

INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE WALES

NOTE OF THE MEETING OF THE INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES CROSS PARTY GROUP HELD IN CARDIFF BAY AT 18.00 ON 13TH MAY 2014

Present: David Rees A M (Chair); P Slater (ICA); Cllr J Ward (Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC); D Pike (Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC); Cllr D White (Bridgend CBC); J Peters (Bridgend CBC), J Dixon (ICA).

1. David Rees AM opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to Cardiff Bay. He explained that the meeting had been convened to discuss a new report produced by the ICA, '*Rebuilding the Economy of Wales' Industrial Communities – A Ten Point Plan for Government*'.
2. Peter Slater, Director ICA Wales, introduced the report and described the context which had led to its publication, namely that there was a continuing need to re-balance the UK economy in order to ensure that the benefits of growth and jobs are delivered to all regions, particularly those that are still struggling with the aftermath of job losses in the coal and steel industries. He went on to describe how the prosperity and economic success of local economies was intimately bound up with ensuring that the pre-conditions for growing the national economy were met. These included: maintaining low exchange and interest rates; maintaining a measured approach to deficit reduction; investing in training and education; establishing a banking system that supports business; establish regulatory regimes that encourage growth an investment.
3. Turning to the Action Plan, the meeting was informed that rebalancing the economy towards industry and the regions was at the heart of the strategy with the emphasis on reviving industrial investment and production, which would be especially beneficial to Wales, the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland where so much of UK manufacturing is located. In this respect the ICA was strongly of the view that that economic revival of industrial Britain would bring into use under-utilised resources of land, labour and premises and ease the relentless and unsustainable pressure on resources in the South.
4. Regarding the specific policy areas of the Ten Point Plan, Peter Slater high-lighted the following as being critical to securing higher rates of economic growth in Wales' older industrial areas: using procurement a development tool – as already recognized by the Welsh Government; investing in infrastructure to support the regions, particularly transport projects such as the Valleys Metro; delivering effective structures that work and ensuring that initiatives such as the City Regions have the necessary resources and powers to deliver their strategies; maximizing the impact of the 2014-2020 Structural Funds; supporting businesses through effective financial support measures which maximize the advantages of much of Wales having Tier 1 Assisted Area status;

ensuring that the Enterprise Zone Initiative has the widest range of incentives to encourage to boost economic growth and jobs; building on the success of Jobs Growth Wales; focus on growing local and regional economies rather than reducing welfare benefits which hit the poorest communities hardest.

5. There followed a short discussion on issues such as the City Regions and the capacity of Cardiff to meet the jobs gap in the Valleys, as well as the success of the Welsh Government's Jobs Growth Wales, which the ICA had brought to the attention of its members in its other UK regions.
6. Arising from the presentation and discussion it was agreed to circulate the presentation and copies of the plan to Assembly Members and for the ICA seek meetings with the appropriate Ministers to discuss areas of mutual interest.

Peter Slater, Industrial Communities Alliance Wales,