# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Response to the Ford UK Bridgend Engine Plant Closure** |
| **DATE** | **11 June 2019** |
| **BY** | **Ken Skates, Minister for Economy and Transport** |

I was bitterly disappointed by Ford UK’s announcement last week that it is beginning a consultation to close its Bridgend engine plant in September 2020.

The closure is devastating news for the workforce and their families, as well as for the wider supply chain, the town of Bridgend and those surrounding areas also affected.

Like all vehicle manufacturers, Ford is facing major global challenges in terms of climate change, and new alternative technologies. Ford has an incredibly valuable asset, both in terms of its workforce in Bridgend and in the plant and I call on them again to rethink their decision.

In the mean time we must do all we can to prepare for every eventuality. Last week I announced that the Welsh Government would establish a Taskforce to work with national and local partners to help find a sustainable, long term solution for the plant, its work force and the wider community. Today I am able to give members some more information on the focus of that taskforce and on our proposed next steps.

I will be asking the task force to focus its efforts around three main themes:

* People: focusing on the people working at Ford Bridgend and within the Engine Plant’s supply chains to ensure they are supported throughout the consultation and in the future
* Potential: focusing on the long term potential for the site by attracting new investment to secure the future of the site and the skills of the workforce
* Place: focusing on the wider impact on the community and securing a resilient future for local area and wider region

The focus on ‘place’ represents an additional and vital component of previous Taskforce models we have deployed following announcements of this nature. I have asked the local member for Bridgend and former First Minister, Carwyn Jones AM, to oversee this work to prepare Bridgend and the wider community for life after September 2020.

I have also spoken to key partners about the membership and remit of the Taskforce which will be finalised very shortly. It will be chaired by a prominent figure from the automotive sector, jointly sponsored by myself and the Secretary of State for Wales and will include representation from the Welsh Government, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales, BEIS, Trade Unions, local authorities, and others. Clearly, open and regular collaboration with Ford, at all levels is absolutely vital to this process.

I want the Taskforce to work closely with supply chain companies in the area to map the activity underway and to support interventions that will help companies whose business relies on Ford to survive this body blow.

The role of Ford in this work will be pivotal. I will be writing to the Company in the coming days, alongside the UK Government, to set out our expectations of how Ford must support the community it has been a key part of for the past four decades. I will be clear that it is essential that we work with the company to secure a significant legacy for the whole community including those within the supply chain. That legacy should reflect the enormous contribution of workers, the community and the tax payers over many years.

The impact that Ford’s announcement has had, and will continue to have, on the people living and working in Bridgend must be at the forefront of all our efforts. I am determined to ensure that all parties work together in our efforts to deliver a sustainable future. The Taskforce will be the focal point for these efforts and I will provide more detail on its membership and Terms of Reference shortly.