

Brilliance of the Seas returns to Anglesey

Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas had the opportunity to step on board the ship during a visit in June to meet with Captain and crew and explore how Wales can further increase its share in the lucrative cruise sector.

The cruise ship market has been identified as growth market for Wales. This year alone, Wales will have welcomed 100 cruise visits – which means over 51,000 cruise passengers from USA, Canada, France and Germany, to name but a few countries. It is also a significant upturn on 2017 year's figures which show a year on year increase of 15%. Holyhead will welcome 54 of these calls in 2018 – an increase of 30% from 2017.

Wales has attracted new lines such as Norwegian Cruise Line, Aida, Regent Seven Seas and Phoenix Reisen and work is ongoing to attract further cruise lines as well as retain the existing ones. Cruise & Maritime Voyages cruise line will continue to offer turnaround cruises in 2019 to the Mediterranean, following the second successful year of sailing out of Cardiff port, where 750 passengers boarded and disembarked the Marco Polo cruise vessel.

The Welsh Government and Cruise Wales have been working in partnership with Local Authorities and Ports on a marketing programme for Wales as well as improving what we have to offer in Wales for the cruise market.

In Fishguard port, through the Tourism Investment Support Scheme, Welsh Government has invested in a pontoon allowing larger cruise vessels to call. As a result, there is already an increase in passenger numbers for 2019 of 30%, including the arrival of the Aidabella cruise ship, with 2500 cruise passengers on board. This will be the largest ship to call in Fishguard so far.

The port of Holyhead is also to undergo change, with a new multi-use berth development under consideration. In Milford Haven, revised plans for a multi-million pound marina redevelopment, including new hotels, shops and restaurants, have been approved by Pembrokeshire County Council.

A key part of retaining calls is to develop and promote new onshore tour itineraries for passengers and showcasing more of Wales's attractions to cruise lines and ground handlers. A new tour, involving the architect of the Wales Millennium Centre has been developed for passengers arriving in Cardiff; and for passengers arriving in Fishguard, a Hwyl event featuring entertainment to showcase Welsh heritage & culture and been developed. In Holyhead, an adventure tour option is being offered to Zip World Forest Coaster.

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“I was delighted to have the opportunity in June to see how a

cruise ship such as the Brilliance of the Seas operates, and look at the opportunities these cruise calls present for the wider economy of Wales.

It's great news that Anglesey is welcoming passengers again today. The growth of the sector is testimony to the collaborative work between public and private sector partners, working closely with the cruise liners to ensure that Wales is developing the right infrastructure and products which will appeal to their customers. I'm sure the passengers will have an excellent time exploring the variety and quality of what Wales has to offer and we look forward to welcoming more ships to Wales during 2018."

Anglesey's Major Projects and Economic Development portfolio holder, Councillor Carwyn Jones added:

"The economic benefits the cruise industry brings to Anglesey and North Wales are hugely important.

Anglesey Council is pleased to be leading the North Wales Regional Cruise Project, and support via the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) has helped us attract many more cruise ship passengers to the region.

We will continue to market North Wales as a unique destination, build on our success and cement Holyhead's position as one of the UK's premier cruise ports."

The cruise industry is also supported by the Destination Anglesey Partnership, where key private sector representatives collaborate with the public sector to maximise benefits.

First £10m of Active Travel grants announced

As part of the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan Mid-Point Review 2018 more than £10m has been earmarked for individual projects and packages of local schemes the length of Wales.

All local authorities were invited to submit applications – one strategic scheme and one local scheme or package of local schemes per local authority. A total of 35 applications were received, including 16 applications for strategic schemes, and 19 applications for local schemes.

The Active Travel Fund will allow 11 strategic schemes and 13 local schemes across 18 local authorities to be designed or delivered this financial year.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This funding will create new active travel routes across Wales, connecting people’s homes to schools, jobs and their local community with the aim of encouraging more people to walk or cycle.

“I am allocating the first £10.36 million to local authorities across Wales for schemes to promote active travel, which supports our efforts as a government to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality, while building physical activity into people’s daily lives, delivering wider health benefits.”

Some examples of the projects include:

Flintshire

Strategic – Deeside Industrial Park – Active travel and bus infrastructure on Parkway, Deeside Industrial Park Zone 2 – £1,070,000

Local – Holywell town walking and cycling link – Phase 1 – construction of active travel path, Greenfield Valley – £697,000

Pembrokeshire

Local – Pembrokeshire active travel package – Fishguard / Goodwick – Town Centre SUP Link, Haverfordwest – Castle Lake Link, Narberth – Redstone Court to Rugby Club Link, St Dogmaels – County Boundary to the Moorings, Neyland – A477 Westfield Pill Bridge Crossing £493,000

Powys

Strategic – Newtown Bridge (the 3rd Crossing) – New active travel bridge over River Severn £500,000

Local – Powys Active Travel Programme – Presteigne Phase ii, Section 1 active travel improvements and Active Travel Newtown, Pool Road – £450,000.

