

## ***Wales International Center Opens In Manhattan*** **Office Will promote Wales in the United States**

NEW YORK, March 1, 2004—Andrew Davies, Wales Assembly Government Minister for Economic Development and Transport, officially opened the Wales International Center in Manhattan's renowned Chrysler Building today, St. David's Day, capping off a week celebrating Wales' contributions to New York City, New York State and the United States.

"This Center in the heart of New York's will help to cement the ties that have existed between Wales and the United States for more than two centuries," Minister Davies told the New York officials, businessmen and press who attended the opening. "The purpose of the Center is to raise awareness of Wales in America, stimulate American tourism to Wales, attract North American investments into Wales and assist Welsh businesses in selling their products into the American markets."

The United States is an important source of investment capital for Wales. More than 150 American companies have operations in Wales, including IBM, General Electric, Bristol Meyers Squibb, Corning, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Ford Motors Co., and Alcoa. Welsh businesses are increasingly targeting the U.S. market. Welsh companies have reported that sales to the U.S. increased 38 percent in the last six months.

In addition to business, cultural and political ties between the two countries go back more than 200 years. Four of the six signers of the Declaration of Independence from New York were Welsh. Thomas Jefferson was proud of his Welsh roots, and U. S. Sen. Hillary Clinton's ancestors were Welsh. Ellis Island, entry point for hundreds of thousands immigrants to the U.S., is named after Samuel Ellis, known as the "little Welshman", who owned the island in the late 1700s. One of the co-founders of *The New York Times*, George Jones, was the son of a Welsh immigrant. J.P. Morgan, the financier, was a descendant of Welshmen.

Welsh actors, artists and writers have made significant contributions to New York City's cultural life. Dylan Thomas spent a great deal of time in the city. Richard Burton gave some of his finest performances on the New York stage. Bryn Terfel's debut in New York in 1994 made the front page of *The New York Times*. Terfel continues to perform regularly in New York. Catherine Zeta Jones is a regular visitor.

The Wales International Center will house representatives of the Welsh Assembly Government, WalesTrade International, the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board will have a virtual presence here.. These agencies will cooperate with the British Embassy and the British Consulate to jointly promote tourism and business opportunities in the United Kingdom, while focusing on the unique attractions of Wales.

The Chrysler Building, a New York City landmark since it opened in 1930, is famous for its art deco styling, especially lobby and its soaring silver roof, which is as well known to New Yorkers as the Empire State Building. The Chrysler Building is adjacent to Grand Central Terminal, one of the major railroad and subway centers in New York.