

Funding for fire prevention programmes announced

The Cabinet Secretary has today announced, that the three FRAs in Wales are to receive £1,424,000 to continue to support their arson reduction and youth engagement schemes, as well as for the purchase of home safety equipment.

He said:

“Our Fire and Rescue Services work incredibly hard to keep us safe and educate us about the threat fire poses. There are, however, many other risks to people’s safety besides fire; and the decline in the incidence of fire means FRAs can play an increasing role in addressing those too.

“Everyone agrees that preventing fires from happening in the first place is much better than responding to them. That is what these programmes aim to do. Some of them alert young people to the dangers of fire and fire-setting and divert them away from fire-related crime and other offending. Others help to keep our most vulnerable citizens safe from fire and other hazards in their homes, such as falls and electrical safety.”

One of the schemes to be funded is Operation Dawns Glow. This aims to educate the public and landowners, about the dangers and impact of deliberate fire-setting and raises awareness about the consequences of deliberate grass fires, which can result in prosecution.

Dawns Glow was established in 2015 and includes representatives of Welsh Government, FRAs, Police Services, Local Authorities, Met Office, Natural Resources Wales, Young Farmers Clubs, Crimestoppers and others. Multi-agency work like this has led to a reduction of 50% in grass fires in Wales over the past two years and a reduction of over 1,000 in the number of attendances made by the Fire & Rescue Services. Their interventions with young people at risk of offending has showed to consistently achieve exceptional levels of behaviour change and minimal reoffending rates, a positive example of how engagement through prevention has a long lasting effect.

Mydrian Harries, Chair of the Dawns Glow taskforce said:

“Deliberate grass fires endanger lives. If the Fire and Rescue Service are tied up tackling a deliberately set grass fire it can result in a delayed response to a life-threatening emergency, such as a house fire or road traffic collision. Deliberately set grass fires also severely damage our countryside and our environment,

pose a threat to wildlife and livestock, and costs the Welsh economy millions of pounds each year.

“We all have a part to play to reduce and eliminate deliberately lit grass fires in Wales. I would appeal to the public to remain vigilant and help us protect our communities and our countryside, by reporting any suspicious activity immediately to the Police.”

This additional funding also allows FRAs to provide free “Safe and Well” visits to check the safety of people’s homes, including the free provision of items such as smoke alarms and flame-retardant bedding. Around 50,000 such checks are carried out each year, focusing on those most at risk of fire such as frail, or elderly people, people with disabilities, smokers and single parents.

[Wheels in motion for Deeside transport schemes](#)

The funding will improve access to and within Deeside Industrial Park by supporting the acquisition of a site for a proposed park and ride service, enhancing the Deeside shuttle service and improving the bus link from Zone 2 to Zone 3.

Flintshire County Council has also been working closely with communities to develop innovative and sustainable community minibus schemes. The Welsh Government will be providing £127,000 to enable the local authority to purchase two Euro 6 standard minibuses for two schemes in rural communities within Flintshire. This will improve links to local transport hubs, connections with mainline transport services and access to employment and education.

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement during a visit to the site of the proposed Deeside Parkway railway station which is a big part of the metro developments in the area. Progress is also being made on plans for the integration of Shotton High/Low stations. Transport for Wales is working in collaboration with Flintshire County Council and Network Rail to develop these schemes.

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates said:

“The Welsh Government’s investment in Deeside is a clear demonstration of our commitment to delivering an integrated transport hub approach which will benefit commuters and businesses in the area and beyond.

"The £1.8 million Welsh Government investment I am announcing today will be a boost to delivering important schemes which will improve access to and within Deeside Industrial Park and the wider Enterprise Zone, linking communities with jobs and services. They also offer a low carbon travel option enabling people to leave their own vehicle at home which will be of benefit to our environment.

"I'm very pleased we are working closely with Flintshire County Council, Network Rail and Transport for Wales in taking forward important work in Deeside which is a key part of the North East Wales metro vision and also supports the local authority's Deeside Plan. This reinforces our commitment to deliver major changes to the transport system in the area through engaging and joint working with our key partners.

"The investment is also a great example of the steps we are taking as a forward-looking government in driving prosperity and building a regionally focussed model of economic development, which are important parts of our new Economic Action Plan."

Cllr Aaron Shotton, Leader of Flintshire County Council, said:

"Today's announcement by the Cabinet Secretary progresses our long held, shared ambition to improve and strengthen public transport links to and within Deeside Industrial Park.