£6.8million to improve performance at Betsi Cadwaladr

The £6.8million Welsh Government funding will be used to strengthen the

Health Board's delivery of planned and unscheduled care across all three hospitals, and drive further improvements to mental health and learning disability services.

Vaughan Gething said:

"In May I set out my expectations for the Health Board over the next 18 months, and made a commitment to provide more intensive support, including additional resources to quickly and efficiently deliver the improvements needed to the Health Board.

"Today's funding forms part of that support. It will be used to set up stronger operational governance and accountability at the Health Board and to push forward financial improvements. I expect to see significant improvements for patients as a result, especially in planned and unscheduled care across North Wales."

The Health Secretary added:

"This additional support comes as a new Chair prepares to take up his appointment next month. This marks a new phase in the Health Board's improvement journey. The key focus remains on driving forward the work to deliver sustained change and ensuring the people of North Wales receive the health service they deserve."

David Hanson MP to lead review of prison education in Wales

Mr Hanson, who has long-standing experience in the criminal justice system as a former Minister of State for Prisons will explore what works well and what are the areas for improvement. He will consider the needs of three distinct groups- young people, women and men – and review the barriers to effective delivery. He will undertake the review over the summer and report back to the Minister by the end of November 2018.

Education, training and libraries in prisons in Wales has been devolved to the Welsh Government since 2009 and the Welsh Government currently funds this learning through a joint Memorandum of Understanding with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and with funding provided for this purpose by the UK government.

The Minister said:

“I am grateful to David for agreeing to undertake this review of education in Welsh prisons. He brings with him a great deal of experience and knowledge from his time as Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Youth Justice.

“We know that excellent education in prisons is vital if we are to reduce re-offending. Boosting skills and employment is believed to be one of the most effective means of combating crime by breaking the cycle of disadvantage and inequality that many offenders experience. We also know that, at the moment, prison education in Wales is not as good as we would like it to be.

“David’s review, therefore, is the first step in making the necessary improvements that we need to rehabilitate prisoners and provide them with the skills and confidence they need to become economically active members of society after they are released.”

Mr Hanson said:

“I am delighted to undertake this review of education in prisons for the Welsh Government. I hope that I can utilise my experience as Minister of State for Prisons to ensure that this evaluation produces a report which can earmark key areas of reform and opportunity.

“Ensuring that we have a criminal justice system that rehabilitates offenders is key. By creating a prisons system that educates and retrains offenders we are producing new members of society who can contribute and pay their own way. This will be an evidence led investigation and I hope that we can build upon past successes, root out current failures and embrace future opportunities so that the prisons system in Wales is the envy of the UK.”

National Playday: “Let’s get our children out playing!” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Huw Irranca-Davies is using this year’s National Playday (Wednesday 1st August) to urge children and parents to get out and play, either in their own community or by attending one of the many community events are taking place in parks and other open spaces across Wales.

The importance of physical activity for children and young people is clear. It has multiple benefits for children's physical, mental and social needs and aids strong growth, co-ordination and helps to reduce the risk of children becoming overweight or obese.

Research shows that by the age of 11, more than 40% of Welsh children are either obese or overweight.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"These days, children and young people spend a lot of their time indoors playing computer games and using their mobile phones and other electronic devices to socialise with their friends. But the amount of time they spend outdoors, being physically active, is falling. This is one of the reasons why 40% of Welsh children are either obese or overweight by the time they reach the age of 11.

"The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of our children. We believe children have a fundamental right to be able to play and that play is central to their enjoyment of life.

"As well as a celebration of children's right to play, National Playday is a great way of focussing on the important role play should have in children's lives. Play is essential for the growth in children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. It also contributes to their and their families' health and well-being, as well as their future life chances.

"I want to urge parents to use this year's National Playday as an opportunity to get their children out to play."

During term time, there are a number of programmes such as Active Journeys to Schools, Daily Mile, and School Sport to empower children and young people to build more activity into their daily routines.

Over the summer holidays, there are a range of summer play schemes and other community activities for example Streetgames and Parkrun operating which children and young people can access. The Welsh Government is continuing to support and invest in community-based approaches.

Mike Greenaway, Director of Play Wales added:

"Today and over the last thirty-one years there have been thousands of great events across Wales celebrating Playday and children's right to play. Playing is important to children and it makes a significant positive impact on their physical and mental health, wellbeing and happiness.

“As a society – adults, organisations and governments – we need to continue working together to ensure everyone values the child’s right to play and that it’s provided for by making certain that every child in Wales has enough time, space and permission to play outdoors every day of the year.”