

Welsh and Scottish Finance Secretaries call for end to UK Government austerity

Welsh Government Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford and Scottish Government Finance Secretary Derek Mackay will also call on the UK Treasury to abandon its plans for a further £3.5bn of unallocated cuts in 2019-20.

Speaking ahead of today's meeting between Devolved Administration Finance Ministers and the Treasury, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"Our draft Budget was set against the backdrop of the longest period of sustained austerity in living memory – one which has seen our budget cut by 7% in real terms since 2010.

"The UK Government's failed and unnecessary policy of austerity continues to place unjustifiable constraints on public services in Wales.

"After seven years of sustained austerity the evidence is clear – it is a failed policy and must be abandoned. Public services across the UK are feeling the pinch and I urge the UK Government to change tack and invest.

"The threat of a further £3.5bn of unallocated cuts to public spending for 2019-20 continues to loom large. This could mean a further cut of up to £175m to the Welsh budget, depending on where these unallocated cuts fall.

"We have worked hard to protect devolved services from the worst of austerity in Wales but if the UK Government continues with the efficiency review it will place further unfair and counter-productive pressure on our already hard pressed front-line services."

Scottish Government Finance Secretary Derek Mackay said:

"We have repeatedly called for the UK Government to end austerity, invest in public services and reverse the cuts that are damaging our economy and hurting some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

"The UK Government will cut £2.9 billion or 9.2% from our discretionary Scottish budget in the ten years to 2019-20. And that is before taking account of the impact of the UK Government's further planned efficiency savings of £3.5 billion in 2019-20 –

which could cut another £350 million from the Scottish budget.

“While we have done what we can to mitigate the worst effects of UK Government austerity, the continued and sustained real terms reductions in our budget makes this increasingly difficult.

“The UK Government needs to abandon their obsession with austerity. The policy has failed and it is time to stimulate the economy by investing in this country’s future.”

[Economy Secretary announces Tourism Funding at Denbighshire Tourism Forum](#)

The Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF) and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) will help the private and public sector work together to develop and deliver innovative destination and product led initiatives linked to Year of the Sea 2018 and Year of Discovery 2019 – and more than £1million is available to eligible projects.

The Cabinet Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“We are looking for big idea projects which can make a real difference in making Wales a must visit destination and give people compelling reasons to visit Wales. For the Year of the Sea we want to challenge perceptions with new innovative 21st century products, events and experiences that tell the fantastic stories of our various coastal destinations. Our aim for the year is to celebrate Wales’ epic coast in order to make Wales a stand out UK destination.”

Many projects from Denbighshire were successful in securing funding during the last three years and have included:

- Mountain Bike Wales – Denbighshire County Council has been instrumental in drawing down £35k TPIF funding to bring together all of the Welsh mountain bike centres to deliver ‘Mountain Bike Wales’, an innovative one stop shop for cycling enthusiasts of all abilities. Promoting facilities close to mountain bike bases, specifically Llandegla. It is encouraging visitors to stay longer and contribute to tourism growth.
- MythFest Wales – The Clwydian Range Tourism Group secured £40k of TPIF funding to deliver MythFest Wales, an original touring family festival celebrating North East Wales’s myths and legends and links to the Sea through immersion in traditional Welsh storytelling, music and

sustainable crafts.

- Cruise – In a collaborative project between Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham the Destination Management Partnerships have been able to develop itineraries to support regional strategic cruise operations. Developing relationships with tour operators working from the Port of Liverpool and Holyhead to bring more cruise business into the region.

Expressions of Interest should be made by Friday 17 November 2017 for this 2018-2019 round of funding for both Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF) and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) – with full spend to be completed by March 2019.

Take a look at successful projects assisted through [TPIF](#) and [RTEF](#) and guidance for the funding.

Both the Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF) and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) are supported through the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the Welsh Government.

[Quarter million pound initiative to promote tasty careers in the Valleys](#)

At the first of two 'Invest in Skills, Invest in Growth' conferences, held in Cardiff Bay's Exchange Hotel, the Cabinet Secretary will announce funding of £250,000 to run two pilot projects, working with the Welsh Government's Valleys Taskforce.

The Welsh Government Valleys Initiative will focus on two key areas for the food industry. Focussing on the South Wales Valleys, the first will provide funding to allow for up-skilling of the workforce, helping to turn those already in the industry into technicians.

The second will work with local communities and businesses to help raise the profile and attractiveness of careers within the industry.

Speaking ahead of the conference, organised by the Welsh Government's Food and Drink Wales Industry Board, the Cabinet Secretary said:

"Our Food and Drink industry is one of Wales' largest business sectors and a Welsh success story. Over 222,000 people are employed within the whole supply chain and in 2016 we exported £337 million; around 20% growth on the previous year.

