

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

Rebecca Evans AS/MS

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

Jack Sargeant AS/MS

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Andrew RT Davies MS
Chair, Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

18 September 2025

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter seeking further information following our appearance before the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee on 17 July 2025 for general Ministerial scrutiny.

Our responses to your queries are provided in Annex 1 below.

Yours sincerely,

 Rebecca Evans.  JACK SARGEANT.

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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.

Annex 1

Rural Affairs

Bluetongue

- *How many fewer livestock units have moved into Wales, since Bluetongue restrictions came into place?*

Our current figures for movements from England into Wales for July 2025 are only available for cattle and may not reflect all movements as farmers are still providing returns for this period. Movement data for sheep is expected in September.

6,890 cattle arrived in Wales from England in July 2025. Between 2022-2024 the average number of cattle that arrived during July was 11,401. These figures include both live movements and direct movements to slaughterhouses located in Wales.

Notably, although July movements have declined, there was an increase in livestock movements earlier in 2025. When comparing cumulative cattle movements to Wales from January to July across recent years, the figures show no significant deviation in 2025:

- **2022:** 82,017 cattle
- **2023:** 84,766 cattle
- **2024:** 96,640 cattle
- **2025:** 94,400 cattle

This suggests that short-term fluctuations, such as those observed in July, should be interpreted cautiously. To understand the true impact of BTV-3 restrictions, it is essential to monitor longer-term trends rather than relying on data from a single month.

Fisheries

- *How will your development and implementation of Fisheries Management Plans be impacted by the newly agreed extension to UK-EU fishing arrangements to 2038?*
- *How are you engaging with the fishing industry in anticipation of the extension?*

I will answer your first two questions together. As I said in the evidence paper, industry are concerned about the 12-year extension to access, which is understandable of course. In terms of the impact on Wales, the agreement continues access to EU waters, with guaranteed mutual access for 12 years. The status quo remains. The UK retains control over its waters to pursue its own sustainable fishing policies, and we remain outside the EU's fisheries rules.

Industry have noted concerns the implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) may be frustrated due to the 12-year extension. The UK has preserved regulatory autonomy, and I want to be clear here that Fisheries Management Plans continue to be one of our top priorities, in line with the Strategic Approach.

The extension to UK-EU fishing arrangements to 2038 was ratified by the Specialised Committee on Fisheries on 19 June following the UK Government announcement. The Ministerial Advisory Group for Welsh Fisheries (MAGWF) meets quarterly, and the recent announcement was discussed with them in the 24 June meeting. The group is meeting next on 14 October and we will continue to engage the industry, through their representatives in this way.

As part of the extension announcement, UK Government announced the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund. Discussions are ongoing at official level as the plans are developed. I am pleased to note fishing industry representatives from Wales were engaged in a meeting with Minister Zeichner on this and I wrote to him to set our priorities to support those discussions. We and all the other administrations are making strong representations for the fund to be devolved. Officials advise me this has been heard loud and clear and we continue to press for this. Alongside this, we are working constructively to shape the Fund to achieve the best outcomes for our industry. A further meeting was held on 7 August with UK Government, officials from all Administrations and industry representatives (Welsh Fisherman's Association for Wales) to support the co-design of the Fund. Discussions were positive and constructive, and we expect ongoing dialogue.

You may find it helpful to see the letter I received from Minister Zeichner, which is relevant to all the questions you have asked (Annex 2).

- *How are you engaging with the fishing shellfish industry in anticipation of the likely introduction of a UK-EU sanitary and phytosanitary agreement?*

We continue to seek clarity and push for the best outcomes for Wales from the UK Government around the potential SPS agreement and opportunities for Live Bivalve Mollusc producers to gain access to the EU market again. SPS dynamic alignment with the EU will reduce the red tape burden and reduce the cost of exporting our seafood products. As yet, there has been little to no communications from UK Government on the matter.

In addition to the Ministerial Advisory Group for Welsh Fisheries, where discussions are ongoing, officials have regular engagement with various industry advisory and working groups, put in place to support the management of permitted fisheries and development FMPs. When we have a steer from UK Government on plans, we will engage fully with these groups and representative bodies to disseminate the information as we get it. This will include more focused engaged with our exporters in Wales.

