

Cabinet Secretary joins Big Issue sellers on Cardiff streets

The Cabinet Secretary spent an hour selling The Big Issue outside Costa on Queen Street, while Bethan Jenkins AM, who invited him to take part in a selling challenge, sold the magazine outside Burger King.

Vendors buy The Big Issue magazine for £1.25 and sell it for £2.50, making each seller a 'micro-entrepreneur' who is working, not begging. Since 1991, the magazine has helped over 92,000 vendors earn £115 million. There are currently around 1500 vendors across the UK, who earned a total of £5.5 million last year. Currently, the magazine is read by an estimated 379,195 people across the UK and circulates 82,294 copies every week.

In the Welsh Government draft budget, published last week, a further £20m was announced to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next two financial years. This follows the recent announcement of an additional £2.6m to tackle the issue during this financial year.

Mr Sargeant said:

"Selling The Big Issue has been a very interesting and valuable experience. It has given me an insight into some of the challenges the vendors face as well as the kindness of the public. The magazine has offered vendors the opportunity and support to change their lives and get off the streets.

"Homelessness can have a devastating effect on people's lives. Tackling it is a priority for this government, which is why we have announced a further £20m to tackle the issue over the next two years and why we have protected the budget for Supporting People which plays a very important role in preventing homelessness and helping rough sleepers off the streets."

Welsh Government to consult on discounted bus travel for 16-24 year olds

The consultation will encourage and consider views from interested individuals, groups and organisations across Wales and will look at how best

to facilitate bus use amongst 16-24 year olds. It will last until the 4 January 2018.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“It’s absolutely vital that those who stand to gain from a future discounted travel scheme are at the heart of any decision we make.

“When I announced the continuation of My Travel pass scheme in February, I was clear that we’d look to consult widely on what a future offering should look like and I’m delighted to announce that this will be launched on Tuesday.

“I’ve been particularly keen to explore what appetite there is for extending the age of discounted travel up to 24 year olds, potentially allowing us to help more young people make the most of bus travel across Wales.

“Based on the outcome of this consultation, a new scheme for young people will then be introduced in April 2018 – one that best reflects the needs and preferences of our young people and helps further boost bus travel as an option.”

The full details of the Welsh Government’s consultation will be released on Tuesday.

Boost for red meat export plans announced

With the impending departure of the UK from the European Union and the uncertainty over the terms of access to key markets post-2019, the Welsh red meat industry faces significant challenges. Most of the challenges lie in prioritising the maintenance of existing export markets and the development of new ones.

The Cabinet Secretary, who flew out to Cologne to attend the trade exhibition to support our delegation of Welsh food and drink producers, said the funding for HCC is a direct response to these “significant” challenges.

Before leaving she said,

“It has never been more important to raise Wales’ international profile and promote our quality food and drink to the world.

“HCC indicate that only 5% of lamb produced in Wales is consumed in Wales, with up to 40% being exported outside the UK. It is estimated that over 90% of these exports are traded within the European Union single market, and worth over €200m per year.

“The Welsh red meat industry is heavily reliant on global export markets to achieve premium prices. Strong overseas demand uplifts farm gate prices and helps to balance supply and demand thus securing greater returns for the supply chain. This demonstrates the significance of export markets for the Welsh red meat industry.

“This £1.5m funding is a direct response to the significant challenge the industry faces with the uncertainty of future trading arrangements post-Brexit.

“We clearly need to continue to strengthen and future-proof our industry and it is vital that HCC continue to support the industry to maintain key markets in Europe, as well as look further afield.

“I am confident that this investment and the support to be delivered by HCC will help the industry to meet the challenges and opportunities over the next few years.

“International trade events like Anuga are great for our incredible Welsh companies looking to expand their business and provide invaluable exposure to exciting new markets. They are also helping us to achieve our shared vision of sustainably growing overall sales in the industry by 30% to £7bn by 2020.

“Over the past year alone, our food and drink exports have increased by 20%. This is increasing at a faster rate compared to the UK as a whole, which grew 9.5% over the same period.”

Wales and Ireland announce community football partnership ahead of crunch World Cup qualifier

More than €1m of EU funding is being invested in a partnership between the Football Association of Ireland and the Welsh sports organisation Vi-Ability to capitalise on the popularity of football, by turning local clubs into social enterprises that deliver a range of sport-based life science and educational programmes.

The ‘More than a Club’ initiative will be piloted over the next two years at

four clubs in Wales and Ireland, with Haverfordwest County, Cork City and Dublin-based Bohemian FC already signed up.

The project is supported by the Ireland Wales 2014-2020 European Territorial Co-operation Programme, which is helping to strengthen collaboration between Ireland and Wales, to address common economic and social challenges.

Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government Mark Drakeford said:

"This is a very creative approach to improving health and wellbeing in local communities, and the project will benefit hugely from the ideas, expertise and resources that will be shared across the Irish Sea.'

"The Ireland-Wales co-operation programme is a vital platform for collaboration that is bringing investment into our economy and creating opportunities for our businesses, universities and specialist organisations to work together. I'm delighted that €1m of EU funds will be supporting another exciting collaboration between our nations."

The Irish Minister for Finance and for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe T.D., said:

"The 'More than a Club' project is an example of the benefits of ongoing partnership under the Ireland Wales Programme. EU funding will allow this project to combine the expertise of organisations in the two nations to engage young people in social enterprise through football.'

"The positive impact of continued cooperation under the Ireland Wales Programme is strongly supported by the Irish government and we remain committed to its successful implementation."

Through the project, participating clubs will deliver community-focused programmes to help improve the physical and mental health of people of all ages, alternative learning opportunities for children, and other social programmes aimed at improving the quality of people's lives locally.

FAI Project Manager, Derek O'Neill, said:

"For millions of people, football is a hugely attractive sport to play, to watch and to talk about, but it can also be a powerful vehicle to promote physical health, personal development, community development and general well-being.'

"The FAI and Vi-Ability are delighted to have secured EU funding to

help expand the role and potential of football in the community, and we're looking forward to working together to exchange ideas, share resources and expertise and develop a flagship model which other football clubs in both nations can seek to emulate."

Carmarthenshire's looked after children get their just rewards for educational attainment

Kirsty Williams joined the Children's Commissioner Sally Holland, council leaders, foster carers and school teachers to acknowledge the hard work and educational achievements of looked after children in Carmarthenshire who come from a background of family crisis or breakdown.

The children and young people were awarded for good school attendance and educational achievement as well as their contribution to sports, music and volunteering.

Kirsty Williams said:

"Children who enter care often come from very difficult family circumstances. We cannot change their personal experiences, but we have to mitigate the impact and support them into a rewarding, fulfilling and independent adulthood. Research shows that too often simply being 'in care' lowers the expectations placed on these young people.

This culture impacts negatively on their ability to achieve in all aspects of their lives, including education. Today's awards ceremony proves that this needn't be the case and showcases just what our looked after learners are capable of given the right support."

The awards reflect the achievements of cared for children at Key Stage 4 where last summer, 23% of looked after children in Wales achieved L2 Inclusive (5 GCSEs at Grade A*-C in English or Welsh and mathematics) representing a 10 percentage point increase since 2013.