport Limited. Our immediate priority now is to safeguard the future of the hundreds of highly skilled jobs in Newport. We remain fully committed to ensuring the continued development of our compound semiconductor cluster in South East Wales and the role it plays on a wider UK scale. In light of the UK Government's decision, UK ministers now clearly view the compound semiconductor sector in Wales as a strategic national asset as well as being internationally recognised. We therefore call on the UK Government to invest in the sector to safeguard its future. We don't have national security responsibilities, nor do we have any insight into the reasons why the UK government came to the conclusion that it did. What I think has become much clearer in the aftermath of the decision is that the sale of the company is not going to happen quickly. The investment that will be needed to move Nexperia - or the successor to Nexperia - from a fab manufacturing chips for Nexperia's

customers to one making other semi-conductor products for a new owner is also likely to take many hundreds of millions of pounds. This is a very, very consequential decision that has been made and it will be BEIS that will now have to help deal with the consequences of that decision. The issue of Nexperia and how its transition to new ownership is to be supported I think is a matter for the UK government given that they made the decision in the first place.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD