

# More homebuyers to benefit from changes to land transaction tax

The starting threshold for land transaction tax will increase from £150,000 to £180,000 for the residential main rates when the tax is devolved in April 2018.

The increase in the starting threshold will help everyone in Wales who is seeking to buy a home in this part of the market, including first-time buyers.

The new threshold is £55,000 higher than the starting threshold for stamp duty land tax in England and will reduce the tax burden for around 24,000 homebuyers – including first-time buyers – in Wales.

Professor Drakeford's decision to change the starting threshold for land transaction tax follows the UK Government's introduction of a stamp duty land tax relief for first-time buyers in the Autumn Budget last month.

The Finance Secretary said he has given careful consideration to the right approach for both the Welsh property market and for Welsh homebuyers. His focus is to help everyone looking to buy a home in this part of the market by increasing the progressivity of the tax overall.

The new land transaction tax rates for residential property mean:

- no one will pay more tax under the changes announced today compared to the land transaction tax rates which were announced at the time of the draft Budget in October
- the average homebuyer in Wales will pay more than £500 less tax than under stamp duty land tax
- around 90% of homebuyers in Wales will either pay the same or less tax than under stamp duty land tax
- around 80% of first-time buyers in Wales will pay no tax – the same proportion which will benefit from the Chancellor's first-time buyer stamp duty land tax relief in England.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Under the changes to the main rates of land transaction tax, which I am announcing today, around 65% of these house sales will not be liable for tax.

“The changes will benefit more buyers than the Chancellor's targeted relief for first-time buyers – more than half of buyers will benefit from a reduction in tax relative to stamp duty land tax.

“This is consistent with my aim to make tax fairer and contribute

to a more equal Wales. These improved rates will help meet Wales' needs and priorities and will make a real difference to people's lives."

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## [Education Secretary outlines proposed implementation plan for new additional learning needs system in Wales](#)

The details have been published ahead of the final debate on the Bill in Plenary tomorrow [12/12/2017].

The consultation, which was conducted between 27 February and 9 June 2017, sought views about how the Bill should be implemented if it receives Royal Assent and what transition arrangements should be put in place to help local authorities and education providers facilitate the introduction of the new system. It received a total of 89 replies, some of which were collaborative responses representing the views of multiple individuals and organisations.

Additionally, between 28 February and 9 March 2017, the Welsh Government held eight stakeholder events across Wales to engage with professionals and the public to raise awareness of the proposed additional learning needs system. These events included workshops on the consultation and its implementation options and were attended by a total of 629 participants.

The responses from both the consultation and engagement events have been used to inform the development of the proposed approach to implement the new system.

In publishing the consultation summary and outlining her proposals for how the new system will work in Wales, Kirsty Williams said:

"This Bill is at the heart of our programme to transform the education and support for young people with additional learning needs. We have engaged heavily with partners, stakeholders and – crucially – children, young people and their families to ensure their views are captured and reflected in our proposals for how it will be delivered if passed by the Assembly tomorrow."

The key elements of the approach we will take include:

- A mandatory phased approach to the introduction of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), which will provide tailored support to the learning needs of each individual and replace current statutory and non-

statutory plans including the statement of Special Educational Needs; with those with the most severe learning needs prioritised.

- The new system should commence in September 2020. This will allow sufficient time for the range of supporting measures, subordinate legislation and the Additional Learning Needs Code (which will sit alongside the Bill), to be developed and put into place, and a comprehensive programme of multi-agency training and development, to aid a smooth transition to the new system.
- The implementation of the new system should last three years, with completion expected by the end of 2023.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“We will be investing £20m to support the implementation of the new additional learning needs (ALN) system. Following analysis of the consultation responses, we have restructured our funding commitments to better align them with the needs of the sector.

“We will focus more resources on implementation training, planning and strategic support, through increased grant funding to the ALN transformation leads. These key posts will support services to put in place detailed implementation planning arrangements at a regional level, across the further education sector and roll-out training to all those who will support learners with additional learning needs to deliver the new system.

“We will of course continue to work with partners on the implementation approach of this new system if the Bill passes tomorrow to ensure the new system provides the best level of support for our most vulnerable learners.”

The [report and proposed approach to implementation](#) are published on the Welsh Government’s website.

