

Welcome to our latest Small Business Fortnight – the e-bulletin about what the FSB Cardiff Office has been doing which aims to keep you on top of key small business issues and what the FSB in Wales has been saying about them.

Shape Our Thinking

Thank you to all of you who filled the online survey during August, it is helping to shape our thinking in preparing policies for the FSB Manifesto for the 2011 National Assembly Election. [Click here](#) to see the key issues where you've been informing our discussions with Government.

Call for Sector Panel members

The Welsh Assembly Government has opened the **application process for positions on the Sectoral Panels**, as outlined in the Economic Renewal Programme. The six sectoral panels will be: Creative industries, ICT, Energy and Environment, Advanced material and manufacturing, Life Sciences, and Financial and Professional services. The Sector Panels will oversee strategy and delivery of support to the sectors and will work to Ministerial policy to establish suitable and effective mechanisms for ensuring appropriate strategy is derived within a sector. If you are an FSB member which operates in any of these sectors, we are urging you to apply to ensure that the voice of small businesses is heard. You will provide advice to the Minister on progress of policy and will be instrumental in developing sector action plans and monitoring their progress. For more information on the application process, click [here](#).

Give us your views

The Wales Policy team will be setting up **focus groups on key issues** in order to inform their policies and manifesto for the Wales Assembly elections in 2010. The team find them hugely valuable in making the case for small businesses so if you would like to be involved in these focus groups please contact Non Rhys, Wales Policy Manager, at Non.Rhys@fsb.org.uk

Ieuan sets the record straight

In an exclusive for the FSB, Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones explained to members his vision of the Economic Renewal Programme and how it will affect FSB members. He said: "The assurance that I can give all businesses in Wales is that, in the delivery of the programme that I have announced, size does not matter in the sense that we will give support to businesses whatever their size. So, there is no discrimination against small businesses and, indeed, the benefits will be felt by all businesses. The fundamental point I would like to make is that, through our infrastructure programme, all businesses in Wales will benefit. The truth is that, under the old grant regime, the only companies that benefited were those that applied for the grants. Under our infrastructure programme, with a commitment to enabling next-generation broadband for all businesses in Wales by 2016, all businesses in Wales will benefit whatever their size." He gave the FSB a series of full and frank answers to questions set by the FSB, and this Q&A briefing can be found by clicking [here](#).

Date announced

The Welsh Assembly Government has announced its preferred date for the referendum on further powers to the National Assembly as the **3 March 2011** and now awaits the Secretary of State's formal response.

FSB newsround

[Number of jobless growing with fewer jobs on offer](#); ['Keep 10-day payment target in UK'](#); [Target help for the small businesses](#); [Call for centre to tackle business-related crime](#); [The recession takes its toll on Severn crossings](#); [Technium branded a waste of money](#); [Sustainability must be made to make economic sense](#); [WAG asked to reveal plans for small firms](#); [Assembly decisions 'are best'](#); [Strategy aims to tee up more big events for Wales](#).

Press releases

Over the last fortnight the FSB said that small businesses are generally positive about the National Assembly although nearly two thirds still don't feel sufficiently knowledgeable to cast an informed vote in the upcoming referendum (see the release [here](#)), and were calling for the Assembly Government to outline their plans for supporting small firms (see the release [here](#)).

Assembly doings

Angela Burns AM, as Chair of the Assembly's Finance Committee, made a contribution to the debate on the Welsh Language Measure on the 21 September focusing on the **potential impact of the Measure Welsh business**, and also expressing concern that the Finance Committee had been unable to properly scrutinize the proposed legislation because sufficient information had not been provided by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Welsh Language Measure was passed unanimously and sent to Legislation Committee No 2 on the 21 September for further consultation and amendments.

The Welsh Assembly Government has published the key economic statistics up to August 2010, these are available [here](#), The Labour Force Survey estimates for the 3 months to July 2010 show:

- The employment rate for those aged from 16 - 64 in Wales was 67.0 per cent, down from 67.5 per cent in the same period a year earlier. The UK average was 70.7 per cent.
- The unemployment rate in Wales was 8.4 per cent of the economically active, up from 8.1 per cent in the same period a year earlier. For the UK as a whole it was 7.8 per cent.
- The rate of economic inactivity for those aged from 16 - 64 in Wales was 26.6 per cent, up from 26.4 per cent in the same period a year earlier. The UK average was 23.2 per cent.
- The claimant count rate in August 2010 for Wales was 5.0 per cent of the workforce, down 0.6 percentage points on August 2009 (UK rate 4.5 per cent, down 0.4 percentage points).

For daily summaries of all news Assembly-related, [click here](#).