

Agenda – Enterprise and Business Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: Wednesday, 9

December 2015

Meeting time: 09.15

For further information contact:

Gareth Price

Committee Clerk

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Private pre-meeting (09.15–09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

2 Devolution of Business Rates to Wales – Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation

(09.30–10.15)

(Pages 1 – 25)

David Magor, Chief Executive, Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation

Janet Alexander, Professional Services Manager, Institute of Revenues, Rating and
Valuation

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

EBC(4)–30–15 (p.1) Evidence from the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation

Break (10.15–10.30)



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

3 Devolution of Business Rates to Wales – Federation of Small Businesses

(10.30–11.15)

(Pages 26 – 29)

Rachel Bowen, Policy Manager, Federation of Small Businesses Wales

Rhodri Evans, Senior Communications Adviser, Federation of Small Businesses Wales

Rhian Murphy, Managing Director, SlideFold UK Ltd.

Attached Documents:

EBC(4)–30–15 (p.2) Evidence from the Federation of Small Businesses Wales

4 Devolution of Business Rates to Wales – Welsh Government and CBI Wales

(11.15–12.15)

(Pages 30 – 33)

Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport

Chris Sutton, Chair, CBI Wales

Attached Documents:

EBC(4)–30–15 (p.3) Evidence from the Welsh Government

5 Papers to note

5.1 Transport Planning and Funding

(Page 34)

Attached Documents:

EBC(4)–30–15 (p.4) Response from the Secretary of State for Transport regarding Rail Infrastructure Funding in Wales

5.2 Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+

(Pages 35 – 36)

Attached Documents:

EBC(4)-30-15 (p.5) Further information provided by Colegau Cymru following the Committee meeting on 21 October

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from remainder of the meeting and the beginning of the next meeting.

7 Fourth Assembly Committee Legacy

(12.15-12.20)

(Pages 37 – 40)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Finance Committee on Legacy with draft response

Private de-brief (12.20-12.30)

Agenda Item 2

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Devolution of Business Rates to Wales

An Outline of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation's (IRRv) Evidence

The Enterprise and Business Committee of the National Assembly for Wales

9:30am until 10.15am on the 9th December 2015.

The potential for changes to business rates policy

Introduction

The IRRv is the professional body concerned with all aspects of local taxation, valuation, appeals, financial management and local benefits administration in the United Kingdom. It has members within both the public and private sectors, including ratepayers and their agents. Institute members are engaged in local taxation collection, property valuation, the appeals process, advising and representing ratepayers and financial management within local government.

We are an Institute that represents the professional interests of members who work within a broad church. The Institute is the only professional body in the United Kingdom which specialises in the law and practice of local authority revenues and local taxation, together with the valuations, appeals, reliefs and benefits which support these processes.

The approach taken to modelling the costs and economic benefits of business rates policy options

The Institute often models the impact of government policy and in recent months has looked critically at the government's proposals for 100% rate retention in England. This modelling approach takes account of the impact of rate liability and its effect on both the ratepayer and local economic conditions. This approach is partially helpful when dealing with issues such as;

local discretions, particularly those related to stimulation of the tax base, regeneration and local economic activity.

The likely timetable for any changes and how this will be communicated to businesses in Wales

Using our experience from England, it is important that business ratepayers are given a reasonable lead time in order to take into account of any adjustments in their outgoings. This is particularly important with rate liability because it is regarded by business as the most significant outgoing after all the costs of employment. We would therefore suggest that a lead in time of at least 12 months is essential to give business the opportunity to make these adjustments.

The potential for differential tax rates within Wales.

We believe the application of differential tax rates for rate liability would give local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government the opportunity to introduce innovative approaches to encourage businesses to relocate in Wales. This will be particularly important if it were to be considered alongside any potential changes in the levels of Corporation Tax. This will also give a possible incentive for dealing with the porous nature of the border between England and Wales.

