



Dear all

This latest update and newsletter finds us in unprecedented times. The Covid- 19 crisis is having a, fast-moving, global effect on our lives and we recognise the immediate and profound impact it is having on food and drink businesses in Wales.

As the Board we are the voice of the industry in Wales and we want to reassure you that we are here to provide direction and support in these very difficult times.

We are in daily contact with Welsh Government to communicate key priorities and challenges for our industry and to work together to find effect solutions – quickly!

We are working together on effective social media solution for companies to ‘lend’ skills and staff as and when needed. This is after early feedback from industry that some businesses are having to lose their skilled staff due to reduced demand, whereas many others desperately need skilled staff due to absenteeism combined with increased demand for their service or products. At the moment, this is being conducted through a Facebook group -search for [Welsh Food and Drink Workforce Collaboration.](#)

Both the Board and Welsh Government are also lobbying for the best possible outcome and support for the industry in Wales at a UK level. We are making sure Wales has a voice in Westminster and at Cobra meetings and is considered in all responses to the current situation and its impact on the industry. It’s more vital than ever that Wales is not marginalised and that our voices are heard.

Even in the current crisis, Brexit will continue to be an issue for our industry. While we have now technically left the European Union, the nature of the future relationship is still uncertain. I spoke to the BBC’s Country Focus programme in February about Brexit and the resilience of the food and drink industry in Wales and what steps businesses can take to prepare. Previous advice still stands and we will still be working on this to help the industry respond to all the challenges we face.

Innovation and collaboration, even in the wake of Brexit and Coronavirus, have been our industry's key strengths and helped us to proudly grow the sector to the point we are at today. By continuing in this spirit of sharing ideas and supporting each other, we will be better able to face this latest challenge.

As ever, please do contact me with your thoughts and questions. We are here to help and stronger together. I'm taking the unusual step of giving you my personal work email address to use during this crisis. If you have any concerns and need something to be fixed urgently in the food and drink sector email me at andy.richardson@volac.com. I'll do my very best to help as we're all in this together.

Andy Richardson, Chair of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board