

Wales joins project on residential leasehold reform

In March the Minister for Housing and Regeneration Rebecca Evans announced a package of actions to curb the inappropriate use of leasehold for new build houses in Wales and to improve transparency and understanding for those entering into leasehold transactions.

Working alongside the UK Government, the Law Commission project will also consider how to overcome barriers to wider use of Commonhold, which provides an alternative form of home ownership to residential leasehold.

Rebecca Evans said:

“There has been widespread criticism of poor practice in the use of leasehold in Wales, and I have been clear that the Welsh Government will not support poor practice that has a negative impact on homeowners.

“This is why we introduced new criteria for Help to Buy – Wales. Now developers must give a genuine reason for a house to be marketed as leasehold, and comply with new minimum standards for both houses and flats to be sold as leasehold through Help to Buy – Wales.

“I’ve been clear that I am not ruling out future legislation to make leasehold or Commonhold fit for the modern housing market. When I receive the Law Commission’s report and our own research, I will set out our next steps.

“In the meantime, I continue to explore every avenue available to address the valid concerns being raised.”

The [Law Commission’s eight week call for evidence on Commonhold Law](#) (external link) is now open.

£1.2m for Welsh Universities to crack the code

The investment is on top of a £1.3m drive to connect Welsh pupils with coding, Cracking the Code, which was announced last year.

Research from 2016 showed the digital sector employs 40,000 people and is worth over £8.5 billion in turnover to the Welsh economy.

Cardiff and Swansea Universities will benefit from the funding, allocated by HEFCW, which will include £200,000 to support coding initiatives in schools, colleges and universities.

The Institute of Coding has been established by the UK Government to serve as a national focus for improving digital skills provision. It includes universities, businesses and industry experts including IBM, Cisco, BT and Microsoft.

The funding will pay for computers and associated equipment for Technocamps labs which provide hands on experience for teachers and learners on a range of coding activities and tools. It will also fund schools/business liaison officers, and the establishment of community engagement code clubs run by the National Software Academy.

The Cabinet Secretary will make the announcement at St Philip Evans Catholic Primary School, Cardiff, which runs a coding club.

Since announcing Cracking the Code progress has included:

- Over 200 teachers have undergone training in coding with further sessions planned.
- Coleg Meirion Dwyfor in partnership with BT Cymru and Bangor University's Widening Access Centres hosted an all Wales coding competition
- In 2017/18 Technocamps delivered 150 workshops in 85 primary schools across Wales to over 4,250 pupils and their 135 teachers. 40 workshops were delivered in 25 secondary schools to over 1,000 pupils and their teachers.

Kirsty Williams said:

"Code is everywhere and part of our everyday lives. Having world-class digital skills is essential and it is vitally important that young people have the ability and knowledge to develop in this field.

"I'm pleased to announce that £1.2m is available for Cardiff and Swansea universities to take part in the Institute of Coding which will allow them to link with other universities, businesses and industries. Importantly the funding will also enable them to carry out work in the community, building further on the steps we have already taken to ensure coding is part of the learning process in our schools."

David Blaney, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said:

“This is an excellent opportunity for the universities involved to be part of the influential consortium of businesses, professional bodies and universities, and to develop a recognised standard to meet the needs of the digital industry. We are excited to be able to fund the universities involved in order to give this development the status it deserves in Wales.

“The funding will develop coding activities for students and young people in Wales to help address any skills gaps. It will allow universities to run new and revised degree programmes in Software Engineering, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity, with considerably increased opportunities to access work experience.

“This will have a significant impact on Wales’s ‘supply-chain’ of coders: from upskilling teachers and running hands-on computer science workshops to inspire young people, to delivering work-ready technical graduates. Through student STEM ambassadors, they will also have a role in changing the perceptions of computer science and breaking down barriers to participation, including providing more opportunities for women to participate in computer science.”

Professor Faron Moller, Director of Technocamps and Lead of the Institute of Coding Wales, said:

“With the pan-Wales Technocamps programme, and through delivering novel software engineering apprenticeship courses to full-time employees from companies throughout South Wales, Cardiff and Swansea Universities together represent a powerful force in Wales in addressing the national skills shortage in the digital economy workforce. We are excited at the prospects and new opportunities that will arise from being partners in the UK-wide Institute of Coding.”

Professor Stuart Allen, Head of School, Computer Science and Informatics, Cardiff University said:

“The Institute of Coding builds on the successful partnership between the University’s National Software Academy, Welsh Government and industry leaders, to address the national shortage of skilled programming and software engineering graduates. Its focus on developing skills and knowledge through hands-on experience on industry led projects is producing sought after graduates ready to step straight into careers as commercial software engineers.”

Minister sets out Welsh Government's approach to parental alienation

There are occasions when one parent behaves in a way which creates anxiety in the child, so that it appears the child is opposed to living with or spending time with the other parent. This is often referred to as 'parental alienation'.

The Welsh Government recognises parental separation affects many children and their families. Where it is handled well, the adverse impact on children is minimised.

To address this, the Welsh Government continues to place a firm focus on positive parenting and the provision of parenting support services are an integral part of the Families First and Flying Start programmes. Funding has been made available to up-skill the family support workforce, so they are better able to embed inter-parental support in their early intervention services for families.

