



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Tata Steel Task Force Meeting**
DATE **8 August 2016**
BY **Ken Skates AM, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and
Infrastructure**

On 4 August I chaired the sixth meeting of the Tata Steel Task Force. This was my first meeting as Chair of the Task Force. There was strong attendance from all parties including Tata Steel, Unite and Community Unions and partners highlighting the ongoing commitment across organisations to support those affected by the steel crisis. The UK Government was also represented through the attendance of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Tata Steel in Wales provided an oral update on the business performance which continues to show a turnaround. This is due to a range of external and internal factors but not least the commitment and efforts of the workforce. Tata also provided an update on the redundancy process that has been taking place since January and is now nearing completion. Thanks were given to all the support agencies who have been involved.

The Trade Unions equally commended the achievements and contribution of the workforce to improvements over recent months. The Unions updated the Task Force on their position regarding the current situation, particularly the prolonged uncertainty in relation to the sales process and stressed the importance of securing a long term sustainable future for the plants.

An update was provided on progress by the work streams.

Support to Tata workers through the Training and Skills work stream has progressed and recent advice sessions had been opened up to workers in the supply chain. Support has been provided by a wide range of organisations including the Money Advice Service, UK Steel Enterprise, local voluntary organisations and HMRC. On site presence by Job Centre Plus has continued through until the end of July. Careers Wales had carried out partnership presentations and worked on a one to one basis with a number of Tata and known subcontractor employees. The Unions strongly praised the flexible and sensitive support that has been provided to date by all agencies.

An update was given on the work of the Business and Supply Chain. Through Business Wales, 30 companies have been offered specific support and 24 companies have been, or are, actively participating in that support, whilst some companies have asked that the support offered be deferred given their specific circumstances and business challenges. The work stream will continue to monitor the situation and support from Business Wales remains open for businesses seeking help.

The Health work stream, led by the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, is progressing a programme of work to address both the health and wellbeing needs of Tata staff and workers in the supply chain. This work is focussed on community-based actions that include and support the needs of wider family members including children. An information leaflet has been produced promoting the support available and the work stream is working hard to ensure that this information reaches all those who may need it. Thanks was given to the Unions, Tata, voluntary organisations and the local authority for their support.

The Task Force agreed that going forward the Skills and Training work stream and the Business and Supply chain work stream would be merged to continue the joined-up action between organisations in support of both Tata workers and those in the supply chain. Roger Evans MBE, had kindly agreed to Chair the new work stream, in addition to acting as Deputy Chair for the main Tata Task Force. There will be close working between this work stream and the Health work stream.

The Secretary of State for Wales commented on the strong working relationship by all parties to date. He advised the Task Force that the UK Government was continuing to engage with all potential investors and develop potential support. He advised the Task Force that the responses to the UK Government consultation on the pensions, which closed on 24 June, are currently being analysed.

I updated the Task Force on progress with the Port Talbot Waterfront Enterprise Zone. The Board is working alongside Swansea Bay City Region, universities and research centres, Business Wales, the local authorities and major employers to support local businesses.

Since my appointment I have visited most of the steel plants in Wales, recently spending time visiting Tata sites at Shotton, Llanelli, Newport and Port Talbot. I intend to keep in close contact with all of the plants across Wales as well as those in the wider steel industry in Wales.

This remains a very uncertain time for many steel workers, their families and local communities across Wales. It is vitally important that progress we have made in recent months is not disrupted by a change of personnel in Westminster. We still need to see UK Government take action on pensions and energy which are central to helping move the steel industry in Wales onto a sustainable long term footing.

I will continue to keep Members up-dated as matters develop with this work.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.