

Opportunity opens for farmers to access grant to improve the performance of their holdings

The Farm Business Grant (FBG) helps farmers make their businesses more efficient, resilient and environmentally friendly by providing a contribution towards capital investments in items of equipment and machinery.

The third application window for the FBG opens on 29 January and will remain open until midnight on 16th March. It builds on the success of the first two windows which has seen over 850 applications, requesting a total of £5.7m of grant support.

Administration of the FBG will be transferred to Rural Payments Wales (RPW) for the third and subsequent windows. Applications and claims for the FBG will now be submitted through RPW Online.

The third window introduces new flexibility to the grant, allowing farmers to submit more than one application in a scheme year within the £3,000 to £12,000 grant limit. There are also minor changes to some of the eligible items – an updated full list of items is available on the [Farm Business Grant](#) page on the Welsh Government's website.

Farmers will still be required to attend one of the Farming for the Future events, which will be held across Wales between 17 January and 1 February. Farmers who have already attended one of these events will not be required to attend again, unless they wish to do so.

The FBG is an important element of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, and is a key commitment in the Programme for Government: Taking Wales Forward.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“Our farm Business Grant provides vital funding to help farmers invest in their business and improve the economic and environmental performance of their holdings. This funding is more important than ever as we prepare for an uncertain future as we leave the EU.

“We have been able to make some changes to the third window, to improve and provide flexibility to how the grant will work, by listening to feedback about the grant. I encourage farmers across Wales to attend a ‘Farming for the Future’ roadshow and find out more information on the wide range of advice and support available to them.”

For information on dates and locations for the roadshows and to reserve a

place, visit [Farming Connect](#) or call the Farming Connect Service Centre on 08456 000 813.

[TUI to create 175 jobs in Swansea with Welsh Government assistance](#)

Their customer services centre has grown from 48 people to over 280 over the last three years. The support will both secure existing customer services jobs within the UK, and support further growth of the company's successful operations here in Wales.

As the world's leading tourism business, TUI understands it has a real opportunity to shape the future of sustainable tourism.

In 2015 TUI launched their ambitious 'Better Holidays, Better World' strategy. The strategy focuses on reducing the environmental impact of holidays, creating positive change for people and communities and pioneering sustainable tourism.

By 2020 TUI aims to be the most carbon-efficient airline in Europe as well as delivering 10 million 'greener and fairer holidays' enabling more local people to share in the benefits of tourism.

The company has begun recruitment, seeking advisers to help customers in their choice of flights, holidays, hotels and increasingly, cruises. TUI's commitment to training and development means TUI staff will be supported in an exciting and rewarding career, giving them real opportunities to progress.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"I am delighted that with Welsh Government support TUI is creating 175 new jobs in Wales. The company's expansion in Swansea is testament to our reputation for delivering excellence in customer service.

"Our growing and vibrant customer service sector now employs in excess of 30,000 people in over 200 centres across Wales.

"Also, TUI's commitment to sustainability reflects our commitments in our new Economic Action Plan, which has the principles of growth, fair work and decarbonisation at its heart."

Helen Caron, Director for Distribution and Cruise for TUI UK & Ireland said:

“We opened our Alexandra House Office in Swansea which is home to our contact centre team in 2015 and it’s continued to go from strength to strength. We are really grateful for the support of the Welsh Government as we look to further grow our office in Swansea. This came out of extensive research, consideration and discussion about the future of our business and ensuring we can best serve and communicate with our customers as we move forwards.”

[Alun Davies in town to learn from new Neath Valleys hub](#)

Since the taskforce was set up, it has worked closely with people living and working in the Valleys to find out what they want for their communities and what they believe the opportunities and challenges are.

Our Valleys Our Future, the recently published plan setting out the actions to deliver the priorities of the Taskforce, identified the need for seven strategic hubs across the Valleys. It is hoped the hubs will become areas of focused public investment and will attract private sector capital and investment, creating jobs and opportunities for the local area.

The Cabinet Secretary has been visiting each of the seven strategic hubs to discuss with local stakeholders the work of the taskforce, as well as the shape of the sites and how local authorities, businesses and other key stakeholders can play a role in lifting the prosperity of the area.

Speaking following the meeting at Neath’s Civic Centre, Alun Davies said,

“This was an excellent opportunity for all those responsible for delivering our priorities to get together and share valuable knowledge and ideas. I am confident that working in this way can help us identify the priority projects which will form the first part of the new stage of Neath’s ongoing economic regeneration.

“It is vital we continue to engage with communities, like our partners in Neath, to make sure each of these hubs meets the unique needs of the local area.”