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## **Welsh Government approves funding for Cardigan Integrated Care Centre**

Formal agreement for the Cardigan Integrated Care Centre has now been given with work on the old Bathhouse site due to start in spring 2018. The centre is expected to open in late 2019 due to £23.8m funding from the Welsh Government.

As well as providing a modern, fit for purpose healthcare service for the local population including a GP practice, dental service and pharmacy, the

new centre will bring care closer to home and in the community.

A wide range of improved integrated health and social care services will be delivered by Hywel Dda UHB, the third sector, local authority and partner organisations.

The local community will also benefit from;

- Mental health and learning disabilities services
- Minor Injury Service with telemedicine links to the Emergency Department
- potential for an increase in 7 day service provision
- increased diagnostic services including pre-operative assessments
- improved outcomes for patients.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“I’m pleased to announce the funding for the Cardigan Integrated Care Centre which will make a significant difference to the care people in the Cardigan area receive, closer to home in their communities.

“It’s imperative that people are treated in modern centres and this project will facilitate an improved, integrated approach to healthcare in the community, all under one roof.”

Hywel Dda County Director for Ceredigion, Peter Skitt said:

“We acknowledge that the planning process has at times been quite protracted and drawn-out but it’s been absolutely critical for the project in terms of making sure that we’ve got it right first time, and I would like to reiterate our thanks to stakeholders – particularly local residents, patients and our staff – for their patience and understanding.”

Chair of Hywel Dda University Health Board, Bernardine Rees OBE, added:

“We recognise that the population of Cardigan has been very patient and this facility has definitely had its challenges, but the health board are now very pleased to be moving forward with this important development.

“I would like to pay tribute to everyone involved for their ongoing commitment and hard work to ensure the new centre meets our aim of providing safe, sustainable, integrated care for our local population.

“We are grateful to Welsh Government for providing formal agreement to the Cardigan ICC project. This represents the culmination of several years’ worth of work to ensure that we are able to care for

patients in Cardigan in a safe, sustainable and integrated way by providing a facility that is fit for purpose both now and for the future”.

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## [A celebration of our Epic Shores – Year of the Sea 2018 gets underway](#)

Next year will be the opportunity for Wales to make its mark as the UK’s top 21st century coastal destination.

- building on Wales’ strengths as a leading 21st Century coastal destination
- Olympian Hannah Mills announced as Ambassador for Year of the Sea

Following the success of Year of Adventure 2016 and Year of Legends 2017, Year of the Sea is a continuation of Visit Wales’ work to reinforce positive perceptions and challenge any outdated perceptions of Wales by promoting our world-class products, activities, events and experiences.

The themed years were developed to build on stand-out strengths of Wales’ tourism offer and to capitalise on major events opportunities happening that year.

The Tourism Minister, said:

“Following a focus on adventure and legends, we now have an opportunity to celebrate Wales’ coastline and build on Wales’ strengths as a coastal destination. As we launch this new initiative it’s fantastic news that the Rough Guides have named Wales as one of the top 5 places in the world to visit – testimony that we’re making a name for ourselves in this global market place.

“The themed year gives us a chance to celebrate our unique 870-mile Wales Coast Path, our 230 beaches and 50 islands and the fact that we have more Blue Flag beaches per mile than anywhere else in Britain.

“Year of the Sea will be about more than our coastline. We’ll be using the year as an opportunity to focus on Wales’ shores, and this will include not only our seas, but everything from our lakes, to our rivers, and journeys to the sea and will be a celebration of our coastal communities and culture. We’ll be using the Wales Way,

an ambitious new family of three national scenic touring routes that cross the country's most epic landscapes as a way of showcasing Wales' fascinating history, coastlines and attractions."

"This year, leading up to 2018 has been a time for planning and developing and establishing new partnerships. Sustainability and Marine Environment are high on the agenda as is safety on the sea and ensuring that everyone enjoys the beaches, but in a responsible manner."

The Welsh Government has recently launched a consultation on the Welsh National Marine Plan with a commitment to secure a joined up and sustainable approach to the planning and management of our coast and sea and to help achieve our vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas.

