

# Wales Monthly Update

3 March 2025

As we head into March, the promise of spring brings fresh energy and exciting opportunities to connect in 2025! Stay up-to-date with our latest Wales Monthly Update, where we'll reflect on February's highlights and share what's blooming on the horizon for the months ahead. Don't miss out - dive in to stay in the loop with everything we've got planned!

## Campaigning and Policy Activity

📄 Ben Cottam, Head of FSB Wales, joined the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Vikki Howells, as a keynote speaker to celebrate ten years of the Small Business Charter, a national accreditation recognising business schools' commitment to supporting small businesses. In his remarks, he spoke about the importance of nurturing partnerships between universities and smaller businesses to help drive productivity and growth as well as inspiring entrepreneurship.



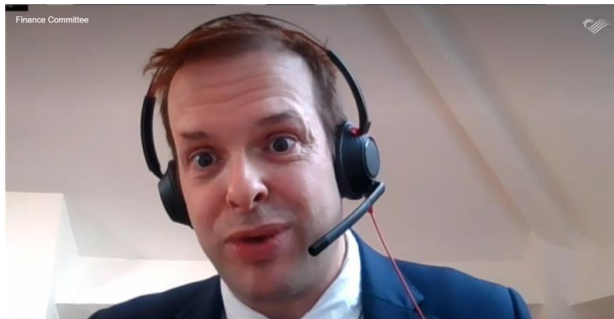
📄 Ben Lake MP, Plaid Cymru's Treasury spokesperson in Westminster, joined the FSB Wales team on a visit to the award-winning Needle Rock Ltd, an upholstery business transforming everyday furniture into works of art. The founder Ali Wright, 2023 FSB Microbusiness of the Year winner, shared how apprenticeships have

been instrumental to her business' growth. The discussion covered key issues for small businesses, including upskilling the workforce, the impact of recent tax changes, and policy measures to support growth and job creation in Mid-Wales.

📄 The publication of the Welsh Government's final 2025-26 Budget has confirmed delivery of key FSB priorities, including extending the 40% business rates relief for retail, leisure and hospitality, a limited multiplier increase for all businesses, and investment in crucial road and rail infrastructure. Looking ahead, FSB is urging the government to immediately begin planning the 2026-27 Budget, focusing on how new powers to vary the business rates multiplier can be used to foster an environment where small businesses can thrive and grow.

📄 To mark this year's Apprenticeship Week Wales, which took place in, FSB called for Medr (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research) to deliver an SME focused strategy to close Wales' skills gaps by increasing the number of apprenticeship starts and supporting more small firms to take on apprentices. Skills gaps are a persistent top three issue for SMEs. Apprenticeships have a key role to play in bridging these gaps and in developing the workforce required to deliver the economic growth Wales desperately needs.

📄 Our Head of Policy, Dr Llyr ap Gareth, gave evidence to the Senedd's Finance Committee on proposals for a Welsh Visitor Levy. He made the case that the time isn't right to introduce a visitor levy in Wales given the tourism sector's prolonged period of difficulty, but that if a levy is to be introduced, the revenue it raises should be used to support the Welsh tourism sector.



📄 Ben Cottam, Head of FSB Wales, joined the second meeting of the Welsh Economic Growth Advisory Board, established by the Secretary of State for Wales Jo Stevens MP. 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.

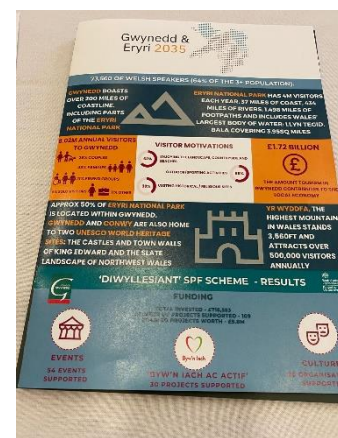
## North Wales Update: Mike Learmond

February may be the shortest month, but we certainly managed to pack a lot in!

Of course, we held our regular in-person and virtual networking events, but we also participated in a lot of external events also.

Highlights included attending Wrexham University's Leadership event, where business owners were given tools and strategies to overcome challenges and think creatively about how to grow their business. We also attended an excellent event on business succession organised by [Cympas](#). The main message is to start planning early and consider how your business will continue after your retirement. After all, it will be your legacy.

Also, during February, we attended a conference focussing on the Gwynedd Visitor Economy. Hospitality businesses have faced many challenges in the last few years, so it was encouraging to witness such a level of positivity in the room from the business owners. This is in spite of the planned increase in Employer National Insurance Contributions from April and the Welsh Government Visitor Levy. Please do check that you are receiving the Employer's Allowance as this is not automatic for eligible businesses. Due to FSB lobbying, this will be worth £10,500 per annum from April 2025 and details on how to apply are [here](#).



We also fitted in a jobs fair in Rhyl, organised by Working Denbighshire. Over 600 people passed through on the day and we talked to many who were planning to go into self-employment, which was great to hear.



Towards the end of the month, we were back at Wrexham University to learn about their [plans and vision](#) for the next five years. This includes working more closely with the business community, so watch this space!