As well as Neath, hubs will be created in Merthyr, Caerphilly, Pontypridd, Ebbw Vale, Cwmbran and northern Bridgend.

Between now and April, the taskforce will be working with local authorities and stakeholders to identify those projects which can be funded and delivered in the first phase of development in each of the strategic hub sites by

2021.

The taskforce aims to ensure that businesses, employers and entrepreneurs are aware of the different types of support available to help them to grow and to boost the local economy.

The Cabinet Secretary said he wanted to close the employability gap between the Valleys and the rest of Wales by helping some 7,000 people who are unemployed or economically inactive into work.

Major conference to support Welsh companies to export

The Wales Export Conference 2018, which is being held at Cardiff City Stadium next month, will seek to provide new and existing exporting companies with the information, advice, guidance and support they need to increase their overseas trade.

As part of the conference, successful exporting companies such as Zip Clip will share their experiences of developing overseas trade, and talk about the support they accessed from the Welsh Government that has helped drive up their profit margins.

In Zip-Clip's case, the company, which employs 18 full time staff from its base in Powys, took the decision to fight the recession by targeting the high specification suspension systems that they produce for the electrical, mechanical, heating and ventilation industries, at overseas export markets.

Before 2008, Zip-Clip's business was solely reliant on the UK market, but the economic downturn resulted in a 30% reduction in its annual turnover.

The company responded to this dip by seeking to expand its client-base into new overseas markets, including Germany, South Africa and Australia.

Its drive was assisted by the Welsh Government's export support programmes, including the International Trade Opportunities programme which assisted Zip Clip in identifying potential business partners, and the Overseas Business Development Visits programme, which enabled the company to visit their target markets and attend key trade shows.

Indeed an important trip to Qatar which was supported by the Welsh Government, opened the door to a whole new range of opportunities for Zip-Clip.

Overall the company's export drive resulted in a 40% increase in its overseas trade in no fewer than 23 countries.

Steve Goldsworthy, managing director of Zip-Clip said:

“Like many companies across the UK, the recession had a detrimental impact on our business as many of our clients were forced to cut back.

Thankfully, the Welsh Government’s support programmes were available. Their support has changed the dynamic of our business, providing assistance for our expansion overseas. It has been invaluable.”

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Companies such as Zip-Clip are proof that exporting really does have the potential to transform a business and take it to the next level, and increasing Welsh exports is more important than ever as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

The Welsh Government is keen to work with companies looking to build up the exports arm of their operations and offer them the right support for wherever they may be in their business development.

As part of this work we will be holding a major exporting conference in Cardiff next month. I would encourage companies from all sectors and from across Wales to come along to find out more about how the Welsh Government can help them to develop this element of their business, and to speak to companies like Zip-Clip who have experienced the benefits first hand.”

“Different system of care needed to deliver for the people of Wales” says expert panel

The new report published today makes a number of recommendations on how change to the system can be supported and explains, in practical terms, how to meet the challenges facing health and social care services in the years ahead.

The panel’s report includes a renewed vision for health and social care in Wales, with action guided by four mutually supportive goals:

- improving the health and wellbeing of the population
- improving the experience and quality of care for individuals and their families
- improving the wellbeing and engagement of the workforce
- increasing the value achieved from the resources that are invested in services.

The report, recommends bold new models of care with services organised around the individual and their family, as close to home as possible. It also emphasises that services need to be preventative, easy to access and of high quality. They also need to be seamless, and delivered without artificial barriers.

Dr Ruth Hussey, Chair of the review panel said:

“The scale of the challenge ahead should not be underestimated. It is clear that change is needed and even clearer that this should happen quickly.

“We have detected an appetite for change and a desire to ‘get on with it’. A strong commitment to transform not just how much is done, but what and how it is delivered is needed.

“We hope that this report will be a catalyst for the action that is needed, and help to guide the future of health and social care in Wales.”

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“This report, a key commitment in Taking Wales Forward and Prosperity for All, sets out some clear recommendations about what needs to change and how to make those changes happen for the benefit of people in Wales.

“I’m pleased that report suggests that what we are already doing in Wales with regard to the integration of health social care services is right, but we will need to carefully consider the findings of this review to see how this can be improved in the future.

“The new long term plan for health and social care will be published in the spring, taking account of recommendations in this report. I’d like to thank Dr Hussey, her team and everyone who has contributed. I welcome the continued cross party support for the review.

“I believe that what we have seen today from the panel will set firm foundations for the future of health and social care in Wales for many years to come.”