Local retention of business rates

The Institute has taken a positive stance on the introduction of business rates retention schemes. There is no doubt in our mind that it has encouraged billing authorities to take a more active role in the administration of the tax which has led to an increase in yield. The localisation mechanism and the potential to retain income have also begun to yield results particularly in relation to the funds available to improve the infrastructure in areas of economic decline such as the traditional high street.

The condition of the Rating List for Wales

We have carried out a study of the quality of rating lists in England and Scotland which has revealed a significant incidence of missing rateable value. This situation has been fuelled by the “nationalisation” of the non domestic rate in 1990 which led to billing authorities reducing the administrative effort in relation to the maintenance of the rating lists. We believe there is significant missing value in Wales.

The introduction of an incentive scheme to Billing Authorities in England was probably the most significant change to the non domestic rate since its inception in 1990. It introduced two major challenges to Billing Authorities (BAs), firstly it demanded improved budgetary forecasting in an area generally unfamiliar to finance managers, but it also gave financial encouragement to BAs to improve resource commitment to the rating team. In England this incentive has already realised over £50m of missing value

Rates Avoidance

The Institute fully supports the premise that clarification and/or change is required regarding aspects of empty business rating, both in terms of its application and its administration. The Institute also fully supports the Government commitment to “continue to support law abiding ratepayers who are genuinely entitled to the reliefs and exemptions”. This support should apply to all who work by legal means to minimise business rates liability; and by extension it should not include those who adopt practices by which they seek to evade tax liability.

Tax avoidance is, of course, a strategy which involves exploiting legal means of reducing taxes with the goal of minimizing tax liability. Avoidance is a perfectly legal approach to handling taxes. There is a point at which practices of a minority stray into the realm of being abusive; and thereby cross the line into tax evasion. It is important to emphasise however that there is nothing illegal in seeking to minimise that tax liability, either for oneself or on the behalf of others. To state that avoidance places an unfair burden on the “honest majority” could be seen to portray those who seek to minimise liability legitimately as ‘dishonest’ and this is not the case.

It is felt that avoidance is “undermining confidence in the rates system”. It could well be argued that the interaction of the empty property rating system as introduced from 2008, with the now high level of business rates multiplier are also contributory factors to any perceived undermining of confidence in the system.

The timetable for revaluations

One of the disadvantages of five yearly revaluations is that where there is a large swing in rental or capital values inter-quinquennium, this is not reflected until the following revaluation. Where rents and costs are increasing, the ratepayer is unlikely to be upset; however, where

these values fall, dissatisfaction can arise (notwithstanding provisions relating to material change which may assist in these cases).

We contend that shorter periods between revaluations would be preferred by the majority of ratepayers as this would help to even out some of the changes in levels of value which can occur within the revaluation cycle.

The revaluation cycle has traditionally lent itself to a five-year valuation cycle, due in part to the timescale required to handle large volumes of appeals between revaluations.

It may assist ratepayers to move towards a three-yearly revaluation cycle; possibly as a stepping stone to annual or two-yearly revaluations. We accept however that these changes would probably only be achieved if all leases are supplied as a matter of course to the VOA (direct or via Land Registry). Such a move to more frequent revaluation would generally reduce the number of appeals, keep rateable values more aligned to passing rents and could negate any need for transitional relief schemes.

More frequent revaluations would generally result in a more acceptable change to rate poundage levels; thereby giving rateable occupiers a greater degree of certainty. Three-yearly revaluations could level out the appeal workload for rating surveyors, minimise increases / reductions in revaluation assessments for occupiers and allow the Government and billing authorities a greater degree of certainty of income level.

Any evidence to support the Minister's comment that the border between Wales and England is "long and porous"

The 160 mile border between Wales and England is often described as "porous". This is understandable. 90% of the Welsh population lives within 50 miles of the English border. 30% of the *combined* English and Welsh population—some 16 million people—live within 50 miles of the border. As a result, there is a huge degree of travel and integration between England and Wales throughout the year, be it commuters, business people, freight or leisure seekers.

