

New powers to tackle waste crime

Most of the waste industry operates responsibly but there are a small number of operators whose activities either fail to meet the required standards of their permit /exemptions or operate illegally with no permit or exemption in place.

These sites can cause pollution to the environment and endanger human health. They pose a risk of fire, water pollution and cause other issues such as odour, litter and fly infestations which affect surrounding communities.

Following a plenary debate yesterday, the National Assembly for Wales approved The Waste Enforcement (England and Wales) Regulations 2018. These regulations are part of a range of measures aimed at tackling waste crime and poor performing waste sites in Wales.

Natural Resources Wales will now be able to act quicker at problematic waste sites, for example, by locking the gates to stop more waste entering the site in order to prevent a risk of serious pollution or to stop pollution from continuing.

Meanwhile, to reduce the impact of abandoned waste, Natural Resources Wales and Local Authorities will also have the powers widened to take action on occupiers and landowners requiring them to take action to remove waste unlawfully present on a site regardless of whether they were originally deposited lawfully under a permit or exemption. Action needs to be taken to eliminate or reduce any consequences caused by the keeping or disposal of waste on land.

Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn said:

“We have worked with Natural Resources Wales to identify what more can be done to prevent problematic and abandoned waste sites and I have listened to the views of industry”.

“These regulations provide two new powers. The first will enable Natural Resources Wales to restrict access to a waste site to stop more waste coming on the site while the second gives Natural Resources Wales and Local Authorities the ability to serve a notice on an occupier or land owner requiring them to take action to remove wastes unlawfully present.”

“These new powers to take action against illegal waste operators will create a level playing field and help ensure operators who comply with the rules do not lose out to those who undermine and undercut the law-abiding majority.”

Ceri Davies, NRW’s Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting said:

“These new powers will be an invaluable weapon in our continuing fight against waste crime.

“Unscrupulous operators pose a threat to the environment, the health and wellbeing of the communities in which they operate and undermine the Welsh economy.

“But now, thanks to the new regulations, we will be able to deal with them more effectively and reduce the impact of their illegal activity.”

Spring marketing wave for Year of the Sea

- Promoting Wales at the World’s largest travel show
- Luke Evans on screen at Principality Stadium

This week, Visit Wales and partners will be at the world’s leading Travel Trade show – ITB Berlin. The show is attended by 120,000 trade and media visitors and around 26,000 consumers. Visit Wales will host meetings with the German, Swiss and Austrian travel trade, press and media over the first 3 days, and promote Wales to consumers over the final 2 days of the show. The team will be joined on the stand by industry partners Alpine Travel; Destination Conwy; Cadw and Cambria DMC.

Attendance at ITB is one element of a marketing drive in Germany. January to March is a key booking period for German visitors to Wales, and the campaign aims to inspire potential visitors to come to Wales in 2018. Other campaigns with key international influential partners are promoting the Year of the Sea and The Wales Way, including a supplement and competition in National Geographic and working in partnership with Lonely Planet, Flybe, P&O, Secret Escapes and outdoor retailers in Germany, Sportscheck and Globetrotter, on online and printed campaigns.

Also this week, Visit Wales will be taking the Year of Sea message to the Sea Trade Global event in the USA, in order to raise Wales’ profile as a cruise and water sports destination. SeaTrade is the cruise industry’s premier global event and is the only event guaranteed to bring together every aspect of the business, including cruise lines, suppliers, travel agents and partners.

The Visit Wales [campaign film featuring Hollywood actor Luke Evans](#) (external link) is back on air and on video on demand during March in Wales and England. On 1st March the giant Waterloo motion screen showcased Wales’ beautiful landscapes and seascapes in celebration of St David’s Day and

extensive advertising at Waterloo station will continue until 11 March.

A multi-platform campaign to promote Wales in Ireland will also run throughout March on TV and video on-demand; as well as a digital campaign. Visit Wales is also delighted to work in partnership again with Irish Ferries, Stena Line and Flybe to promote direct routes – by sea and by air – to Wales.

Visit Wales' In-Wales campaigns have included press and digital advertising on walesonline, The Western Mail and the Daily Post. Advertorials currently running include [‘The ultimate 50 things to do on the Welsh coast’](#) (external link) and an online [Guide to the Welsh Coast](#) (external link). The campaign film will be shown at the Principality Stadium when Wales face Italy this weekend and again on the 17th March during the France match.

Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“Visit Wales’ Spring marketing activity is part of an ambitious programme of activity promoting our world-class products, activities, events and experiences during Year of the Sea. The Volvo Ocean Race is fast approaching, and this is one of our key events for 2018 – when the world’s eyes will once again be on Wales. This will be an invaluable opportunity for us to promote Wales as a top 21st Century coastal destination and celebrate our coastal Capital and communities.

“Another key initiative for this year is The Wales Way – our new family of three national scenic touring routes which cross the country’s most epic landscapes as a way of showcasing Wales’ fascinating history, coastlines and attractions – and give overseas visitors the confidence and information to explore more of Wales.”

On working with Visit Wales on the campaign film, Luke Evans, said: ““Being able to see Wales’ coastline in this way was both an honour and privilege.

“We passed hundreds of beaches, harbours, inlets and islands – while spotting porpoises and bottlenose dolphins play in the distance – and saw people kayaking, paddleboarding and coasteering. There is just so much to do along Wales’ coast.

“I have such fond memories spending holidays by the coast in Wales, and I try to get back here as often as I can. It offers complete respite from the hustle of everyday life and reminds me how lucky I was to grow up surrounded by such awe-inspiring scenery.”

