

‘Fantastic facility’ made possible thanks to Welsh Government funding

The Welsh Government has approved over £1.9m for Caerphilly County Borough Council over the 3 years of the VVP programme.

The range of projects the funding has helped to deliver include environmental improvements to Rowan Place; the refurbishment of the Hafod Deg centre which includes Men in Sheds; Ty Coch Play Area; the removal of a dilapidated footbridge and unused community centre at Lansbury Park; CAB Hub redevelopment and the Lansbury Park Energy Efficiency scheme.

During the visit the Cabinet Secretary officially opened the new workshop at the Hafod Deg Resource Centre in Rhymney and visited Rowan Place to view the improvements that have been made possible thanks to the Welsh Government funding.

Carl Sargeant said:

“I am pleased to see how Welsh Government funding has helped make a difference in this area. The work undertaken at Hafod Deg and Rowan Place demonstrates what can be achieved through strong partnership working. This is a fantastic facility for the local community.”

Chetwood Financial comes to Wrexham

The start-up, which is creating 90 high quality jobs in North East Wales, is led by a management team who have operated at senior executive levels in UK retail banks and overseas.

The company pride themselves on using state of the art technology to develop and offer innovative financial services products for consumers. Their move to Wales has been supported by £750,000 business finance from the Welsh Government.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I am very pleased to welcome Chetwood to Wrexham, and to have supported their move here with £750,000 of Welsh Government funding.

“Our investment in Chetwood is helping to support the creation of

90 well paid skilled jobs, in what is becoming a thriving professional and financial services sector in North East Wales.

“It is particularly pleasing to see Chetwood working with Coleg Cambria, Glyndwr University and others to ensure their business capitalises on local talent.

“With the region attracting a growing number of financial specialists, not least our own Development Bank for Wales, I look forward to seeing Chetwood Financial building North East Wales’ reputation as a destination for financial service companies and forming part of a lasting and financial hub in this part of Wales.”

Speaking at the launch CEO Andy Mielczarek said:

“It’s a huge milestone for us to finally open our doors and to be able to operate right here in my home town, Wrexham. The assistance from the Welsh Government has been integral and we’re confident that their investment will pay dividends for the people of Wrexham and the wider public as we fulfil our plans to create smarter financial products that make people better off.”

Speaking about the launch COO Mark Jenkinson added:

“It might sound complex when we say we’re a product manufacturer rather than a bank – but what we’re offering is refreshingly simple. We design really good, cost-efficient financial products that will make use of cutting edge software so they’re different to the products currently out there. Whether that’s a loan, savings account or mortgage – they will be clever, dynamic products that make people better off and give them a better experience too.”

Organisations that promote Spanish and German welcomed to Wales by Kirsty Williams

The Spanish Embassy Education Office & Goethe Institut Offices will be based at Cardiff University. They have each received £10,000 of Welsh Government funding to set up in the city.

In December the Education Secretary signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Spanish Government which included an agreement to support, increase and improve the teaching of Spanish in Wales.

The Goethe-Institut promotes the study of German abroad and encourages international cultural exchange. In the UK German Teacher Awards 2017, two of the three winners were teachers from Wales.

The support is part of the Welsh Government's Global Futures plan to promote modern foreign languages for pupils and students.

Kirsty Williams said:

"I am delighted to celebrate the launch of the Goethe Institut and Spanish Embassy Education Office's presence at Cardiff University.

"We want more of our pupils and learners to recognise the importance of modern foreign languages and the significant life and career opportunities they can provide. Our aim is to improve the learning and teaching experience of modern foreign languages in our schools, to make them subjects that more choose to study at GCSE, A-level and at university.

"I want our young people to become global citizens, able to speak to people in other languages and to understand and appreciate their own and other cultures."

£800,000 food and drink scheme – expressions of interest window open

The Rural Business Investment Scheme – FOOD (RBISF), available under the EU-supported Rural Development Programme, is a capital investments programme to support projects that offer clear and quantifiable benefits to the food and drink industry in Wales.

The scheme is open to existing and start-up micro & small food and drink processors and manufacturers throughout Wales who are not eligible under the Welsh Government's Food Business Investment Scheme.

Eligible businesses can apply for up to £50,000 for any individual investment project. These projects must contribute to the Welsh Government's ambitious [Food Strategy Action Plan](#) (external link) with one or more of the following objectives:

- promote and develop a growing and vibrant food and drink sector in Wales
- continue to develop a green image based on sustainable production methods
- further build resilience into the industry to withstand market changes
- drive improvements in food safety and security
- promote technological innovation in both product and processes
- provide career opportunities at varying skill levels.

Ahead of the opening of the first window for expressions of interest, Lesley Griffiths said:

“Our Welsh food and drink industry is a real success story, experiencing impressive levels of growth in recent years. We are committed to maintaining this momentum by ensuring the right conditions are in place for businesses of all sizes to prosper.

“I would encourage small businesses to find out more about this scheme and if they are eligible, to apply for the funding.”

More information, including eligibility criteria, can be found on the [Rural Business Investment Scheme – FOOD \(RBISF\)](#) page .

Search starts for Wales’ next Older People’s Commissioner

Created by the Welsh Government in 2008, the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales is the independent voice and champion for older people aged 60 and over across Wales. The Commissioner’s work is driven by what older people say matters most to them, and ensures their voices are at the heart of all the commissioner does.

The Older People’s Commissioner:

- promotes awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales
- challenges discrimination against older people in Wales
- encourages best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales
- reviews the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

The Commissioner has a wide range of legal powers to help deliver the change older people want and need to see.

The current commissioner, Sarah Rochira, was appointed in June 2012 for a four year term. Her term of office was extended last year for a further two years, and comes to an end in June 2018.

The Welsh Government is now inviting applications from people interested in becoming Wales' third Older People's Commissioner. The closing date is 13 October 2017.

Following a full public appointments exercise, which will involve representatives of older people, it is expected a new commissioner will be appointed by the First Minister of Wales in spring 2018 for an initial four year term, with the new commissioner starting in the role in June 2018.

Social Services Minister, Rebecca Evans said:

"Wales was the first country in the UK to establish an Older People's Commissioner, to help ensure we're a country where older people are respected, valued, listened to and supported to lead safe and happy lives.

"The Welsh Government attaches great importance to the role, and I look forward to receiving applications from a broad range of high calibre applicants who are interested in making a real difference to the lives of older people in Wales."