Later today, the Minister will appear before the National Assembly for Wales' Petitions Committee, where he will respond to calls that the Welsh Government should take specific actions to reduce the impact of parental alienation on children and their families.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"The Welsh Government believes a child is entitled to a meaningful relationship with both parents following family separation where it is safe and in the child's best interests. However, I am clear the welfare of the child should always be at the centre of our concerns.

"We recognise some parents can behave in a way that alienates the other from their child's life, and that these behaviours can have a significant adverse impact on the emotional well-being of the child.

"We view parental alienation not as a syndrome or a classification, but as a set of behaviours. The most important issue for us is that these behaviours, when they occur, are appropriately dealt with using our family and parenting support programmes and the existing regulatory and legal frameworks."

Funding now open for creating better tourism destinations

The funding is aimed at public, third sector and not for profit organisations for investment targeting small scale infrastructure (visitor amenity) projects in the tourism sector in Wales. This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

The Minister had an opportunity to see the developments taking place under the Elan Links scheme which is a £3.3million investment into the Elan Valley area over the next five years. It will safeguard the unique and varied heritage of the Elan Valley and enhance the area for the long-term.

Funding was secured from the last round of TAIS funding for four projects – opening access to inaccessible and/or underutilised sites at Elan, including the World War 2 pillboxes which were visited by the Minister; creating three family friendly hubs across the Valley; building a new woodland cycle trail and improving destination signage.

Dr Ieuan Joyce, Chair of Elan Valley Trust and the Elan Links scheme, said:

“The Elan Valley is a special place with a unique landscape, story and history. The funding received through the Tourism Amenity Investment Scheme means that we can increase the activities available for people to enjoy the Elan Valley. It aligns with the long-term vision for the Elan Links scheme of boosting opportunities for visitors while at the same time securing the natural and cultural heritage of the area.”

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“The Tourism Amenity Investment Support scheme is an excellent way for us to assist the tourism sector to improve local facilities and amenities. These facilities often go unnoticed but they are an important part of people’s experiences when they visit Wales and they also benefit those who live in the area.

“I’ve seen today the difference that this funding has made to the Elan Valley project and also seen how local partners have come together and identified what can really make a difference in their area. This funding is another building block to create better destinations. I wish the team at Elan Valley well with the project

and urge local partners to see how this funding could be used to improve their destinations.”

This fund is part of a suite of programmes that are aimed at improving the tourism offer in Wales at every level. Supporting improvements to local facilities and amenities will help support the wider tourism economy and help tourism SMEs to grow.

To support this growth the Micro and small business fund is open all year round for applications.

More information on the [Tourism Amenity Investment Support \(TAIS\)](#) (external link).

Applications for the fund will close **25 May**.

[Destination Qatar](#)

Welsh companies looking to build their trade links with the Middle East will be among the first to capitalise on the new daily flights between Cardiff and Doha which begin this week.

First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, who will be on tomorrow’s inaugural Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Cardiff, has announced that a trade mission of ten Welsh companies will be heading to Qatar later this week (5-11 May) to capitalise on the new links.

The companies taking part in the trade mission to Qatar are:

- AmniTec
- Axium Process
- Calon Wen Organic Dairy Produce
- Catnic – Tata Steel UK.
- Penfro Consultancy
- Rachel’s Dairy
- Rhug Organic Farm
- Site Heat – Treatment Services
- Teddington Engineered Solutions
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The trade mission provides an opportunity to strengthen and build ties with prospective partners and investors both independently and through Welsh Government organised business receptions and events.

Speaking ahead of his trip to Doha, the First Minister said:

“The new direct service between Cardiff and Doha has the potential to deliver exciting new economic opportunities for Welsh businesses looking to do trade with the Middle East, India, China, Singapore and Australasia. This trade mission demonstrates the appetite there is among Welsh businesses to make the most of this new global trade link and show the world exactly what they have to offer.

“This week marks the result of two years of hard work – with Welsh Government and Cardiff Airport working together to put forward an attractive proposal to bring this service to Wales. The direct flight opens up the prospect of further investment, and the Welsh Government will continue to maximise opportunities to raise Wales’ profile in new global markets – this week’s trade mission is just the beginning.”

The Economy and Transport Secretary said:

“The direct service between Cardiff and Doha is an exciting opportunity for Wales, providing a direct route to and from the world’s fastest growing hub airport, Hamad International.

“From the construction and energy supply chain to food and drink, there are a number of Wales based companies already active in Qatar, whilst Qatar Petroleum is the major shareholder in South Hook, one of the largest liquefied natural gas terminals in Europe, in Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire. This link provides further opportunities for both nations to build on these ties and act as a further catalyst for trade, investment and partnership.

“This trade mission will build on recent visits by both myself and the First Minister and will be followed by a specific food and drink trade development visit later in the year. This is all in addition to the recently announced marketing partnership agreement with Qatar Airways which will increase Wales’ visibility in key markets as a holiday and business destination.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for some of our finest Welsh companies to showcase exactly what they have to offer a key market and I look forward to continuing to work with them and companies across Wales to ensure they are fully equipped to capitalise on these links.”