

Deputy First Minister's Trade Mission to New York and Boston

12 March 2008

Ieuan Wyn Jones, Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy & Transport

I attended a Trade Mission of Welsh companies to New York and Boston between the 26th February and the 2nd March 2008, and attended a range of events organised to promote Wales as a place to visit and a place to do business.

The events surrounding Wales Week coincided with St David's Day celebrations and provided an excellent platform to further develop the profile of Wales across a range of sectors – from food to tourism – and bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

An evening reception on Wall Street, attended by over 300 influential US business representatives, and co-hosted by Sir Howard Stringer was very successful. During the evening, I announced the appointment of Sir Terry Matthews as a Champion for Wales.

An event was organised earlier in the day to promote the best of Welsh business and a number of companies accompanying the Trade Mission were provided the opportunity to showcase their products to over 250 workers in and around the Wall Street area.

The best of Welsh food and drink featured at both these events and were used to demonstrate the quality of products available from Wales. In addition, I hosted a Welsh lunch for food and travel writers from across the US, to support our drive to publicise Wales as a high quality food, cultural and tourism destination.

In addition to supporting the development of export opportunities for Welsh companies, I held a number of meetings with companies to discuss possible investments in Wales. Whilst at this stage I am unable to reveal the outcome of some of these discussions, I am delighted to announce the creation of 45 high value jobs by a young company called Current Biodata.

Following my meeting in New York with Ian Tarr, the Chief Executive of Current Biodata, the company has announced that they are to set up a new centre for its scientific editors in Swansea, creating 45 high value jobs for graduate and post-doctoral biochemists and biologists in the area.

Current BioData had looked at a number of locations, including Singapore, for its expansion project but we were able to encourage the company to choose Wales as the place to establish and grow their high tech business.

Ministers take every opportunity to highlight the fact that Wales will host the 2010 Ryder Cup – and on this visit I was fortunate to have the actual Ryder Cup on hand for a number of events. This helped to focus attention on the assets Wales offers as a world-class business and tourism destination.

The 2010 event was also high on the agenda of meetings that Sir Terry Mathews and I held with Sir Alan Collins, the UK Consul general in New York.

I was pleased to attend the annual St David's Society Dinner for the first time, and discuss how members intend to move forward as an organisation. St David's societies are a key vehicle in delivering messages about Wales around the world. So it is important that Ministers and officials take the time to present to them the pace and scope of the exciting changes taking place in post-devolution Wales.

I also hosted a dinner attended by writers and organisers of the New York Public Library's fellowship programme. The Library is famous for its collection of iconic books. As a son of the manse I was delighted to see for myself their copy of a 1588 Bishop Morgan Bible – and pleased on behalf of the University of Wales to present them with a copy of the newly published Welsh Encyclopaedia, y Gwyddoniadur.

And as a Jones myself I took the opportunity to visit the Keeping up with the Joneses travelling exhibition at the national monument in New York. This exhibition has travelled to 5 different venues in the States and tells the story of the Welsh in America. It started its tour in the Ellis Island Museum in New York in September 2006 where it was visited by an estimated million visitors and has proved an invaluable asset in raising Wales' profile.

The United States has been an important focus as a potential market for Wales for a number of years – and it is therefore important for us to maintain a nucleus to promote Welsh trade, investment and tourism. That is why the Wales International Centre in New York has a crucial role to fulfil.

Finally, the Welsh Assembly Government is always keen to secure a higher profile for our country abroad. New York is a notoriously difficult place to secure Press coverage but I am pleased to say that Wales Week in New York is punching above its weight. The visit was also covered by the Welsh media and there was also coverage for the new Welsh Assembly Government publication of a Manhattan Map and Welsh Guide to New York. Wales Week and its events and products had extensive coverage in the New York media, including 5 listings and articles in Time Out New York for that particular week. The Ryder Cup attracted good coverage both in the business media in New York (notably Forbes.com and Golf.com) and in Boston on the AP. In addition, over 20 participating and supporting organisations listed Wales Week and its events on their websites.