You can get behind the campaigns by sharing content and tagging #FindYourEpic

and #GwladGwlad.

Seeking positive change for offenders in Wales

The 'Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales 2018-23' sets out how organisations involved will work closely together to provide support to any offender who requires it. It aims to ensure positive outcomes are achieved not only for offenders but also those at risk of offending, as well as their families and our communities.

The document, published today, builds on the success of The Reducing Reoffending Strategy 2014-16 and has been developed jointly by Welsh Government and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service in Wales, on behalf of the All Wales Criminal Justice Board.

Alun Davies said:

"We are committed to reducing offending and reoffending, to help ensure our communities remain safe.

"The previous Strategy was a success due to organisations in Wales, devolved, non-devolved and third sector, committing to working in partnership. I am pleased the new Framework will promote further collaboration but will also focus efforts on early intervention to reduce the number of offenders entering the criminal justice system, as well as working with women and young people at risk."

Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee said:

"This work will bring together vital agencies in Wales, including health, education and housing, to give offenders the network of support services they need to help them reintegrate into society.

"We remain committed to working in collaboration with our partners in Wales to continue to protect the public and give offenders the skills they need to lead more constructive lives on release."

Greater and continued collaboration across Wales will reduce the demand on services provided for those at risk of re-offending at the point of crisis, by moving the focus to early intervention. This will also help manage demand on health and social services for people who are not in the criminal justice system.

It also considers how we can better support the children of offenders from entering the criminal justice system themselves, and how we can provide better support to young people and care leavers to prevent a deterioration of behaviour into crime. It also covers those adult offenders already in the criminal justice system, and how we can better support them to come to terms with their own actions and in doing so, support their rehabilitation and improve their resettlement.

The Framework will be formally launched on 19th April in Cardiff, where key stakeholders will reflect on the progress made to date under the Reducing Reoffending Strategy and be invited to consider how they can support an Integrated Offender Management approach to the Framework's priority groups in future.

[New measures introduced to tackle leasehold concerns in Wales](#)

The Minister announced the package of measures with a visit to The Quays in Barry, and met representatives from Taylor Wimpey and Barratts, who have developments at the site.

For houses and flats which qualify for support under Help to Buy – Wales:

- new criteria will require a developer to present a genuine reason for a house to be marketed as leasehold
- leasehold contracts will have to meet minimum standards, including limiting the starting ground rent to a maximum of 0.1% of the property's sale value
- leasehold agreements will have to run for a minimum of 125 years for flats and 250 years for houses.

The Help to Buy Wales – Conveyancer Accreditation Scheme will ensure that trained and registered conveyancers provide clear advice to all Help to Buy – Wales purchasers. The scheme already has more than 150 trained members across Wales. This is designed to ensure that home buyers are properly advised of the implications of their agreements and other ongoing commitments. As well as Help to Buy – Wales buyers, other home buyers will be able to make use of their services.

The Welsh Government provides smaller home builders with affordable loans through the Wales Property Development Fund and the same Help to Buy – Wales leasehold criteria will now apply to properties built through this scheme.

Rebecca Evans said:

“I am delighted that major home builders such as Taylor Wimpey, Bellway, Barratts, Redrow and Persimmon will no longer offer houses for sale on a leasehold basis, unless absolutely necessary. I look forward to other developers making the same commitment.

“These measures have been developed in co-operation with the industry through our House Builder Engagement Programme including the Home Builders Federation and Federation of Master Builders.

“We have acted swiftly to take targeted and tangible action over concerns about leasehold sales on newbuild homes, and where leasehold is already the tenure, I am setting up a new group to recommend reforms to the system. I intend to put in place a voluntary Code of Practice to underpin these measures, improve standards and to promote best practice.

“This is only the start of my plans to address concerns around leasehold. I have not ruled out the possibility of legislation in the future, which may well be needed to make leasehold, or an alternative to it, fit for the modern housing market.”

Anthony Essien, Chief Executive of LEASE, said:

“We look forward to continuing to work with the Welsh and English governments in supporting leaseholders. Measures like these are clear evidence of their intent to support leasehold homeowners now and in the future. LEASE will do all it can to assist both governments to improve the sector for our leasehold customers”.

Minister urges more LGBT people to adopt or foster children in Wales

To mark LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week (5th-11th March), the Minister said Wales needs more prospective adoptive families to care for the 140 children who are currently waiting for an adoptive family.

Adoptions by same-sex couples have been allowed in England and Wales since 2005, and in 2016-17 one in eight adoptions in Wales were with same-sex couples.

Nearly 6,000 children in Wales were looked-after in 2017. But 140 children are currently waiting to be adopted, while 4,435 children are in foster care.

Of the children waiting to be placed for adoption, 6 in 10 are part of a sibling group, which means there is a particular need for prospective adoptive parents who are prepared to adopt a group of children. Similarly, there are children with additional health and developmental needs who need to be adopted. There is also a need for more local authority foster carers as many foster carers approach retirement (the average age of foster carers is 55).

Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Adopting or fostering a child can be an incredibly rewarding experience. The responsibility for raising a child is considerable, but the reward of seeing a child grow up and achieve their true potential is such an incredible experience.

“1 in 8 adoptions in Wales during 2016-17 were to same-sex couples, but I want to encourage more LGBT people to consider adopting or fostering children.

“It is an exciting time to become a foster carer in Wales. Implementation of the National Fostering Framework will ensure that all foster carers in Wales are properly supported and rewarded to provide the best possible care for the children and young people in their care.

“So if you are willing and able to give your time, commitment and dedication to giving vulnerable children the best start in life, please consider adoption or fostering.”