The Welsh and English economies and geographies are highly integrated however this integration has not been fully researched in relation to variable tax regimes and the impact of any such variable regimes. An obvious example of this is the impact of the corporation tax

regime in the Irish Republic in contrast with the higher tax levels in Northern Ireland. In response to this there are proposals to reduce the level of this burden in Northern Ireland in order to attract an increase in business activity.

In the context of non domestic rates would the introduction of variable local multipliers in Wales influence the relocation of business activity from England to Wales? If this is the case it raises the potential for increased revenue as the tax relationship between Wales and the Treasury matures.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Magor'. The signature is stylized with a large loop for the 'D' and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

David Magor
IRRV Chief Executive

Agenda Item 3

Devolution of Business Rates

FSB Wales
response to
Enterprise &
Business
Committee

24 November 2015





Devolution of Business Rates to Wales

FSB Wales

FSB Wales welcomes the opportunity to present its views to the Enterprise and Business Committee. FSB Wales is the authoritative voice of businesses in Wales. With 10,000 members, a Welsh Policy Unit, two regional committees and twelve branch committees; FSB Wales is in constant contact with business at a grassroots level. It undertakes regular online surveys of its members as well as a biennial membership survey on a wide range of issues and concerns facing small business.

Key Points

FSB Wales has called for a number of changes to the system of business rates in Wales in our manifesto for the incoming 2016 Welsh Government¹. Most significantly for the proceedings of this committee we have called for the Welsh Government to do the following:

- Agree a position on the local retention of Business Rates within 100 days.
- Undertake more regular revaluations, to ensure that rates bills are more reflective of economic circumstance and rents. The Welsh Government should look to do this within its first three years.
- Instruct the Valuation Office Agency to value land and property separately. This will allow a more meaningful evaluation of the impact of moving towards a system of Land Value Taxation. This should also be undertaken within the first three years.
- Take forward the recommendations in 'The Devolution of Business Rates to Wales' Report (February 2015)² and undertake a full assessment of alternative options for business rates.
- Split the uniform business rate multiplier in line with the split between small and large multipliers operating in England

FSB Wales has general concerns about the levels of data available for modelling the impacts of business rates in Wales. It has therefore been difficult for us to fully assess the impact of business rates policy changes on our members and the wider economy. Welsh Government and local Government should do more to ensure that good quality data relating to business rates is available to policymakers. In this light, we find it difficult to comment as fully as we would like on potential reforms to Business Rates in Wales. It is our view that the costs and benefits of business rates policy are not fully explored.

It will be essential that any changes to business rates are clearly communicated to Welsh businesses, and that any changes to the system of Business Rates in Wales are phased in clearly and with

¹ Available at:

[http://www.fsb.org.uk/policy/rpu/wales/images/the_fsb_wales_business_manifesto_for_the_2016-21_welsh_government%20\(1\).pdf%20final.pdf](http://www.fsb.org.uk/policy/rpu/wales/images/the_fsb_wales_business_manifesto_for_the_2016-21_welsh_government%20(1).pdf%20final.pdf)

² Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/150202-devolution-of-business-rates-en.pdf>



adequate warning. Whilst some changes, such as local retention could be made relatively quickly (i.e. those which are not 'customer facing'), others may take more time and preparation. Such changes should be consulted on fully, and subject to a full and proper impact assessment, as FSB Wales has outlined in our report "Better Regulation for Wales"³.

Non-Domestic Rates are a source of c£1bn a year in revenue for the Welsh Government (and subsequently Local Authorities) and FSB Wales recognises the need to protect this revenue stream, and to grow it in line with economic growth. Indeed business rates' relatively "static" pot, whilst not reflecting business conditions, is a virtue from the point of view of the Government as it provides a predictable and secure stream of revenue. However, it is our view that the tax currently falls disproportionately on those small businesses with premises, something implicitly recognised by the now year-on-year retention of the Small Business Rates Relief scheme, which should be extended and made permanent. It is also clear that some Local Authorities substantially benefit from the current "shared pot" whilst other, normally more prosperous Local Authorities effectively lose out. There is however, a clear need for some element of redistribution to be preserved in order that Welsh Local Authorities are able to deliver their statutory (and non-statutory) services.

