

# Building relationships to sell Wales to the world

The aim is to build relationships with the travel trade in key markets and show what Wales has to offer as a holiday destination for 2020 and beyond:

- International presence more important than ever
- Announcing 2020 as Year of Outdoors

During the event, Visit Wales will announce that its next themed year from 2020 will be Year of Outdoors – which will reinforce Wales’ strengths of adventure, culture and the outdoors.

Year of Outdoors will follow on from Year of Discovery 2019, when visitors are being invited to discover something new about Wales. 2019 has got off to a great start, with the Sunday Times Magazine choosing Wales as one of the rising stars of 2019. Wales has also been placed 10th in a list by the Rough Guides of the most beautiful places in the world and has been named as the ‘Next Big Thing’ in the Delta Sky magazine which reaches six million travellers and last week TripAdvisor named three Welsh beaches in a list of Top 10 UK Beaches:- Barafundle; Rhossili; Newborough.

In response to industry feedback, there will be a shift to a two-year cycle for themes from 2020. The themed years have been supported by the industry, and are providing a clear focus for collaboration, joint-working and product change across Wales – with a longer cycle allowing more opportunities for bigger projects and ideas.

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“Our research shows that Wales is famous for its scenery and nature – and the theme will build on this strength by showcasing our outstanding natural landscapes.

Wales is now well-known for its world-leading adventure, and the Year of Outdoors will provide a platform for showing that our stunning, vibrant landscape is alive with activities and things to do. We know that taking part in outdoor activities has significant health benefits and we’ll be encouraging the people of Wales and our visitors to take part in activities to enrich their wellbeing.

It isn’t just about wide empty spaces either – our landscape is shaped by our people and communities, and celebrating the relationship between culture, heritage, language and place will be a major part of the year.”

New developments which have been funded through the EU programme, Tourism Attractor Destination scheme, will open during 2020 including, the Dŵr Cymru's Llys y Frân site in West Wales. Llys y Frân will become a must visit park offering land and water-themed outdoor activities and an education recreational site.

In addition to this, Porthcawl and Saundersfoot will enhance their existing experiences with the investment of a maritime and coastal centre providing more things for the visitors to do and see. And Pendine will see the opening of the new Speeds of Sand Visitor Centre and Eco accommodation.

Year of Outdoors will celebrate Wales' outstanding natural landscapes which are alive with world-leading adventure and a distinctive, contemporary culture. The 870 mile Coastal Path; three National Parks; 600 Castles; Outstanding Areas of Natural Beauty and Dark Sky Reserves – are all set to be enjoyed in 2020.

Presence at ITB Berlin follows a successful visit to Vakantiebeurs in Utrecht during January, as well as a successful UK Inbound Convention. Visit Wales' work with international partners and attendance at key events plays an important part in building relationships and showcasing what Wales has to offer.

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism Lord Elis-Thomas, continued:

“Never has it been more important to bridge Wales culturally, digitally and physically to the world. The travel trade is extremely important in our bid to grow tourism to Wales, especially our share of international visits – building relationships with tour operators for Wales is a key focus for us.

As well as growing the volume and value of visitors to Wales, the travel trade can help us with addressing particular challenges – such as spreading visitors throughout the year, all-across Wales and increasing the time visitors stay in Wales – resulting in higher spend.”

Research shows the long term benefits of Visit Wales' work with the Travel Trade. Figures show that the value of business in 2017 delivered by the top 100 international operators influenced by Visit Wales was up 24% at £11.2 million (from £9 million in 2016). The total value of business to Wales delivered by this group in 2017 was £18.1 million.

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# £2m to improve mental health and well-being at Welsh universities

The funding has been provided to improve support for students and staff in higher education providers. Institution-wide initiatives such as training staff in well-being and mental health awareness and promoting health information on campus should benefit from the funding, in addition to safeguarding students at risk of harm.

The funding will be allocated through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

The Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, said:

“For most students, university is a joyous experience where new friendships are forged, careers paths are chosen and lessons are learned, both inside and outside the lecture theatre. But it is also a time of transition which can bring its own challenges, such as living away from home for the first time, managing finances or coping with exam pressures.

