

Press Release

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Welsh business leaders back flexible working for all

Leading Welsh organisations came together today (Thursday 29 March 2007) to promote the wider adoption of flexible working by all employers in Wales.

Top figures from the Institute of Directors Wales, Federation of Small Businesses Wales, Welsh CBI and TUC Wales met at Chwarae Teg's **Better Balance Better Business** conference in Cardiff to encourage smarter working as a way to improve the productivity and competitiveness of Welsh business.

CBI Wales director David Rosser, said: "Progress is being made towards a more flexible workplace. The CBI is keen to see all employers realise the business benefits of choosing to adopt a balanced position on flexible working and to do so on this basis rather than be forced through legislation.

"The broader use of flexible working strategies will provide a much larger pool of the kind of human resource needed to create a stronger Welsh economy of the future. If Wales is going to compete successfully with other countries, businesses must harness and better manage a diverse 21st century workforce, and flexible working is a key element of workforce planning now and for the future."

Wales TUC general secretary Felicity Williams said: "More balanced, diverse, valued and productive workforces can be achieved through smarter not harder working methods. This is why we support the call for more Welsh employers to look at work life balance strategies as an essential recruitment and retention tool of the best talent available.

Jane Davidson, Minister for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills who oversees the Welsh Assembly Government's Work Life Balance In Wales initiative delivered by Chwarae Teg, believes work life balance is a win/win situation.

She said, "Flexible employment practices can help toward a more competitive and better economy and bring improved quality of life through promoting social inclusion, equality of opportunity and economic development for the people of Wales. The Assembly is keen to work with partners in all sectors to drive this initiative forward so urge all employers to play their part in making work life balance a reality".

The event signalled a crucial union of key sections of business that will promote self-compliance of smarter ways of working, said Marcella Maxwell, chief executive of Chwarae Teg.

As the organisation leading the way for a cultural shift in working practices across Welsh businesses and organisations, she said:

"This conference comes at a time when both employers and employees are under considerable pressure to cope with the changing world of work. The significance of flexible working in supporting the transformation of workplaces across all sectors and lines of business, is gaining momentum.

"It's very encouraging to see Wales' influential business leaders come together to lend heavy weight support to balanced and flexible working policies. Today's event is significant as it signals a collective recognition that a balanced approach is mutually beneficial for employers and employees. Flexibility in time, location and method of working holds the key to increased productivity, reduced capital expenditure, less impact on the environment and ultimately a more vibrant and efficient Welsh and UK economy."

Better Balance Better Business is a groundbreaking conference, headlined by Sir Digby Jones, specifically focused on improving flexible working in Wales, which will set the agenda for change. The event brings together UK thought leaders in the field of workforce development, organisational change, flexible working and work life balance to challenge traditional working practices and has been supported by the Welsh Assembly Government, BT, Admiral Group, Wales TUC, Opportunity Wales, Cardiff Council, Marble Recruitment, EOC Wales and the Hilton.

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