

# Agenda – Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee room 5 – Tŷ Hywel  
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 9 October 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 – 12.20

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

09.30

#### 2 Future of Welsh Steel: Panel 1

09.30 – 10.30

(Pages 1 – 20)

Rajesh Nair, CEO, Tata Steel UK

Chris Jaques, Chief HR Officer, Tata Steel UK

Attached Documents:

Research brief



## **Break**

10.30 – 10.40

## **3 Future of Welsh Steel: Panel 2**

10.40 – 11.40

Alasdair McDiarmid, Assistant General Secretary, Community Union

Jason Bartlett, National Officer for Tata Steel UK, Unite the Union Wales

Tom Hoyles, Press Administration and Research, GMB Union

## **Break**

11.40 – 11.50

## **4 Future of Welsh Steel: Panel 3**

11.50 – 12.20

Dan Williams (Community), Deputy Chair, Multi Union Committee, Tata Steel Port Talbot

Ian Williams (Unite), Secretary, Multi Union Committee, Tata Steel Port Talbot

## **5 Papers to note**

12.20

### **5.1 Aberthaw procurement**

(Page 21)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Chair of Cardiff Capital Region – 30 September 2025

## **5.2 Global Centre of Rail Excellence**

(Pages 22 – 25)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Secretary of State for Transport and Secretary of State for Wales, UK Government – 30 September 2025

Letter from the Chair to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, Welsh Government – 30 September 2025

## **5.3 Reviewing Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd**

(Pages 26 – 27)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to Y Llywydd, and Chair of Chairs' Forum – 1 October 2025

## **5.4 Follow-up from the Committee meeting held on 17 July 2025: Junior apprenticeships**

(Pages 28 – 29)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education – 2 October 2025

## **6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of today's meeting, Standing Order 17.42(vi) for the whole of the meeting on 16 October 2025, and Standing Orders 17.42(vii) and 17.42(ix) for the whole of the meeting on 22 October 2025**

12.20

## **Private session**

12.20 – 12.45

### **7 Future of Welsh Steel: Consideration of evidence**

12.20 – 12.35

### **8 International trade monitoring report discussion**

12.35 – 12.45

(Pages 30 – 41)

Attached Documents:

International trade monitoring report

# Agenda Item 2

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Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby  
Chair  
Cardiff Capital Region

30 September 2025

Dear Mary Ann,

### **Aberthaw procurement**

I note the press has reported that the legal costs associated with legal challenge to the demolition contract associated with the Aberthaw site means that the overall cost to Cardiff Capital Region of this error is now £6.16m. I would be grateful if you could confirm whether these numbers are correct and, if so, does CCR expect this to be the final cost?

I would also like to thank you for sending over the terms of reference for the scoping document for the independent audit investigation into the procurement. Do you have a timeline for the completion of this work, and what is the plan for publishing any outcomes?

The Committee would appreciate any information you are able to share on the findings, once this work is complete.

Yours sincerely,



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

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

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**Economy, Trade, and  
Rural Affairs Committee**

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The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
UK Government

The Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP  
Secretary of State for Wales  
UK Government

30 September 2025

Dear Heidi and Jo,

**Global Centre of Rail Excellence**

On 18 September the Committee visited the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) on the Neath Port Talbot-Powys border. The GCRE presented a vision with the Centre driving economic regeneration for the area, and the potential to create secure, well-paid jobs in an area affected by deindustrialisation.

They explained this would be a unique facility that could be instrumental to rail technology development not just in Wales and the UK but for all of Europe and possibly even further afield. However, they also explained the considerable investment the project still requires to bring that vision to fruition.

The Committee believes this project has the potential to be a project which would support British innovation, and notes that the previous UK Government provided £20 million funding towards the project. As such we resolved to write to you to ask what consideration the UK Government has given to further supporting the project either directly or in the form of support to help them bring in the investment they require?



I have copied this letter to Ken Skates, the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew RT Davies

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

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



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

30 September 2025

Dear Ken,

### **Global Centre of Rail Excellence**

On 18 September the Committee visited the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE). The GCRE presented a vision with the Centre driving economic regeneration for the area. However, they explained the considerable investment the project still requires to bring that vision to fruition.

What capacity do you believe the Welsh Government has to support the objectives of the project by further derisking private investment and what, if any, actions has the Welsh Government taken to broaden the appeal and promote the project to investors in order to achieve more private sector, other Governments or third party buy in?

Given the scale of the project and that the UK Government has also previously provided funding, I am also going to write to the UK Secretary of State for Transport and Secretary of State for Wales. I will copy you into that letter.