“This funding will boost the care and support universities provide students, by intervening or offering support if or when they need it, helping them achieve their goals unhindered and getting the most from their university experience.”

Gwyneth Sweatman, NUS Wales President, said:

“Student mental health has been a priority for me as NUS Wales President, and for our member students’ unions across Wales, this year. I very much welcome the Welsh Government’s £2 million investment in improving student mental health and well-being.

“I hope that universities will be able to use this funding to improve the support and services they offer students, such as bilingual and online support. It’s also important that students are able to access support and services across different campuses.

“I am keen to see more frontline academic and non-academic staff given training on mental health, and local public services working in closer partnership with universities.

“Wales is the perfect size for universities, students, and the mental health sector to work together to make sure that every student in Wales, no matter where or how they study, is able to access the services and support they need to stay in education.

“I am looking forward to continuing to work on this important agenda alongside the Welsh Government, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), universities, and our member students’ unions.”

Dr David Blaney, Chief Executive of the HEFCW, said:

“In the same way schools can help pupils, and employers provide services for staff, it is only right that universities are well-equipped to support their large and diverse student populations. This is part of a suite of targeted support from HEFCW, recognising the unique position universities play in the daily lives of students. From early personal and academic interventions to support following any challenges they might have faced, this funding can make a real difference to lives.”

Amanda Wilkinson, Director of Universities Wales, said:

“Universities Wales are very impressed by all the excellent work being done by student support and welfare services across Welsh Universities, particularly in a challenging environment where the proportion of people disclosing mental health issues has significantly increased across the UK.

“This year universities in Wales have been working with HEFCW to develop a Wales-wide approach to promoting good mental health and well-being. Today’s announcement is very welcome and will help Welsh universities tackle the complex challenges in these areas.”

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## **Minister launches new ePassport gates at Cardiff Airport**

The latest-technology e-gates have been funded by the Welsh Government. They will permit travellers with biometric passports to bypass manual inspections, allowing for a quicker entry into Wales.

Although Cardiff International Airport Ltd (CIAL) was one of the first airports in the UK to introduce e-gate technology, the three original gates were removed by the UK Border Force in 2017 as the initial technology was superseded.

UK Government allows ePassport gates to be fitted free of charge by UK Border

Force only at airports with more than two million in-bound passengers a year, such as Bristol and Heathrow, so UK Border Force required a substantial capital payment from Cardiff Airport to install replacement e-gates.

The Welsh Government has provided funding of up to £1m for the latest technology ePassport gates to be installed at Cardiff Airport.

Visiting Cardiff Airport to launch the new e-gates, Economy and Transport Minister, Ken Skates said:

“Passenger numbers at Cardiff Airport have increased by 60% since Welsh Government purchased the airport in 2013. The number of destinations has also increased significantly with over 50 direct route destinations and links to over 900 connecting destinations being offered, including a scheduled daily long-haul Qatar Airways flight to its Doha hub.

“The new ePassport gates are an important part of our No Deal Brexit planning. They will help ensure queuing in immigration is minimised should the UK Government not secure a seamless departure from the EU.

“This smoother entry to Wales, and subsequently the UK, enhances the customer experience, whilst meeting all UK Border Force requirements.

“We stepped in to grant fund the e-gates when the UK Government refused to do so. Westminster’s decision not to fund e-gates in Cardiff whilst funding them in competing regional airports in England needs to be seen alongside its decisions to block our attempt to establish a network of Public Service Obligation air routes to cities across the UK and not to support devolution of Air Passenger Duty (APD) to Wales based on flawed economic analysis.

“We want the UK Government to stop seeing devolution of APD to Wales as a barrier and more as an opportunity, as they have done in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Devolution of APD would be a win for Cardiff Airport, for Wales and for the UK. Devolution will allow us to focus on our key Economic Action Plan goal of better connecting Wales with the rest of the UK and the wider world. In fact, my colleague Rebecca Evans, the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd, will stand before the Welsh Affairs Committee tomorrow (Thursday 7th), to give oral evidence in favour of our case for devolution of APD to Wales.