Agricultural pollution regulations

- *Why are some of the recommendations made by Dr Susannah Bolton's review of the agricultural pollution regulations identified as taking over three years to implement?*

Some of the recommendations are complex by nature and will require time to consider properly. In some cases, this will require commissioning of external scientific and agronomic advice prior to exploring the matters with stakeholders and reaching a conclusion on the way forward. If we can conclude those recommendations in a shorter timescale, then we will. Legislative reform requires necessary processes to be followed, including in relation to consultation, and this takes time. I want to make changes which will benefit farmers and the environment as quickly as possible. Where we can make changes without amending the regulations, we will do so at the earliest opportunity.

- *Will the Welsh Government be publishing a programme of works setting out how and when all the recommendations will be implemented? If so, when?*

It is important to note that the recommendations are not for specific regulatory changes. The majority of the recommendations are to *consider* further changes. My officials are developing a programme of work to take forward the recommendations. This programme includes a stakeholder engagement plan and more detail on how we propose to implement each of the recommendations. However, we must take forward the recommendations collaboratively with our stakeholders. As such, the programme of work will not be a static document and will change over time depending on stakeholder feedback and developments and as we progress each recommendation.

International Trade

- *As discussed in the session, you committed to write to us regarding confirmation that the Welsh Government is not making any public investment in any company that is investing in armaments to Israel.*

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning addressed this issue in a separate letter dated 4 August 2025.

Economy and Skills

Skills

- *When available, a timeline on when we can expect an announcement on construction apprenticeships and the reintroduction of a level 2 qualification.*

Following the Minister's formal request dated 16 July 2025, Qualifications Wales and Medr have commenced work to explore the reinstatement of a Level 2 construction apprenticeship framework. This work is being undertaken in response to issues raised with him about the continuing suitability of the current provision at level 3, and specifically whether the current framework was discouraging people from taking up the opportunity and hindering recruitment and progression.

Discussions are ongoing between Qualifications Wales and the awarding body City & Guilds to assess whether existing provision and qualifications can be adapted to support a Level 2 pathway. Technical feasibility work and impact assessments are being carried out throughout August and September 2025, with consideration being given to trade-specific requirements, delivery implications, and alignment with industry standards.

We expect to receive advice from Qualifications Wales and Medr by the end of September 2025 on the options open to us and consideration of steps to implementation. Qualifications Wales and Medr are working at pace to support early delivery, subject to feasibility and consultation outcomes.

We will provide a further update to the Committee once we have received the advice and when timelines are clearer.

- *Correspondence from the Minister for Further and Higher Education with a fuller response on rolling out junior apprenticeships.*

The Cabinet Secretary for Education is responsible for junior apprenticeships and will therefore write to you separately on this matter.

- *Specific figures on the uptake of rail degree apprenticeships.*

There were 13 apprenticeship starts on the Railway Engineering Degree Apprenticeship programme during the 2023/24 academic year. For 2024/25, two learners have commenced the programme to date; however, enrolment figures for the current academic year have not yet been finalised and may increase.

Economy

- *The specific detail on property development at Brocastle.*

The infrastructure works contract for the roads, services and creation of plateaux at Brocastle was substantially completed in late 2022 and further investment by Welsh Government in an Active Travel Route to compliment these onsite works was subsequently completed during 2023. Both these work packages were undertaken by Welsh based contractors – Walters and Alun Griffiths respectively.

Brocastle has received a number of enquiries from interested parties which included an 18-month exclusivity arrangement agreed with an internal technology company for approximately two thirds of the site. Due to reasons outside of the control of Welsh Government, those enquiries did not progress. Following the lapse of that arrangement, site marketing was relaunched last year, and officials are currently negotiating legal documents for the disposal and development of an advanced build unit on one of the development plots (plot 5) with a private sector developer.

Heads of terms for the disposal and development of another plot to an owner occupier are being finalised which will be the subject of ministerial approval prior to progressing to negotiation of legal documents.

The remaining plots continue to be marketed by commercial property agents and attract steady market interest.