Finally, during the month, we met with Claire Hughes MP (Bangor Aberconwy). We discussed a wide range of topics, including the impact of the

Budget on our members and concerns about proposed new employment rights legislation and the impact this might have on the confidence employers will have on growing their workforce.

Looking forward to March, we will be holding our annual business dinner, networking at the Welsh Mountain Zoo, participating in a number of business advice drop-in sessions throughout North Wales, exhibiting at a major exporting conference and speaking about financial wellbeing at a conference in Wrexham organised by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.



## South Wales Update: Rob Basini

It's been another busy month, with lobbying activity and events again being key features of our activity in the area.

It was a real pleasure to host our 'Being Responsible Businesses' group for our latest event, and to hear from Ian Timbrell of Timbrell Education about how businesses can become more inclusive, and the benefits of this.



Our FSB and HSBC joint networking event in Cardiff was completely sold out, and it was great to provide businesses with such a vibrant opportunity to make new contacts.

Our FSB South Wales team were also delighted this month to host a national virtual FSB webinar on '25 Must Have's For Your Website in 2025'. Our guest speaker at this event, Will Roberts of WebBox Digital in Cardiff, gave a fantastic overview of key points to consider in ensuring the effectiveness of a business's website, and feedback on the session was exceptional.





Our FSB West Wales networking event, as previously, generated a real buzz in the room, and the positive energy was helped by a great session from Keith Small, of Your Success, who talked about building mental resilience and a positive mindset.

From a lobbying point of view, meeting with Ben Lake, Member of Parliament for Ceredigion, allowed small businesses in the area to share their experiences and concerns. It was also good to contribute to discussions at Cardiff Metropolitan University's Circular Economy conference, and at the Placemaking for Town Centres conference, hosted by the Design Commission for Wales.

We've also continued to feed into various economic development groups and to make sure that the voice of small businesses heard by key decision makers.

In addition to continuing our lobbying and supporting members through our ongoing services, we are looking forward to a number of activities and events over the coming month, including the Swansea City conference, our FSB South East Wales networking, Welsh Government's Explore Export event at Cardiff City Stadium, and our FSB Swansea Area networking.

## Upcoming Events

[North Wales March For Business Dinner, Wednesday 5 March, 6pm – 10pm](#)

Throughout March there are a series of events taking place across Denbighshire to support and promote the business community in the area. The annual 'North Wales March For Business Dinner' is a key event in the month, with around 100 business people attending from all over North Wales. The dinner is supported by FSB, Denbighshire County Council, Ministry of Defence, Business Wales/Menter Môn and North Wales Police and Community Trust. Come along and join us for a pre-dinner drinks reception and a delicious three course meal, combined with good company and plentiful networking opportunities and business support. Secure your spot now, tickets selling fast!



[South East Wales In-Person Business Networking, Thursday 6 March, 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, who at this month's event, will be Matthew Burgin from Trustist. Matthew will discuss '**How To Conquer Online Reviews**', providing an

overview of the basic fundamentals of online reviews, detailing how to avoid the pitfalls and how to use them, in the most successful way for your business. Both FSB members and non-members are welcome to attend, tickets always sell quickly for this one so make sure you don't miss out!

#### [Wales Virtual Networking, Thursday 6 March, 1-2pm](#)

Join us for the first time this month 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 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.



#### [North Wales Business Breakfast, Wednesday 12 March, 9.30am – 11am](#)

Our in-person networking in North Wales returns with our popular regular monthly North Wales Business Breakfast events. This monthly networking meet-up, this month taking place on Wednesday 12 March in Coleg Cambria Business School, Northop, offers a prime opportunity to forge meaningful business connections, in a professional environment. At this event we are pleased to welcome Paul Peters from The Cyber Resilience Centre for Wales (WCRC) as our guest speaker who will discuss the topic 'I Don't Do Cyber', highlighting current threats to SMEs and micro businesses. Come along and network, collaborate, promote your services and support each other. Open to all, both FSB members and non-members.

#### [Wales Virtual Networking, Thursday 20 March, 1-2pm](#)

Join us 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 second chance this month 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.

#### [Exploring the North Wales Business Jungle, Tuesday 25 March, 9.30am – 11.30am](#)



Start your day at this business networking event, taking place at a very special and unique location! Come along and enjoy the opportunity to expand your business network by making new connections, all whilst experiencing the beautiful back-drop location of the Welsh Mountain Zoo. This fabulous FREE event also includes a short, guided tour of the zoo, to add a wild twist to your networking experience! Open to all, both FSB members and non-members, book your place today!

[Swansea Area Business Networking, Friday 28 March, 9am – 11.45am](#)

Our regular networking in Swansea returns to Penderyn Copperworks Distillery this month and is already proving to be another extremely popular one, with familiar faces and new attendees enjoying this event every time. This engaging event provides the opportunity to connect with a diverse array of businesses from across the area, as well as hearing business support tips and guidance from a special guest speaker. Book your space before it is too late, open to all.

## 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 \(Wales\)](#)