“We are also looking to reverse the decision of the UK Government to prevent us from creating a network of domestic air routes, aimed at better connecting Cardiff to other parts of the UK.

“The UK Government has for too long distorted the market in favour of larger airports. Future devolution of APD would go some of the way to levelling the playing field, which has been skewed in favour of other large airports in England.”

Cardiff Airport chief executive officer Deb Barber said: “Cardiff Airport has been on a continuous journey of transformation over the past few years, during which time we have seen incumbent airlines such as KLM, TUI and Ryanair adding capacity, welcomed new airlines and seen new routes added to

our route network – including a regular flight to Doha with Qatar Airways which creates vital links between Wales and the Middle East.

“Significant developments such as these, plus the extensive improvements we have made to the terminal and infrastructure, reflect our long-term vision to deliver a successful airport for Wales and a key gateway to the UK.

“It is essential therefore, that we have modern and efficient technology in place at the UK Border to create a safe, secure and seamless entry point into Wales for international passengers that is on a par with other larger regional airports in the UK. The unveiling today of our new ePassport gates is a very positive step forward in our long term strategy for growth and we are grateful to the Welsh Government for their support.”

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## [Scheme to help young people across south west Wales gets EU funding boost](#)

The Cynnydd project, which is led by Pembrokeshire County Council, and also operates across Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, has been awarded an additional £11.5 million from the European Social Fund.

The project works with Careers Wales, FE colleges and private and third sector companies, to help young people into work via training and work experience opportunities, while providing one-to-one mentoring, coaching and counselling to improve life skills and self-esteem.

Jeremy Miles today announced that Cynnydd, which was launched in September 2016, will now run until December 2022 thanks to the extra EU funding. This means a further 3,200 young people will benefit from support and opportunities created by the project over the next three years, and 7,500 in total.

Jeremy Miles said:

“We’ve already seen how successful Cynnydd has been in working with young people in the area to remove some of the barriers to them completing education and training programmes which can contribute to the reduction in young people in Wales who are NEET. This is so important, not only to the local economy, but to the sustainability of our communities, especially in parts of rural Wales.

“Wales is still benefiting substantially from EU funds and I’m delighted this investment will be supporting the futures of so many young people in South West Wales.”

Cllr David Lloyd, Pembrokeshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Education, said he was delighted to welcome the additional funding:

"We're passionate about continuing our hard work towards the elimination of NEETS. No-one should leave school with nowhere to go."

In the last decade, EU-funded projects have created 45,000 new jobs and 13,000 new businesses across Wales, while also helping more than 85,000 people into employment.

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## Welsh Government's Wales for Africa Grant now open

There is approximately £150,000 available in this round. We are seeking applications looking to deliver mutually beneficial projects between Africa and Wales that support the themes of Health, Lifelong Education, Sustainable Livelihoods and Environment and Climate Change.

Following on from the success of 2018/2019 round which saw 29 projects being funded, Welsh Government would like to encourage applications for the 2019/2020 round. This round of funding is for the main grants between £5000 – £15,000 and will be launched on the 04 March, with a closing date of April 28.

There will also be an opportunity to apply for small grants between £500 – £5,000 in the autumn.

Announcing this year's funding, the Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language Eluned Morgan said:

"Our Wales for Africa grants programme transforms the lives of tens of thousands of people from across this beautiful and diverse continent every year. I encourage community groups and organisations to bid for a share of this funding and work with us.

I'm proud that through projects like these we can continue to build relationships between Wales and Africa, not only improving lives in Africa, but also bringing benefits to Wales by allowing volunteers to exchange skills and have life-changing experiences."

Ruth Marks, WCVA Chief Executive, said:

“WCVA is delighted to be working with Welsh Government to deliver the Wales for Africa Scheme.

“It makes a real difference to people’s lives by granting funding to projects that improve health, education and our environment.

“In the 2018/19 round awards were made to a wide range of innovative projects that are making a positive difference in Africa and Wales. We look forward to receiving further applications for 2019/20.”

[More information on the Welsh Government Wales for Africa grant scheme](#) on the WCVA website.