- *Any information available on the dashboard data shared with the Transition Board with regards to outcomes and next steps for those affected by Tata redundancies in Port Talbot.*

More than £70 million has been announced to date by the Secretary of State for Wales and the Transition Board. Funding announced is being used to drive forward delivery of the following interventions:

- Supply Chain Transition Fund
- Employment and Skills Fund
- Business Growth, Resilience and Start-Up Fund

The Tata Steel UK (TSUK) Training Scheme (Compulsory Redundancy)

The TSUK re-training scheme continues to be available to any Port Talbot site employees leaving through compulsory redundancy. Four employees completed one month's training and have left the scheme. There has been no further interest to-date.

Redundancies to date (headline figures)

2,162 individuals left the business in the period September 2024 to end July 2025 of which:

- 709 left through natural attrition including retirement, other employment, started a new business
- 1,332 leavers via Voluntary Redundancy (number left TSUK by end July 2025)
- 120 leavers via Compulsory Redundancy (number left TSUK by end July 2025)

Supply Chain Fund – Launched 30 September 2024. Data shared on the supply chain activity to date (31/07/2025)

Launched on 30 September 2024, the Supply Chain Transition Fund is focussed exclusively on supporting businesses that are reliant on TSUK and impacted by the blast furnace closures. Funded by the UK Government, the Fund is delivered by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPT CBC), delivering the grant funding support in partnership with the Welsh Government's Business Wales service, who manage business support and advice for impacted businesses.

- 89 businesses have completed the Eligibility Checker Tool
- 77 businesses were eligible of which 71 have received a diagnostic review
- 44 businesses referred to NPT for grant application. Six businesses were provided further support around their projects and referred for a second funding application
- The remaining 27 active businesses are progressing with the diagnostic

Specialist Webinars support businesses with barriers, upskilling and transitioning, in addition to 1-2-1 specialist support.

Business Growth, Resilience and Start-Up Fund

On 19 December 2024, funding for the Business Growth, Resilience and Start-Up Fund was announced by the UK Government. Business Wales is working closely with the UK Government and NPT CBC on delivery of the business support and funding, leading on enquiry management and business advice and guidance prior to application of funding.

The objective of the '**Business Growth Fund**' is to introduce specialised grant packages to those businesses seeking to increase their role in the local economy.

The '**Resilience Fund**' focusses on supporting local businesses who have been impacted by the Tata transition but were not eligible to apply for support via the Supply Chain Fund.

The **Business startup fund** enables Tata steelworkers, their immediate families and others in the supply chain to receive business advice and financial support.

Growth and Resilience Funds activity to date (31/07/2025)

Resilience Fund

Since 19 December 2024, a total of 158 enquiries have been received. Following the Expression of Interest (EOI), each business is contacted for registration:

- 124 Registrations completed
- 2 waiting for 1st contact
- 23 Failed to contact
- 9 Referred to Supply Chain/Start up support

Growth Fund

Since 19 December 2024, 148 Enquiries received in total:

- 133 Registrations completed
- 1 Query Eligibility
- 8 Failed to contact
- 6 Referred to Supply Chain/Start up support

Start-up - Data shared on the start-up activity to date (10/06/2025)

Referrals	
Total No. general enquiries	365
Total Submissions via Online Form (Dec24)	82

Business Wales has now registered 219 clients interested in starting a business, with 193 actively engaged in receiving business support. All clients registered are invited to participate in business start-up workshops and allocated a business adviser to develop their business plan and evidence need for funding through a cash flow forecast.

80 clients have been referred to NPT CBC for a discussion on the grant and the council issue a link to the grant application for clients to complete.

Business Wales has a regular presence at the Community Hub to meet clients and at local employment fairs. Regular events are now available at the Community Hub, Aberavon, with an online event also available on 18 September.

Employment and Skills Fund (ESF)

The ESF is part of a £13.5m UK Government funded programme coordinated by the TSUK Transition Board to support people and businesses affected by TSUK's transformation programme.

At the last meeting of the Job-matching, Outplacement, and Skills Working Group held on 14 April, a representative of NPT CBC reported that the ESF had 302 'live' participants and 329 training grants have already been awarded. It was reported that 172 ESF participants have found employment.

Community Support Hub, Aberafan Shopping Centre

Community the Union reported that, as at 11 April, 2,587 people have attended the Hub and some events have taken place including sessions on working on oil rigs and wind turbines.

Jobs fairs have taken place and further events are planned.