

Kirsty Williams to chair new Global Centre of Rail Excellence Community Committee

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Kirsty Williams CBE, has been appointed as the new chair of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence Community Committee.

When it opens in 2025 the £400 million Global Centre of Rail Excellence, located at the head of the Dulais and Swansea valleys, will be a facility providing world class research, testing and certification of rolling stock, infrastructure and innovative new rail technologies.

To support community engagement, GCRE is establishing a Community Committee which will provide a forum for the business to engage with local elected representatives for the site and government officials.

Kirsty Williams represented Brecon and Radnorshire in the Senedd for over two decades and was Welsh Education Minister from 2016 to 2021.

The Committee will provide a forum to discuss local issues relating to the facility and its development.

GCRE Chair Dr Debra Williams said: "The Global Centre of Rail Excellence provides a significant economic

opportunity for the local communities and wider region around it. The prospect of high quality new jobs and the creation of new skills linked to the facility will make a positive, long-term contribution to the area.

“What is an absolutely critical principle for me and for the GCRE team is that we go about harnessing that opportunity in a considerate and a sustainable way. We want to work in partnership with the communities around the site and its elected representatives to ensure the facility is both constructed, and operates, in a way that respects the people and the places around it.

“We are delighted that Kirsty Williams has agreed to become the first Chair of the GCRE Community Committee. Her experience, track record and local knowledge of the communities around the site is significant and she will provide constructive challenge to us as a GCRE team about how we can deliver the positive, long term outcomes we want to see for the area.”

Kirsty said: “I’m delighted to be taking on this new role and to get involved in the delivery of what will be a genuinely world class centre of rail innovation and research right here in south Wales.

“The villages and communities around the GCRE site are ones that I know well and I feel very strongly that they deserve the opportunity of the good jobs and prosperity that a facility like GCRE will bring.

“But as with any large and complex infrastructure project of this kind there are always important questions that need to be worked through with the local communities and their elected representatives. Questions about how the site will be constructed; how it will operate and how it will impact the landscape and the natural environment nearby.

“I see my role as Chair of the Community Committee to help deliver a successful project and provide a platform for the constructive resolution of issues and challenges we will need to address along the way.”

Photo credit: GCRE