“We cannot, though, ignore the issues facing the sector. Brexit, for example, is not just a challenge in terms of the security of our supply chains and ability to export, it also presents a threat to the stability of our workforce.

“I want to ensure the momentum the industry has generated is maintained in the years to come. Through the Welsh Government Valleys Initiative, which I am announcing today, I want to encourage young people to consider the food sector as a fulfilling career, reduce our reliance on migrant labour and, in turn, ensure Wales’ food and drink industry is ready for the challenges ahead.”

Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language and Chair of the Valleys Taskforce, Alun Davies said:

“This initiative will build on the priorities highlighted in Our Valleys, Our Future. The Valleys Taskforce will work with people there, local businesses, local government, the third sector and civic organisations to promote the valleys as a region for investment and a place to live.”

[New incentives to teach in Wales – Kirsty Williams](#)

For the first time Computer Science has also been added as a priority subject eligible for the highest level of incentive.

The incentives are:

- Graduates with a 1st (or a PhD / Masters) undertaking secondary postgraduate Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Mathematics, Welsh, Computer Science, physics and chemistry would receive the £20,000 incentive.
- Modern language students with a 1st (or a PhD / Masters) would receive a £15,000 incentive.
- To support students undertaking primary PGCE studies whose subject specialism is in English, Welsh, mathematics, computer science, physics or chemistry with a 1st degree classification (or a PhD / Masters) a £3,000 supplement in addition to the £3,000 incentive will be available.
- A new Welsh medium incentive of £5,000 will compliment arrangements for existing support under the Welsh Medium Improvement Scheme with up to £2,500 payable on successful completion of QTS and a further £2,500 payable on successful completion of induction in a Welsh-medium or

bilingual secondary school, or on successful completion of induction teaching Welsh in any secondary setting.

Kirsty Williams said:

“It is impossible to overstate the importance of our teachers’ role in helping to succeed in our national mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence.

“Our ambitious reforms need well-supported, high quality, aspirational teachers. We must therefore attract and support the best graduates.

“In Wales we experience challenges in recruiting to certain subjects and in certain geographical locations. This is the challenge we must, and will, rise to.

“That is why I have decided to announce incentives for academic year 2018/19 early. We are providing clarity and assurance in our commitment to our newest teachers.”

The Education Secretary also revealed new incentives for Welsh-medium secondary school teachers:

“If we are to achieve the ambitious goal set out in Cymraeg 2050 then we need to increase the number of teachers who can teach bilingually, through the medium of Welsh and teach Welsh as a subject.

“Our recruitment for primary Welsh-medium teachers is broadly on track. However, to achieve our targets for secondary we need to increase recruitment to Welsh-medium ITE places each year to meet the target for increasing the number of secondary Welsh-medium teachers by 2021.

“I am announcing a new Welsh-medium incentive which will target secondary PGCE student teachers who are training to teach all subject specialisms through the medium of Welsh or bilingually.”

[DiscoverTeaching.Wales](#) (external link)

Link between universities and schools must go beyond teacher training – Kirsty Williams

In a speech to higher education leaders and academics from across the UK, she outlined how Wales can lead the way on civic engagement and the role of universities in their communities.

The call takes forward Ms Williams's challenge to universities to recapture their civic mission by doing more to connect campus, community and the country.

In the speech she said:

“The university as the link between the global and the local will be ever more important as we meet the challenges of Britain.

“Universities are global in their outlook, but they must be first and foremost being good stewards of their place and the people living there.

“This is how they will contribute to developing a confident, international and innovative Wales.”

Setting out actions for enhanced university-school links, the Education Secretary proposes that:

- Universities work directly with schools to support leadership development, financial management and attainment programmes;
- There should be a significant increase in the number of university senior managers and leaders on local school governing bodies;
- That there are more industry and undergraduate programmes in schools to promote learner opportunity and student experience in key disciplines, building on success in languages and coding.

Ms Williams also said:

“I would like to see Welsh universities pursuing ‘boundary spanning’ civic leadership.

“I want to see you working beyond the higher education sector and engaging with other key civic leaders at a national and community level.

“Universities should use their expertise, experience and resources to deliver social innovation and civic engagement, building future

leadership capacity, and supporting community and educational organisations.

“Improving education is our national mission. Raising standards, reducing the attainment gap and deliver a system that enjoys public confidence and is a source of national pride.

“Our higher education sector must further contribute to this – going beyond preparing tomorrow’s teachers, important work though that is.”

The Education Secretary’s speech praised the activity underway in Welsh universities and cover four themes: leading place, the contribution to raising school standards, developing active citizenship and acting as the engine of social enterprise.