The guiding objectives in developing the Welsh National Marine Plan are we will achieve more by working together with stakeholders to preserve our coastal communities, awe inspiring coast, seas and wildlife whilst developing our maritime economy.

Hannah Mills, MBE, double Olympic medalist and Cardiff-born sailor will today be announced as Ambassador for Year of the Sea 2018, Hannah said:

"I am so excited to be involved in Year of the Sea. Growing up in Cardiff and exploring the coasts and seas around Wales from Anglesey to Mumbles, the Welsh coastline has had a huge impact on shaping my earlier career. Those memories and beautiful experiences sailing in such a stunning place remain very firmly in my mind. My family are still based in Cardiff, and for me it will always be home. When I won gold in Rio, the warmth and support I got from back home was phenomenal."

The themed years also make a difference to Wales' economy. The first of Wales' themed years in 2016 generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – an 18% increase on 2015. This shows visitors were definitely influenced by Visit Wales marketing before taking a trip to Wales.

During 2017 – the Year of Legends – figures from the Tourism Barometer survey are looking positive with 42% of respondents reporting more visitors than last year. There were also record breaking visitor numbers to Cadw and National Museum Wales sites over the Summer.

The Welsh Government is investing significantly in projects which will help promote Year of the Sea in Wales. More than £2 million had been shared by

for a total of 38 projects across Wales under the Tourism Product Innovation Fund and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund which enables the private and public sectors to develop innovative projects and support the themed years.

To coincide with the Launch of the Year of the Sea, St Davids based TYF Adventure will launch a new product for 2018 –SUPKids programme which is designed to teach children (5-12 years old) Stand Up Paddle boarding, water safety & environmental education and was funded through Visit Wales.

Significant investment will also be made in Coastal locations through Welsh Government EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination scheme.

Colwyn Bay Waterfront project will open in 2018 an investment of £3.9million; work on the £5.5 million Porthcawl Maritime Centre is also underway, and £6.6million investment for a new terminus building for the Welsh Highland Railway in Caernarfon and extension to cultural facilities at Galeri as part of the wider programme to regenerate Caernarfon's Waterfront.

The Welsh Government's Tourism Investment Support Scheme continues to drive a higher quality offer, recently supporting a number of accommodation projects on Wales' coast as well as investing in improving coastal food offer, examples include Dylan's in north Wales, Bryn Williams in Colwyn Bay; Coast in Saundersfoot; The Griffin Inn, Dale; Twr y Felin St Davids.

The Volvo Ocean Race also takes place next year – the world's toughest and most prestigious sailing event which will come to Cardiff in May and June 2018. Andrew Pindar; Volvo Ocean Race Ambassador will attend the launch to give a flavour of what Cardiff can expect next year.

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## [Sam cooks up a success](#)

Sam Everton won a bronze medal at the UK Skills Show in November 2016 when he was a level two student competing against level three students. The skills he demonstrated led to him being invited to return to the Skills Show in November to compete for a place in the UK squad for the EuroSkills competition in 2018 and the WorldSkills competition in 2019. The judges loved his food and he is now in training as part of Squad UK, hoping to gain a place on the team competing in Russia in 2019.

The Skills Show is the UK's largest skills and careers event. In 2017, 99 Welsh competitors were invited to The Skills Show, a record number for Wales. Of these, 48 returned home with medals, 31 were selected for Squad UK and Wales was the most successful region in the medal table.

The Minister said:

“Afternoon tea was absolutely delicious, I can see why Sam has done so well at the Skills Show over the last two years. I congratulate him on his success and wish him well for the selection process for WorldSkills 2019.

“Sam’s success is an excellent example of the highly skilled and committed young people we have in Wales and the excellent work that goes into helping them achieve their potential. Supporting skills growth, in particular higher level skills, is a key priority for the Welsh Government. It helps Welsh businesses to grow, helps people find decent employment to help support themselves and their families and makes a vital contribution to the Welsh economy.”

Sam said:

“Competing at the Skills Show last year was the start of an amazing journey for me that will hopefully end with the opportunity to represent the UK at WorldSkills. I am looking forward to the training with Squad UK which will be taking me all across the UK, to refining my existing skills and learning new ones including bread making, knife skills and butchery. I’m also looking forward to my placement at Restaurant James Sommerin soon.”