On 5th October 2015 the UK Chancellor, George Osborne MP, announced that Local Authorities in England will retain 100% of their business rates, alongside the abolition of the Uniform Multiplier. These announcements will have significant impacts in England and are likely to have cross border implications for the business environment in England and Wales and those businesses which operate on both sides of the border. We await further detail with interest, but it is now even more pressing for Welsh Government to agree a position on the retention (or not) of Business Rates in Wales, and to move ahead with examination of alternative models of taxation.

It appears that Wales and England are on divergent paths with regards to Business Rates, and comments relating to a "long and porous border" are less relevant than they may have been in the past. However, it has historically been true that Wales and England have divergent rates regimes, with England splitting a large and small business rates multiplier where Wales has not. The multiplier has also been set at differing levels on either side of the border – in part to reflect differing levels of prosperity. In general, despite a "long and porous border", Wales and England have rarely, if ever, since 1999 had aligned Business Rates regimes. In this light, over the medium term, the Government should look to examine best practice elsewhere in the UK and globally in order to devise a system of business taxation that works for Wales and its political and social aspirations.

³ Available at: <http://www.fsb.org.uk/policy/rpu/wales/images/better%20regulation%20wales.pdf>



Federation of Small Businesses Wales

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The Federation of Small Businesses Wales

The FSB Wales is non-profit making and non-party political. The Federation of Small Businesses is the UK's largest campaigning pressure group promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and owners of small firms. Formed in 1974, it now has 200,000 members across 33 regions and 194 branches. FSB Wales currently has around 10,000 members, a Welsh Policy Unit, two regional committees and twelve branch committees meaning FSB Wales is in constant contact with small businesses at a grassroots level in Wales.

Lobbying

From the Press and Parliamentary Affairs Office in Cardiff, FSB Wales campaigns with AMs, MPs and MEPs in Cardiff Bay, Westminster and Brussels in order to promote our members' interests. FSB Wales also works closely with local, regional and national media outlets to highlight our members' concerns. Development Managers work alongside members in our regions to further FSB Wales influence at a regional level. More widely, the FSB has Press and Parliamentary Offices in Westminster, Glasgow, Belfast and Brussels to lobby the respective Governments.

Member Benefits

In addition, Member Services is committed to delivering a wide range of high quality, good value business services to members of the FSB. These services will be subject to continuing review and will represent a positive enhancement to the benefit of membership of the Leading Business organisation in the UK.

Vision

A community that recognises, values and adequately rewards the endeavours of those who are self employed and small business owners within the UK.

The Federation of Small Businesses is the trading name of the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses Limited. Our registered office is Sir Frank Whittle Way, Blackpool Business Park, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 2FE. Our company number is 1263540 and our Data Protection Act registration number is Z7356876. We are a non-profit making organisation and we have registered with the Information Commissioner on a voluntary basis.

Agenda Item 4

Written Evidence Paper on Business Rates Devolution in Wales from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to assist the Enterprise and Business Committee with their scrutiny session on Business Rates Devolution in Wales.
- 1.2 The paper addresses the areas identified by the Committee as being of particular interest for this scrutiny session, including potential for changes and options under consideration.

