

Cabinet Secretary announces £25.9m in Local Transport Grants

The money will go towards programmes to improve safety, reduce congestion, create economic growth and promote active travel.

Local authorities were invited to submit applications for their priority schemes. A total of 190 applications were received.

The Local Transport Fund of £6.15 million will allow 18 schemes across 13 local authorities to continue work on multi-year projects. A further £5 million has been provided to fund local authorities to progress active travel scheme development.

The Local Transport Network Fund of £4 million will allow 4 existing schemes to continue with 9 new schemes to start across 13 Local Authorities.

Nearly £4 million in Road Safety Capital Grant will fund 18 schemes contributing to road casualty reduction in 11 local authorities.

The £5 million Safe Routes in Communities Grant is focused on 26 schemes that improve walking and cycling routes to schools in 18 local authorities.

In addition, funding of £1.75 million will be made available to all local authorities for road safety education and training programmes for, in particular, high risk and vulnerable groups, such as children, young people, older drivers and motorcyclists.

The funding will allow the development of many projects such as the Abercynon train station, which is being expanded to include a new Park and Ride facility that aims to encourage residents away from private transport, cutting the number of cars in use and improving air quality in towns and cities.

In the North, significant funding is being invested in the Kinmel Bay Bus Priority Scheme which will alleviate congestion arising at the signalised crossroads of the A548 Foryd Road with St Asaph Avenue.

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport Ken Skates said:

“The grants are a substantial investment to support local economic growth, improve road safety, enhance public transport facilities and provide more and better routes that enable people in Wales to walk and cycle and to do so safely.

“I commend the range of schemes I’ve been able to announce today, and the high quality of applications we received across these

grants.”

View the [full list of successful schemes here](#).

[New Doctor Who game scoops prestigious gaming award](#)

Doctor Who Infinity is the latest offering from Tiny Rebel Games. This new game follows on the success of the company’s prior and wildly successful Doctor Who Legacy game which has been played by over 2.5 million people since its launch in 2013.

Doctor Who Infinity, which releases this spring, is a new platform for interactive storytelling in the Doctor Who extended universe. It brings together a roster of well-known Doctor Who writers and comic book artists, along with the voices of actors from the hit television series, including Michelle Gomez and Ingrid Oliver. The game enables Doctor Who fans to play through a series of brand new, original stories featuring a variety of Doctors and companions from both classic and modern Doctor Who. The game will have its initial launch for PC and Mac digitally on Steam, followed later by availability on major mobile devices.

The Welsh Government has actively supported Tiny Rebel Games in developing and marketing the latest game, providing more than £300,000 funding, alongside a co-investment by Double Eleven Limited, and taking the company to Games Development Conference in San Francisco as part of the Welsh Government trade mission. Whilst at the event, the game won the UK game of the show award, from UKIE – the UK Interactive Entertainment industry body.

The Doctor Who brand is licensed to Tiny Rebel Games by BBC Studios.

Ken Skates said:

“A huge well done to Tiny Rebel Games for their excellent work on Doctor Who Infinity and for winning the prestigious UK industry Game of the Show award at GDC.

“The Welsh Government is proud to have worked closely with Tiny Rebel Games in supporting the development, marketing and distribution of the game, and we were delighted to include them as part of our recent trade mission to San Francisco.

“This prestigious award, the success of Doctor Who Legacy and the positive press that Doctor Who Infinity has received on social media and from reviewers from GamesSpot, DigitalSpy, Tom’s Guide

and ComicBook all bode well and will I'm sure serve as a springboard for the Game's success when it officially launches next month."

"We cannot allow damaging UK Government policies to plunge 50,000 more Welsh children into poverty" – Huw Irranca-Davies

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) recently published its findings on the potential cumulative impact of implemented and proposed UK Government tax and welfare reforms on people sharing different protected characteristics.

The report analyses policy changes made between May 2010 and January 2018, which will have been implemented by the financial year 2021-22. It finds nearly half of all households in Wales will lose out from the reforms, and that the largest impact will be felt by people on the lowest incomes.

The report also shows:

- relative child poverty in Wales will increase substantially – by 50,000 children (or 8 percentage points) by 2021/22 as a result of the tax and welfare reforms analysed
- large families will be particularly hard hit by the reforms with those families that have three or more children losing around £5,600 a year
- the child poverty rate for those in lone parent households in Great Britain is forecast to increase from 37% to over 62%, with lone parents losing an average of £5,250 a year, almost one-fifth of their annual income.

In a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, Leader of the House with responsibility for equalities, Julie James and Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Rebecca Evans, have called on the UK Government to reconsider its tax and welfare reform policies, because of the negative financial impacts they will have on the most disadvantaged.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"The Welsh Government's efforts to tackle child poverty and improve the lives of low income families are being damaged by the UK

Government's package of tax and welfare reforms – in particular by changes to the benefit system such as the freeze in working-age benefit rates, changes to disability benefits and reductions in Universal Credit rates.

