

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
EIS 46 Grŵp Gweithgynhyrchu'r Canolbarth	EIS 46 Mid Wales Manufacturing Group (MWMG)

We regularly survey our members on key issues and some of these are detailed below which I hope will provide some insight into industrial needs in Mid Wales.

### **Property**

We must service the growth requirements of our existing industrial businesses. We need to encourage them to expand their operations in order to bring wider economic benefits to the region. However to do this they require resources currently lacking from the marketplace in Mid Wales: skills and property.

### **Apprentice Levy**

In 2017 the new structure for funding apprenticeships, 'the apprenticeship levy' will be in place. No detail is forthcoming on how this will operate in Wales and how it can assist in Upskilling staff and addressing skills shortage issues.

### **Infrastructure**

Any official consideration of Wales' transport infrastructure invariably gravitates to the M4/Great Western mainline in the South or the A55/North Wales mainline in the North. The third report of the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee entitled 'Crossing the Border' is sadly no exception.

Our survey has identified a vital need to enhance the transport connectivity between Mid Wales and the Midlands conurbation and the North/ South Wales link to really impact on economic development in a part of Wales that has had no 'new thinking' in this arena since the railway arrived in the 1800s. Tinkering with the existing structure and layout will provide only limited relief.

From papers read it appears the UK Highways Agency and Welsh Government have for many years been in discussion with regard to jointly upgrading the A458 from Shrewsbury to the Welshpool bypass. To date it seems this project is no further forward.

### **Broadband**

With Wales on the brink of the Welsh Government's pledge to deliver Broadband to 96% of premises across Wales under the Superfast Cymru scheme, we must all help to promote the opportunities that this offers our businesses and ensure support is available for the 4% not covered. A small number of our local manufacturing companies have embraced advances in technology to completely transform the traceability, storage and distribution of their products. Sharing the benefits of these advances amongst other local industry is a valuable way of inspiring and motivating them to make changes in their own companies.

## **Mobile Coverage**

The lack of 2G mobile coverage across the region remains an issue for businesses both locally and those travelling through the region. There has been little evidence of improvement through the UK Government Mobile Infrastructure Project to date and whilst other areas of the UK forge ahead with 4G and trials of 5G we still await 2G capability in many areas. With more and more devices now able to utilise wifi calling, the Broadband rollout could provide a partial solution to the mobile connectivity issue but easing planning restrictions for masts is likely to prove more effective.

## **Business Rates**

Rates were yet again raised, as many felt the formula for industrial premises was too high and the delayed revaluations unfair.

## **About Mid Wales Manufacturing Group (MWMG)**

Mid Wales Manufacturing Group (MWMG) is a membership organisation based in Newtown with 140+ members across Mid Wales, since 1994 we have been working with our members to-

1. Generally to promote the manufacturing industry in Mid Wales
2. To improve the success, quality, profitability and efficiency in manufacturers in Mid Wales
3. To promote and enhance the education, training and skills of persons in Mid Wales
4. To promote and improve communications among manufacturers and between them and the community as a whole
5. To act as an interface with other organizations for the benefit of manufacturers
6. To band together manufacturers in Mid Wales so as to cultivate a mutual understanding of each others activities to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and the transfer of technology and identify opportunities for trading between members and other organizations whether or not in Wales.

If you require clarification or additional information on any of the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Ceri Stephens

### **Ceri Stephens**

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