2. The costs and economic benefits of policy options

- 2.1 Consideration of costs and benefits is a central part of the development of policy options. This helps determine, alongside consideration of other matters such as the competitiveness of the business rates regime, whether proposals are feasible, worthwhile and appropriate.
- 2.2 Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data on the rateable value of non-domestic premises is used for the development and costing of policy options. This data is checked against that held locally by Billing Authorities. Depending on the nature of the scheme, assumptions may also be applied to this data, for example, vacancy rates were used in the case of the Open for Business Scheme.
- 2.3 Steps are taken when developing policy options to consider alternative interventions, to estimate the anticipated costs and benefits, and to look at sensitivity analysis to reflect, for example, varying levels of take-up. This proportional approach is consistent with the approach taken to non-domestic rates ('business rates') elsewhere.
- 2.4 Data is also gathered on the schemes at implementation to monitor take up and impact. However, it is not always straightforward to quantify or even identify all potential costs and benefits, and they often extend beyond just economic factors.

3. Timetable for changes

- 3.1 Changes to the core administration of business rates need to be determined well in advance of the financial year in which they are to take effect. This is to allow Billing Authorities to make the necessary arrangements and for any necessary sub-ordinate legislation to be prepared.
- 3.2 Grant-based temporary rate reliefs can in some cases be applied with shorter lead-in times, due to their more targeted nature, although there is still a need to ensure that Billing Authorities have sufficient time and information to introduce the changes.

4. Potential for differential tax rates in Wales

4.1 Whilst the UK Government has announced that it will abolish the Uniform Business Rate and allow Billing Authorities to decrease the multiplier in order to attract investment, this decision has not been taken in Wales. The potential exists to introduce differential tax rates but this is not without issues, for example, it would require primary legislation and would have implications for local tax revenues. In addition to this, as the Business Rates Panel concluded, implementing differential tax rates within Wales could create a complex system of varying rates and reduce budgetary certainty for occupiers.

5. Local rates retention

5.1 Local rates retention can be a tool for incentivising local authorities to focus on growth. The Business Rates Panel was supportive in principle of a system of local rates retention.

5.2 However, there are currently a number of factors to be addressed in considering the possibility of rates retention in Wales. For example, there is an uneven distribution in the amounts of rates revenue which can be raised by the Welsh local authorities. In addition to this, business rates provide a core component of the funding for local services across Wales.

5.3 The risks of variation in the yield from local rates retention and in the funding that would consequently be available for local services, as well as authorities' potential to achieve a net increase in the amount of rates generated, would vary significantly between local authorities. Protections would need to be considered for authorities that are heavily reliant on a small number of ratepayers, and these could reduce the incentive that local rates retention would otherwise bring. They could also add further complexity to the system.

5.4 It is important that local rates retention is therefore considered in the context of wider proposals for reforming local government in Wales and in conjunction with the rest of the system for financing local services.

6. Revaluation

6.1 The most recent revaluation in England and Wales was 1 April 2010, and the next will be in 2017. The Business Rates Panel considered the length of the revaluation cycle and the impact this has on business. In its report, the Panel reflected on a consensus from business and commercial ratings professionals that more frequent revaluations could ensure that the tax base better reflects economic circumstances.

6.2 The frequency of revaluation is being considered at a UK level and the VOA has undertaken a detailed analysis of this issue. The VOA concluded that more frequent revaluation would not necessarily increase the stability of bills, and that this would depend on changes in property values across the market and the extent to which these follow a steady trend.

6.3 There are clearly advantages and disadvantages to more frequent revaluations and to adopting a different approach in Wales from that in England. Consideration is needed in any change of approach to factors such as the benefits to business, the cost to the Welsh Government and the impact on the yield and stability of this source of revenue for local services.

7. Integrated economy and porous border

7.1 The economy in Wales is very highly integrated with England; goods and services are freely traded across the border within a framework of a common set of capital market and uniform labour laws.

7.2 The England-Wales border is more porous than the England-Scotland border. For example, 16.4 million people live within 50 miles of the England-Wales border; 6.3 million people live with 25 miles of the border. In contrast, only 3 million people live within 50 miles of the England-Scotland border; and only 0.5 million live with 25 miles of the border.

