

## First Minister's New Year message

"As the year draws to a close, it is a good time to reflect on the events of the last 12 months and look ahead to the year to come.

"2018 offers us new opportunities and a chance to build on the progress we have made this year, and over the past 2 decades of devolution.

"There are certainly challenges and uncertainty ahead, but many reasons for optimism too. I look forward to my ministerial team and I driving forward our ambitious plans for Wales – focusing on growing the economy, creating jobs, supporting our public services and improving the day-to-day lives of the people of Wales.

"I want 2018 to be a year that unites us – a year in which we celebrate all we have in common and work together to build the fair, open, prosperous nation that we all want Wales to become.

"I wish you and your families a very happy, healthy and peaceful New Year."

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## Extra funding to help Mudiad Meithrin contribute to 1 million Welsh speakers

The organisation will receive £3.031m per year for the next two financial years. This comprises £2.031m of annual funding and an extra £1m per year as part of the budget deal between Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Government.

The funding follows Mudiad Meithrin's paper 'Meithrin Miliwn' in summer 2017, outlining the steps needed to enable the Mudiad to respond positively to the ambition of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The extra funding will allow Mudiad Meithrin to:

- offer additional support to establish new settings in priority locations across Wales where there is lack of Welsh medium provision.
- develop alternative models for new cylchoedd meithrin.
- strengthen Mudiad Meithrin's regional and national structures to support its increased membership.

Announcing the funding, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan said:

“Reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050 is a very ambitious target. Education and in particular early years education is key to this and this is why we have set targets to expand Welsh-medium provision by 40 Welsh-medium nursery groups by 2021 and by 150 Welsh medium nursery groups over the next decade.

“As the Welsh-medium early years and childcare specialist, Mudiad Meithrin has a vital role to play so I am delighted to announce this extra funding to help them contribute to this target.”

Dr Gwenllian Lansdown Davies, Mudiad Meithrin Chief Executive added:

“The additional investment by Welsh Government will enable Mudiad Meithrin to open more Welsh-medium childcare provision – a key element of the government’s language strategy, ‘Cymraeg 2050’. The early years is integral to the success of that strategy and this investment highlights its importance.”

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## **Almost £5m Welsh Government investment in regeneration projects brings Christmas cheer to the Tramshed**

The capital investment will go to projects across Wales, identified by local authorities, which aim to maximise their economic impact and help to support regeneration in Welsh towns. The projects have strong links to wider Welsh Government objectives, including supporting people into employment, training and skills development, health and well-being and tackling poverty.

Minister Rebecca Evans AM said:

“These projects will help towards work to regenerate towns across Wales, and will be used for a range of projects, from clearing derelict buildings in Rhyl for redevelopment, to refurbish old buildings to create housing in Swansea.

“The Tramshed is a great example of how Welsh Government support can help to kickstart regeneration. This new investment will help local councils to regenerate areas, in line with our wider priorities, such as supporting people into employment or training, health and well-being, and tackling poverty.

“Communities across Wales will feel the benefit of this money, and

I look forward to seeing how these projects make a difference to people's lives."

Some of the projects include:

- £1m towards the restoration of the Grade II\* listed Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery and the construction of adjacent contemporary new building which will house the new Brecon library, rooms for education, community and conference use and retail areas for local produce
- Swansea Council will receive £300,000 to support the refurbishment of three properties, to create 10 housing units in Swansea city centre, and to create commercial floor space in three currently vacant premises
- In Shotton, £162,000 of investment will be used to help purchase and redevelop the former Tata Steel Sports and Social Club. RegenA partnership led by Care and Repair North Wales will see the complex used to provide training, health support, sports and other services, focused on the well-being of local people
- £80,000 to help fund the conversion of an old college building in Barry to create the BSC Squared Business Centre, a dedicated business start up and incubator space to support micro businesses and SMEs looking to establish themselves and grow locally.

The Tramshed received £500,000 of support through the Welsh Government's £20m Town Centre Loans Fund, which is helping to bring underused sites in town centres back to life. Once loans are repaid, the money is used again to fund new loans.

250 jobs were created or safeguarded as part of the Tramshed project, which has created 18,500 square feet of conference space as well as space for businesses to develop and a place for community events to take place. The area has seen a significant increase in footfall as a result of the project.

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## [Health Secretary delivers Christmas message to health and care service in Wales](#)

Vaughan Gething said:

"As Christmas approaches, I want to say a heartfelt thanks to everyone working tirelessly – day in day out – to deliver health and care services across Wales.

"Staff working in our NHS are the beating heart of a service that

is the envy of the world. Without them it simply won't function.

"Over the last twelve months I've seen and heard first hand, so many, examples of NHS workers going the extra mile and performing the extra ordinary for those in the greatest need.

"Only recently in the heavy snow, I heard about staff battling terrible conditions to get into work to deliver high quality care for the people who need it most.

"It is stories like these, stories about commitment and compassion which make me proud of our NHS and what it achieves across Wales 24/7.

"As people enjoy a peaceful Christmas, I know many will be working to save lives, treat the ill and injured and provide care. They have our admiration and our thanks.

"I hope everyone working tirelessly for our NHS and in our care services has an excellent Christmas. I wish them the best for the year ahead. *Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.*"

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## Tackling food waste on the agenda during festive visit

Every year, the UK bins poultry costing around £660m. The Minister visited the frozen food specialist to hear more about their plans to tackle waste in the supply chain. She also took the opportunity to endorse [Love Food Hate Waste](#)'s seasonal poultry campaign.

This year's 'Give a Cluck' campaign aims to increase awareness amongst 25 – 34 year olds of how much poultry is wasted every year and offers hints and tips on preserving food to decrease the amount unnecessarily ending up in the bin.

Wales has already made impressive progress on reducing household food waste. In 2015 household food waste levels were lower than the rest of the UK by around 9% per person. In addition, household food waste reduced by 12% per person between 2009 and 2015. This equates to around £70 million of food not being wasted. 99% of households in Wales are now covered by separate local authority food waste collections.

The Minister said:

"Family get-togethers over food are obviously a massive part of

Christmas but we need to help people understand more about correct freezing and storage to reduce food waste.

“I learnt today Iceland sells over 20,000 frozen turkeys through its Welsh stores at Christmas. However, every year in the UK, 86 million birds are thrown away uneaten and the value of thrown away poultry in Wales costs us £31m every year.”

Iceland is, like the Welsh Government, a signatory of [Courtauld 2025](#), an ambitious voluntary agreement that brings together organisations across the food system to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable. The company sends no unsold food to landfill; instead putting it to good use in the community, converting it to animal feed; or sending it to Anaerobic Digestion.

Earlier this year, the Welsh Government confirmed its plans to consult on introducing a non-statutory target for Wales to [halve food waste by 2025](#).

The Minister said:

“We are proud Wales is right up there among the world’s best recycling nations. We know though more needs to be done, in particular on tackling food waste.

“We have made great progress but if we are going to realise our ambition to halve food waste by 2025 we need householders and businesses to be fully on board. I was pleased to hear about Iceland’s work in this area and I would encourage other companies across Wales to sign up to the Courtauld agreement.”