"I particularly welcome the clear commitment to facilitating the creation of a new rail station on Deeside. Ensuring direct rail access for workers locally and across the region has the potential to be a real, 'game changer' for Deeside Industrial Park, a new transport connection is vital to the continuing success of Deeside Industrial Park, enabling it to continue as the premier employment hub within our region."

Alan Edwards, Executive Director of Infrastructure Development at Transport for Wales said:

"Transport for Wales is pleased to be working with our partners at Flintshire County Council and Network Rail to deliver improvements at Deeside Industrial Park and Shotton High/Low Level.

"These projects are key components of the North East Wales Metro, realising the Welsh Government's vision for an efficient, reliable and high quality transport system which will make it easier for people to travel by public transport.

"Our collaborative approach will help us to ensure that improvements truly meet the needs of local people, improving links

between public transport and active travel routes so people can walk or cycle to and from stations, and facilitating more convenient access to stations by other modes of transport.”

Bill Kelly, acting route managing director for Network Rail Wales and Borders, said:

“We will continue to work with the Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and other partners to support schemes which deliver a safe, reliable, affordable and growing railway. Working together helps to keep the people of Wales and Borders moving and supports economic growth.”

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[£3m funding to improve cancer services at Withybush](#)

The funding will enable the hospital’s existing Ward 10 to be modernised to improve safety, clinical quality and provide a better environment for patients and staff. The former Ward 9 area will also be developed to serve as a ward area to allow Ward 10 patients to be cared for while the building works are carried out on the existing Ward 10, which will close for refurbishment.

The local community in Pembrokeshire has played a significant part in helping to raise funds to improve these facilities with over £450,000 being raised to date by the Health Board’s Pembrokeshire Cancer Services Fund and Elly’s Ward 10 Flag Appeal.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“I am very happy to be able to announce the £3.15m funding to complete the improvements to Wards 9 and 10 at Withybush Hospital. This project will transform these services at the hospital to provide a modern fit-for-purpose environment for staff, patients and their families. It was a pleasure to meet with staff and the Neville family today. Elly’s fundraising efforts have been truly inspirational and the new facility will be a tribute to her hard work and dedication.”

Hywel Dda University Health Board Chair, Bernardine Rees OBE, said:

“This is fantastic news for Pembrokeshire. I wish to pay tribute to our staff, fundraisers and partners, for their part in reaching this milestone in the project, particularly Elly’s Ward 10 Flag Appeal. We look forward to moving forward at pace now to make these improvements for our local population.”

Lyn Neville, Elly’s father, said:

“On behalf of Elly’s Ward 10 Flag Appeal we are very pleased that the funding has been given for Ward 10 which will be another step towards providing excellent cancer services for Pembrokeshire. On a personal note after many years of campaigning for Ward 10 I am also very pleased that, as seen with the new Pembrokeshire Haematology & Oncology Day Unit (PHODU), patients and staff will be able to receive and deliver care in excellent new facilities.”

Work is expected to start shortly and be completed by the summer of 2019.

Minister gets BID to boost local economy off the ground with Neath visit

Housing and Regeneration Minister Rebecca Evans will announce the £270,000 funding with a visit to meet local traders in Neath to learn about how their Business Improvement District is making a difference to the town.

Business Improvement Districts are an innovative way of bringing local businesses together by pooling their resources to work as a team. Once the BID is agreed via a ballot, each business contributes financially via a levy, which is then used to fund the agreed activities set out in the Business Plan. These could include marketing, promotion and events, car parking, tackling anti-social behaviour, improving access to towns, or work to make the area more attractive.

Rebecca Evans said:

“The momentum for BIDs is growing across the UK and we’re aware of the real impact they create in towns across Wales, but setting them up takes time, effort and support, which is why we provide Welsh Government funding to get them off the ground.

“Neath Inspired, the Business Improvement District, has developed

effective partnerships with the town and county council on several projects, including supporting events, providing hanging baskets and Christmas lights. Members can access social media and marketing training, and their website advertises some fantastic local festivals.”

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Collectively, the eight established Business Improvement Districts which have already received our support will generate over £5m private investment to support activities in their area over the next five years. These projects are supporting economic development and town centre regeneration, making our high streets more attractive and vibrant places to visit.

“We know that a number of towns across Wales are looking at this sustainable funding model, and I hope we see many more potential BIDs come forward as a result of the funding. We are also keen to encourage themed BIDs such as Tourism and Industrial BIDs alongside traditional town centre BIDs”

Andrew Shufflebotham who is the Neath Inspired BID manager, strongly recommends that other towns consider applying for the new funding. He said:

“Towns benefit from establishing a successful BID, especially smaller independent retailers and businesses, where the BID levy is used effectively to increase footfall into the BID area.”