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Graham Morgan, Director of the South Wales Chamber, said: “2010 has seen a dramatic change in events for business. The South Wales Chamber of Commerce (SWCC) launched its National Recovery Plan for Wales (NRP), the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) launched its Economic Renewal Programme and an announcement from ONS advised the UK it was out of the worst recession the country had seen in many years.

“The SWCC’s NRP looks at the key challenges facing Wales and what the private sector can do to aid in the economic recovery for Wales: rising unemployment, business competition, new manufacturing, growing business, supplier development and a falling economy.

“It is during these tough economical times when both the private and public sector need to form a cohesive union and work together to support businesses and this is exactly what is starting to happen.

“Round table discussions have taken place with WAG that SWCC have been involved with and WAG will soon be meeting with a panel of our members to seek their opinion on the Welsh economy and suggestions to move forward.

“Part of the NRP was to create a Task and Finish Group – a private sector panel to drive the NRP forward. The group have been meeting regularly since the launch of the NRP and have laid out a set of priorities:

 Business Champion

- Finance and funding
- Business advice
- Regulation and red tape
- Infrastructure
- International trade
- Procurement
- Knowledge and skills

“The Task and Finish Group is driven by influential private sector businesses from a variety of industries within Wales, and accompanied by business support organisations with a strong influence on policy.

“The speed of the recovery in the UK is dependant on the speed of the recovery globally. With the upturn of the recession upon us, this will create opportunities for businesses to exploit global markets.

“SWCC, as part of the NRP for Wales, have recently had the opportunity to meet with a number of overseas organisations that have included: an Ambassador for Albania, a Consular for Belorussia, a representative from the Spanish Chamber of Commerce and representatives from Hong Kong. SWCC have also welcomed a visiting party of French Post Graduate students to create an awareness of the importance of trading internationally.

“In France the majority of businesses sign up to the chamber as a matter of course when starting a new business. The French students were particularly interested in how we support small businesses to get into the supply chains of larger organisations and bodies - an aspect constantly fed back to SWCC as an area which small businesses across Wales feel very frustrated with.

“It was a great opportunity for us to be a part of the French students visit and share the reasons why international relationships are vital for the Welsh economy.

“If we can create awareness to students of how important international relationships are they will be better prepared when they step out into the world of work. We need to make the future generation internationally aware of the opportunities there are within the global market place.

“Facilitation of international activity is something we are very keen to develop given the international nature of the chamber brand. SWCC is the route to new markets and inter trading alliances – something we are exploring methodically as part of our NRP for Wales.

“The NRP for Wales also urges Local Authorities and Welsh Assembly Government to look at ways to facilitate a greater interest of Welsh business proprietors in overseas markets. SWCC are keen to work with International Business Wales to develop a Welsh export strategy that builds on our strengths in services and new manufacturing activity.

“In order to develop a strategy it is fundamental to be proactive and work together to successfully deliver success to Welsh exporters and not work in isolation. Activities and raising awareness of the benefits of trading internationally will be key to the business community.”