“It is entirely unacceptable in a civilised nation to ignore the impacts of these reforms on equality of opportunity. It cannot be right, proper or moral for the incomes of protected groups to be impacted in such a disproportionate way.

“As a government, we cannot and will not be silent as the UK Government's damaging tax and welfare reforms threaten to plunge 50,000 more Welsh children into poverty and increase levels of deprivation for our most vulnerable families.

“We have called on the UK Government to take urgent action in relation to these policies, which will result in profound hardship. It is essential that these policies are revisited as a matter of priority and rigorous equality impact assessments are undertaken in order to safeguard the well-being of those who are most vulnerable.”

[Access to EU market vital for Flintshire jobs – Ken Skates](#)

Figures show 24 percent of the workforce in Flintshire are in the production sector, mainly in manufacturing, producing goods sold around the world.

In 2017, 60 percent of identifiable Welsh goods exports went to the EU and the Welsh Government doesn't want any new barriers after Brexit that could disrupt this job supporting trade.

The Welsh Government's Brexit trade paper outlines how the Welsh economy is best protected by retaining full access to the European Single Market and membership of a customs union.

Analysis shows the severe impact a hard Brexit would have on Welsh jobs and the economy. If the UK were to move to World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, the Welsh economy could shrink by 8% – 10%, which would be the equivalent of between £1,500 and £2,000 per person in Wales.

The trade paper outlines how the Welsh economy would be disproportionately impacted by a hard Brexit and identifies that the sectors most at risk from tariffs are automotive, chemicals, steel and electrical engineering, while the aerospace industry is most at risk from non-tariff barriers. These are

sectors which are amongst the most productive in Wales and provide a large number of highly-skilled, well-paid jobs.

Ken Skates said:

“Our access to EU markets are vital for jobs in Flintshire. Figures show 24 percent of the workers in the area are in the production sector, creating goods and products we sell across the globe.

“Our biggest market is the EU, with around 60% of identifiable Welsh goods exports going to the EU, worth £16.4 billion each year. Any deal with the EU after Brexit must protect this and that is why we need continued full and unfettered access to the Single Market and participation in a customs union. This is about safeguarding jobs and investment. Wales is currently attracting record levels of inward investment, which is largely due to our access to the EU’s 500 million customers.

“These hard facts show what is at risk if the UK Government fails to get the right deal for the UK or we crash out of the EU without one. We have out forward proposals for a sensible Brexit, based on evidence and analysis, that would protect jobs and the Welsh economy.”

[Schools to share in over £90m to help disadvantaged learners](#)

The Cabinet Secretary has written to schools across Wales to confirm how much they will directly receive in 2018-19.

In addition to over £90m committed this year, £187m has been guaranteed for the remainder of the Assembly term, so that schools have the stability to plan ahead.

The PDG helps schools tackle the effects of poverty and disadvantage on attainment and is targeted at learners who are eligible for Free School Meals or are Looked After Children.

Schools use the PDG in a number of different ways, including nurture groups for children who may be socially and emotionally vulnerable, out-of-hours school learning, on-site multi-agency support and better tracking of pupils as they progress through school.

This year, the PDG for the youngest learners (pupils aged 3-4 years old) has increased from £600 to £700 per pupil. This builds on last year’s doubling of

financial support from £300 to £600 per learner in the early years.

Primary and secondary schools will continue to receive a rate of £1,150 per learner, and this rate also continues to apply to learners in education other than at school (EOTAS).

From this year, schools will also have greater flexibility to support learners who have been eligible for Free School Meals in the previous two years.

Advisers and coordinators from education consortia are also on-hand to provide extra support and guidance for schools on using the funding.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Reducing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is at the heart of our national mission to raise standards. This is one of the most effective ways in which we can break the cycle of deprivation and poverty.

“Time and again, teachers have told me how much of a difference PDG funding has made in raising aspirations, building confidence, improving behaviour and attendance and in involving families with their children’s education.

“Teachers have also called for greater certainty around future PDG funding and that’s why I’m pleased to be able to guarantee allocation levels for the next two financial years and reaffirm our commitment to the grant for the lifetime of this Assembly.

“We have always said that the PDG is there to support all pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals, not just those that are struggling academically. That’s why I want schools to ensure they are supporting more able pupils as well.

“I would also encourage all schools to make full use of the PDG advisers and coordinators from the education consortia – they’re there to help when it comes to making the best use of the funding and ensuring that we raise attainment across the board.”

An independent evaluation of the PDG last year found that many schools consider the funding to be ‘invaluable’, with further evidence from Estyn and the Welsh Government’s raising attainment advocate, Sir Alasdair MacDonald, showing the majority of schools are making well thought out decisions on how to spend the funding.