Yours sincerely,

*Andrew A. Davies*

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

CC: The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport, UK Government

The Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP, Secretary of State for Wales, UK Government

## Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

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Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS

Y Llywydd, and Chair of Chairs' Forum

1 October 2025

Annwyl Lywydd,

### **Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd**

The Committee discussed your letter regarding Reviewing Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd at our meeting on 24 September. Thank you for the opportunity to feed into this work and the Consultation on committee effectiveness. The Committee would like to offer the following feedback:

#### **Remit**

We believe that this committee's remit strikes a good balance and ensures the rural economy (both the economic element of farming and also more widely the economy of rural communities) is not sidelined when examining economic issues. We have worked closely with colleagues on other committees, in particular the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee, when appropriate to the subject matter under consideration. This has also worked well and enhanced the Committee's impact.

#### **Committee size and quorum**

We believe six-member committees work well. Reflecting on the previous eight-member arrangements the Members felt this did not add to the quality of scrutiny. Six-member committees also reduce the number of Members sitting on multiple committees, which enables them to focus their attention on specific policy areas. We also felt that the current requirements around quorum work well and these should be maintained.



## **Protected meeting time**

We feel that having a dedicated day for committee business is beneficial and should be preserved and extended if possible. Currently our committee meets on a Wednesday and Thursday; Members suggested they could better focus on business at Thursday meetings as on Wednesdays their attention was often split between Committee business and preparing for Plenary.

## **Work referred to the Committee, including legislation**

We believe committees need to be as free as possible to set their own work programme. We discussed the various merits of having either separate dedicated policy and legislation committees or the current dual purpose committees, but did not come to a settled preference. However, we agreed that consideration needs to be given to ensuring committees are not overwhelmed by work, and in particular Bills, referred to them by Business Committee. One suggestion discussed was to give committees additional meeting slots when legislation is referred to them to allow them to continue their policy work in their regular meetings alongside the bill work in their new additional slots.

Thank you again for the chance to feed into this work.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



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

2 October 2025

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning and Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnerships on 1 August. The letter was written in your capacity as Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee, and requested further information on the Junior Apprenticeship (JA) programme following the Committee's meeting on 17 July.

To clarify, while JAs are delivered through further education institutions—creating some overlap with the Minister for Further and Higher Education's remit—they are a form of pre-16 provision and therefore fall within my portfolio. As such, I am responding to the Committee's comments.

As outlined to the ETRA Committee on 17 July and referenced in the Welsh Government's response to the Committee's recent report on apprenticeship pathways, the JA programme is not a formal apprenticeship. However, it is designed to help 14 to 16-year-olds progress onto apprenticeships they might not otherwise have the opportunity to access.

JAs are sometimes incorrectly viewed as provision for learners less academically able and/or posing challenges for schools. JAs are instead principally for learners at risk of disengaging, but who show an aptitude for vocational study. The Welsh Government will continue to work with Medr to ensure this message is clearly communicated.

I want more learners to benefit from this successful programme. This is why we are encouraging take-up through additional funding. While most costs are met by local authorities, the Welsh Government provides top-up funding which is administered to colleges by Medr and has increased this budget by 50% to £600,000 for 2025/26.

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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.

I am pleased to confirm that Coleg y Cymoedd is delivering JAs for the first time this academic year, and that Coleg Grŵp Llandrillo Menai has restarted its JA offer through a small pilot for Year 11 learners. My officials continue to work with Medr, local authorities and colleges to plan for further expansion.

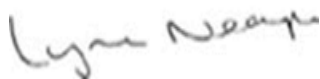
As mentioned at the evidence session in July, I am aware that the number of JA learners has unfortunately decreased at Cardiff and Vale College this academic year. Officials have raised this issue with the local authority and have been reassured that funding is still available for schools to put forward learners. I am also pleased that, overall, JA numbers and providers are expected to increase this academic year across Wales.

My officials are also engaging with Medr to improve the quality of JA data and information to the Welsh Government. This will supplement a growing evidence base, which currently includes the report produced by Estyn in May 2024 which set out the transformational impact of the programme on learners.

Of course, JAs are not the only option for learners at risk of disengaging. I'm aware of other successful partnerships across Wales between schools and colleges that offer 14–16-year-olds alternative opportunities to study vocational qualifications in college, while continuing most of their learning in school. Whilst I welcome all of this provision, I nonetheless continue to expect the majority of learners to engage with a purpose-led, broad and balanced curriculum under the Curriculum for Wales.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to visit colleges delivering the JA programme and to speak with many of the young people involved. The programme is clearly valued by learners and has a positive impact on their lives.

Yours sincerely,



**Lynne Neagle AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education

# Agenda Item 8

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