


Wales Monthly Update

2 January 2025

Happy New Year! The start of another year is here and rest assured, we have plenty of plans in motion for the coming year to ensure it's another busy one! Keep yourself up-to-date with our latest Wales Monthly Update, here to ensure you stay in the loop, providing an overview of our December activities, as well as looking ahead to all our events kicking off 2025.

Campaigning and Policy Activity

 The Draft Budget for 2025/26, published on December 10, included several key FSB asks, including the extension of the 40% rates relief for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, as well as capping the multiplier used to calculate rates will be capped at 1% for 2025-26.

Elsewhere in the Draft Budget, Welsh Government confirmed capital funding for maintaining Welsh roads - another of FSB's calls. Poorly-maintained roads are a huge challenge to FSB members, impact on the ability to grow and attract investment to our communities and so we're pleased to see Welsh Government commit additional funding to this. We similarly welcomed the decision to allocate resource to freeing up the planning system in Wales - another constraint on economic growth. Following the Draft Budget announcement, FSB representatives were interviewed across Welsh media talking about the impact of Welsh Government's measures. You can read our media response to the Draft Budget [here](#)



The true test of the Budget will, of course, be whether it ends Wales' prolonged period of economic stagnation and FSB have urged the Welsh Government to work with small businesses to develop a long-term economic delivery plan.

 FSB joined other leading representatives and partners from Welsh Business and beyond at the inaugural meeting of the Wales Economic Forum with Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Energy and Planning Rebecca Evans MS. The Forum, hosted by Business News Wales at the Senedd discussed the current business landscape and some of the priorities and opportunities for the coming year including Welsh Government's Investment Summit in 2025 and showcasing Welsh business. Read more about the Forum [here](#)



As part of the Senedd Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee's Inquiry into AI and the Welsh Economy, FSB Deputy Head of Policy Felix Millbank gave evidence on behalf of FSB. During the session, Felix outlined some of the opportunities posed by AI for Welsh smaller businesses and productivity as well as some of the support needed to help them exploit new technology. You can watch a recording of the session [here](#). We have also provided evidence to the Senedd on Wales' International Strategy.

Throughout December, FSB ran a #10PoundPledge campaign, encouraging people across Wales to commit to spending at least £10 locally with a small business and to share on social media what makes that business special. We've been pleased to see individuals including politicians post videos telling us about some great local businesses, supporting the town centre spaces we want to see and preserving the heart and soul of our communities.

FSB Wales' Policy Chair, Ben Francis, joined the inaugural meeting of the Welsh Economic Growth Advisory Group, established by the Secretary of State for Wales. The purpose of the group is to discuss opportunities to drive growth and prosperity for Wales. Ben championed



the voice of small businesses and urged the UK and Welsh governments to work together to outline how Wales and our small businesses will feature in their growth missions. He emphasised that the Industrial Strategy must help deliver and complement the investment we need in key growth enablers, including our transport networks and business support structures.



Our work on how to get a business support system that works for SMEs like yours is ongoing but the survey closes soon. If you haven't already, please fill it in – the more responses we have the better the evidence to influence on your behalf!

The survey is available here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZS2YBBB>

North Wales Update: Mike Learmond

There are many organisations and government bodies in North Wales that are able to support your business. Of course, as an FSB member we are only a phone call away to assist you with legal, tax or health and safety questions, but we are also linked to many other organisations via our networks. So it was great to attend the first meeting of Connecting Clwyd which brought all the business support professionals together in one room, to share contacts and information. This group will meet regularly and will help us to expand our support network even further.



Talking of networks, we held another of our popular Business Breakfasts in Bangor and it was great to connect with the businesses that attended. A highlight of the event was hearing from our



inspiring guest speaker, Sammi Rogers from Bala-based Aran Hufen Ia Ice Cream, who shared the story of how their ice cream business was founded, the challenges they have overcome, and their exciting plans for the future. Of course, an added bonus was having ice cream for breakfast!

Our virtual networking sessions continue to be popular also, so please do check them out.

Looking forward, we are already planning for our annual March for Business Dinner and our annual small business conference, which will be held in Wrexham University in June 2025. Watch this space!

South Wales Update: Rob Basini

Despite approaching the end of the year, we had some fantastic events in December.

Our West Wales Business Networking proved to be really productive for those attending. Feedback was really positive, on both the networking element of the event and also the presentation about 'Accessing Business Funding', from David Selwyn of Landsker Business Solutions.

Our South East Wales Business Networking event also proved very worthwhile for attendees, with really positive links being made and a very different, though extremely beneficial, session on idea generation in business from Tom Phillips of Welsh ICE.