7.3 The commuting flows across the Wales-England border are also more significant than those in Scotland. Census data show that in 2011, over 75,000 people travelled from Wales to work in England and 44,370 people travelled from England to work in Wales. In contrast, commuting flows between England and Scotland were much smaller. In 2011, around 16,000 people lived in Scotland but worked in England, whilst around 26,000 lived in England but worked in Scotland.

7.4 In light of this, it is important that decisions on business rates, and the competitiveness of our regime, are not considered in isolation.

8. Contribution to economic growth and measuring performance

8.1 The Task and Finish Group and Business Rates Panel have been clear in their advice that business rates policy is not a panacea for economic growth. They also commented that there was limited evidence on the impacts of changes to the rates system on the wider economy. However, they recognised that rates tend to form a higher proportion of total operating costs for smaller businesses and there is evidence that business rates remain a major concern for SMEs.

8.2 Rate relief schemes have been shown to help certain ratepayers with cash flow, sustainability and keeping costs down, and I am clear from discussions with business how important this is.

8.3 Performance is measured on a scheme by scheme basis, and we work with local authorities in this regard. Data is routinely collected, including the number and level of reliefs awarded. This helps us understand the nature of take-up. It is also important that we recognise the potential burden that reporting requirements place on business and local authorities.

9. Business rates relief schemes

- 9.1 A number of important business rates measures have been taken this year to support business. For example, the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme enhancement has been continued for a further year. This scheme provides support for around three quarters of business premises in Wales, reducing their liability to nil for approximately half of those eligible.
- 9.2 The Wales Retail Relief Scheme was extended and enhanced in 2015-16. In 2014-15, this scheme provided up to £1,000 off the rates bill for over 10,500 business premises in Wales, and cost £9.5m. Building on this, the Scheme in 2015-16 offers up to £1,500 off the rates bill and is providing important support to small businesses and town centres.
- 9.3 A further cap was also placed on increases to the business rates multiplier, at 2% in 2015-16. This measure reduces business rates bill increases for all non-domestic ratepayers, and will cost an estimated £4m in 2015-16.
- 9.4 The New Developments scheme was introduced in October 2013 and is aimed at stimulating construction and encouraging development in Wales. This scheme exempts all newly built, vacant commercial property from business rates for the first 18 months following completion, if completed on or after 1 October 2013 and before 1 October 2016.
- 9.5 A further round of the Enterprise Zones Business Rates Scheme was opened in 2015-16. Across four financial years, the Enterprise Zone Business Rates Scheme has supported 136 businesses and has resulted in more than £8m in funding being offered to business.
- 9.6 We are supportive, in principle, of the continuation of the enhanced Small Business Rates Relief Scheme for 2016-17. However, this and other reliefs will need to be examined in light of the UK Government's Spending Review and wider pressures on the Welsh Government's Budget.

Agenda Item 5.1



Department
for Transport

William Graham AM
Chair, Enterprise and Business Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin

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Our Ref: MC/145170
Your Ref:

- 9 NOV 2015

William,
Dear ~~Mr Graham,~~

Thank you for your letter of 30 September 2015, seeking further information following the evidence given by my officials to your Committee on 17 September. I am glad that their evidence was helpful.

The Government believes that it would be undesirable to generally re-open discussion on Silk recommendations around which there was no consensus. We therefore do not intend to revisit the question of devolving Network Rail funding given the discussions on the issue during the St David's Day process.

I also do not think it would be productive to speculate on how funding for rail infrastructure in Wales would be devolved when there is no such proposal under consideration at the present time.

I note that your Committee is planning to undertake an inquiry into the future of Welsh rail infrastructure in the spring. My Department would of course be happy to assist your Committee with that inquiry. As you will be aware from my officials' evidence, I expect to receive three reports over the next few months containing recommendations relating to the planning and delivery of Network Rail's rail enhancement projects, and Network Rail's longer term shape and financing. The terms of reference for these reports can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-reports-on-network-rail-publication-of-terms-of-reference>

Yours sincerely

THE RT. HON. PATRICK McLOUGHLIN
Pack Page 34

How CITB Cymru Wales works with FE

Wales Funding Model

CITB Cymru Wales has appointed a consortium led by The University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) as the preferred bidder to develop a new approach to training for the construction industry in Wales.

CITB Cymru Wales published plans in March to invest up to £5m in a new scheme. A number of quality bids were received with the UWTSD led consortium achieving the highest score in the bidding process. UWTSD will now work with CITB on the details of the initiative, which will deliver training to meet construction employer needs throughout Wales.

Supporting partners of the UWTSD consortium include, Building Research Establishment (BRE), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), City & County of Swansea Council, Coleg Cambria, Coleg Ceredigion, Coleg Sir Gâr, Coleg y Cymoedd, Cyfle Building Skills, Tidal Lagoon Power Ltd.

This exciting new initiative will offer training opportunities for individuals and construction companies throughout Wales.

Sector Qualification Advisory Panel

CITB Cymru Wales currently operates the Sector Qualification Advisory Panel for Construction (SQAP). The SQAP brings together employers, learners, awarding organisation and providers to facilitate a forum to oversee the decisions relating to vocational construction qualifications eligible for Welsh Government funding in Wales in the Sector Subject Area of Construction, Planning and the Built Environment.

The current SQAP includes representatives from Coleg Sir Gar, Grwp Llandrillo-Menai, Grwp NPTC and Coleg y Cymoedd.

CITB's Work-Based Learning Provision

CITB Cymru Wales sub-contracts with every college that delivers construction provision in Wales and are proud of our partnership arrangements to the benefit of both parties. Counting any learner that attended college in 2014, including those that finished their programme in June and those that started in September, we have 1641 learners attending off-site training at a college. This includes the following colleges:

- Bridgend College
- Cardiff and Vale College
- Coleg Cambria
- Coleg Ceredigion
- Coleg Gwent
- Coleg Sir Gar
- Coleg y Cymoedd
- Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
- NPTC Group
- The College Merthyr Tydfil
- Pembrokeshire College

British Association of Construction Heads

The British Association of Construction Heads (BACH) is an association formed largely from those managing and delivering the construction curriculum from pre-apprenticeship to post graduate level. CITB has a long standing positive relationship with BACH Wales looking at Curriculum development and planning solutions to qualification challenges and enhancement projects such as Essential Skills.

CITB attends all BACH meetings with allocated time to update colleges on apprenticeship performance, work-based learning developments and qualification changes. CITB is also advising BACH on industry needs and BACH and Colegau Cymru jointly chair a strategic group namely Built Environment Strategic Advisory Group (BESAG) which strategically advises colleges and associated work-based learning providers on changes in provision and focus as requested by industry and Welsh Government.

The BESAG group has also been tasked to respond to the ESTYN thematic report on construction and the built environment and has subsequently made recommendations to colleges on changing quality related practice.

CITB and BACH have recently launched a jointly funded project employing a lead construction lecturer with the aim of sharing best practice across colleges and developing a website for best practice examples. The All In It Together project will deliver on the recommendations set out in the Estyn Remit Report Training for Construction, Planning and the Built Environment.

This will include establishing a network of Excellence Mentors (EMs) within the field of vocational education and training (VET) in order to support, guide and enhance the quality of all construction provision in Wales.

ERASMUS+

The Erasmus+ programme offers opportunities for students enrolled on apprenticeships and vocational training to study abroad as part of their programme. CITB Cymru Wales is working with Colegau Cymru as part of the Wales Steering Group on European Initiatives in Vocational Education and Training (VET) to examine how these opportunities can be maximised for the benefit of learners, employers and education providers.

Find out more

For further information, please contact our Welsh Public Affairs Officer, Joshua Miles, by email at joshua.miles@citb.co.uk or by calling **07557136563**.

Agenda Item 7

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