We also continued to contribute to many economic development groups during December, including various ones addressing issues arising from recent announcements at Tata steel.

Our Wales Virtual networking events continue to be very popular, and it was a pleasure to host our national FSB Creative Sector networking event last month too, with local artist Gayle Rogers giving a fantastic presentation on how various projects Gayle runs, bring together art and care services for vulnerable people in RCT.

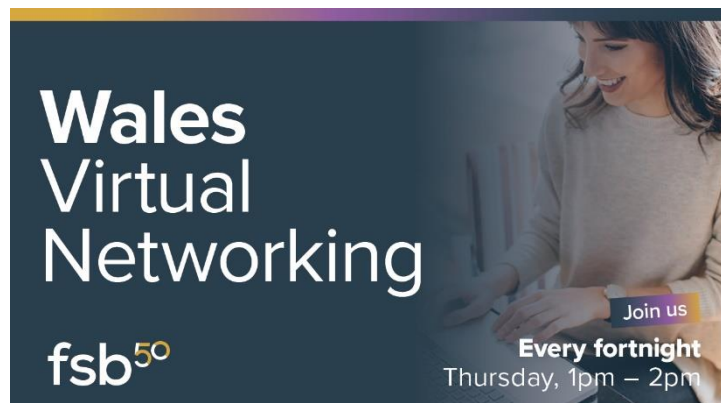
We're already looking forward to events in the New Year, with networking events planned in West Wales, mid Wales, and South East Wales. We are also delighted to be hosting a FSB National Webinar event early in the New Year, with one of our FSB South Wales members, WebBox. '25 Must Haves For Your Website in 2025' will feature a presentation from Will Roberts of WebBox, and is a must attend for small businesses looking to improve their online presence.

We also have a number of planned visits to local businesses with Members of Parliament, to make sure that key decision makers are aware of issues facing small businesses at the moment, and we're really looking forward to our Wales in India event in Swansea in February.

Upcoming Events

[Wales Virtual Networking, Thursday 9 January, 1-2pm](#)

Kick off the New Year by embracing the virtual networking scene with us at our Wales Virtual Networking sessions, the perfect dynamic and engaging setting to grow and diversify your business connections. Held fortnightly on a Thursday afternoon, this is your first chance in 2025 to expand your network, share valuable insights and collaborate with our diverse virtual community of business professionals from Wales and across the UK. The event is open to all and FREE to attend.



[North Wales Business Breakfast, Wednesday 15 January, 9.30am – 11am](#)

Our in-person networking in North Wales returns for the first time in 2025 with our regular monthly North Wales Business Breakfast events. This monthly networking meet-up, this month taking place in Coleg Cambria Business School, Northop, offers a prime opportunity to forge meaningful business connections, in a professional environment. Come and network, collaborate, promote your services and support each other. Open to all, both FSB members and non-members.

[South East Wales Business Networking, Thursday 23 January, 9am – 11.30am](#)

Always a popular one, our in-person networking event returns so come and expand your network within the local area and hear from our guest speaker. At this month's event, Craig Phillips, from Leigh Lawry Accountancy Ltd, will be discussing 'Cashflow 101: Simplifying the Lifeline of your Business', proving that managing cashflow doesn't have to be complicated. Both FSB members and non-members are welcome to attend, tickets selling fast so don't miss out!



[Wales Virtual Networking, Thursday 23 January, 1-2pm](#)

Join us for the second time this month at our virtual networking event and become part of our wonderful online networking community at our Wales Virtual Networking sessions, the perfect dynamic and engaging setting to grow and diversify your business connections. Held fortnightly on a Thursday afternoon, this is your chance to expand your network, share valuable insights and collaborate with our diverse virtual community of business professionals from Wales and across the UK. The event is open to all and FREE to attend.

[Cardiff Networking by FSB and HSBC, Thursday 6 February, 10am-12pm](#)

Take the opportunity to make new introductions, connect with new contacts and meet old friends at this networking event in partnership with HSBC. This relaxed event, with an emphasis on connecting with other like-minded business owners, will provide a warm welcome for all looking to expand their networks. This FREE event is open to FSB members and non-members, spaces are limited so book your space today!

Meet The Team

If you need any further information about any of the information or events covered here, your Wales contacts are:

[Mike Learmond, Senior Development Manager \(North Wales\)](#)

[Rob Basini, Development Manager \(South & Mid Wales\)](#)

[Shona Holmes-Berry, Operational Support Co-Ordinator \(Wales\)](#)

North Wales social media pages

 **@FSB.North.Wales**

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South Wales social media pages

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