

Childcare Pilot projects underway

Five pilot projects are underway in parts of Swansea, Flintshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly, while a sixth will be joint project in Gwynedd and Anglesey. They will test all aspects of the new Childcare Offer for Wales to ensure it will be accessible to parents and sustainable in the long-term once rolled out.

The offer will provide 30 hours a week of government funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds in Wales, for up to 48 weeks of the year. The current free early education provided by Foundation Phase will form part of this offer.

Communities and Children Secretary, Carl Sargeant said:

“Parents, particularly women tell us problems in securing affordable childcare is one of the biggest obstacles to seeking paid employment. This is why providing 30 hours of government funded childcare to working parents of 3 and 4 year olds for 48 weeks a year, is one of the key priorities for this government.

“Affordable, available and accessible childcare will enable parents to work, supporting our drive to increase economic growth, tackle poverty and reduce inequalities. It will also provide opportunities and long-term benefits for our children and improve their life chances.

“This is a very important commitment so we are determined to get it right. This is why we are testing the offer very carefully and why these pilot schemes will be so valuable in helping us understand how best to make it work for parents, providers and children.”

Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill receives Royal Assent

Landfill disposals tax will replace the current landfill tax in Wales when it is devolved in April 2018. The revenue raised will help fund public services in Wales.

At an official sealing ceremony, the Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill became an Act of the Assembly. It is the final of three Acts to establish tax arrangements in Wales.

A Bill receives Royal Assent when Letters Patent under the Welsh Seal signed with Her Majesty's hand signifying her Assent are notified to the Clerk of the Assembly.

The First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones applied the Welsh Seal to the Letters Patent at the sealing ceremony, which was also attended by Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

"This Act is another important step in our devolution journey as we prepare for the introduction of tax powers in April 2018.

"Next year will see the further maturing of devolution as we take on responsibility for raising a proportion of our budget to spend on public services in Wales.

"Landfill disposals tax and land transaction tax will be the first Welsh taxes for almost 800 years. Wales is at the forefront of waste policy and landfill disposals tax is an important element in achieving our ambitious goal of a zero waste Wales."

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said

"This Act has been developed through a collaborative approach and with cross-party support.

"There is a clear public interest in ensuring the new tax systems we are creating for April 2018 are recognisable to those who will have to operate them on a daily basis. There will be similar processes and an approach to tax rates which will provide stability and reassurance to businesses.

"This Act is designed to be up to date, simple and clear to apply, reflecting established practices and will be relevant to Wales.

"However, a key difference between the existing landfill tax and landfill disposals tax is that our Act enables tax to be charged on unauthorised disposals of waste in order to provide a financial deterrent against undertaking this activity. Unauthorised disposals of waste blight our communities; they are a potential source of tax evasion and place legitimate waste businesses at a disadvantage.

"This activity is unacceptable; I want to encourage individuals to take their waste to a registered landfill site and pay a fair share of tax which contributes to the funding of our public services in Wales."

The Welsh Government is also establishing a Landfill Disposals Tax

Communities Scheme, which will support local projects which promote or improve the social or environmental wellbeing of communities affected by the disposal of waste to landfill.

Professor Drakeford added:

“I would like to thank all those who have helped us shape this Act and look forward to continuing to work with them as it is implemented.”

Joint Statement from the Welsh Government, Flintshire County Council and Flintshire Town Council on Next steps for Flint Castle – Year of Legends Art Installations

However, work on Flint Castle and the foreshore masterplan will continue, with the pursuit of an alternative major art installation as a potential component of the investment.

As part of the review, Welsh Government officials met with Flintshire County Council, Flint Town Council and a number of local groups and partners to discuss the future development of the historic Flint Castle and Flint foreshore. Welsh Government made it clear that it was committed to significant investment in Flint Castle and to delivering a masterplan for Flint foreshore and Castle in full consultation with local stakeholders.

Whilst there was some support for the current proposed sculpture from stakeholders locally, it was recognised that any decisions on major public art installations would need to be taken in conjunction with the wider masterplan work. Consequently, it was agreed to stop work on the current sculpture and instead focus on using some of the allocated funding to deliver the masterplan, which sets out a vision for a shared multi-use visitor and mixed use centre to support tourism, walking and cycling, and key local organisations including the RNLi and rugby and football clubs.

Economy and Infrastructure Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“We acknowledge that the proposal for the Iron Ring sculpture has been divisive and, following extremely constructive and productive meetings with local stakeholders, have taken the decision not to proceed with the proposed design. Instead, we will use the investment allocated for the artwork to help deliver the wider masterplan for the foreshore, taking in the views of local people. This will include developing a range of capital investments for the area and holding a number of events and activities to increase the understanding of the history of the Castle and the significance of the foreshore. Alongside Flintshire County Council and Flint Town Council, we see development of the masterplan as a high priority.”

Councillor Ian Roberts from Flintshire County Council said:

“We welcome this investment in the Castle and foreshore and the commitment to retain current resources for Flint. Our recent meeting with the Welsh Government was extremely positive and I feel confident that future partnership working will ensure a favourable outcome for the town of Flint which will enhance the historic Castle with its links to Richard II and Shakespeare, the foreshore and the improvement work which has been carried out in the town centre over recent years. We will continue to actively pursue proposals for major public art installations as part of the foreshore masterplan delivery.”

Youngsters given taste of world class engineering opportunities in Wales

Since the end of June, TRJ, appointed by Aston Martin Lagonda to assist in the conversion of the Superhanger at the Aerospace Business Park (ABP) in St Athan, have been working closely with local schools where pupils are able to join in a ‘bridge building exercise’ promoting the benefits of STEM subjects and the construction and engineering industries.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

"I'm pleased that Aston Martin and one of their key suppliers at St Athan have engaged with the local community and are now making an important contribution to the education of our young people and their understanding of industry. The future prosperity of Wales depends not only on the success of companies like Aston Martin but also on building the skills we need to support a vibrant economy.

"We, along with Aston Martin, are committed to making St Athan a world leading manufacturing facility, by producing cars that Wales can be proud of. This investment in our economic infrastructure will be key to us achieving this goal. The planned investment by the Welsh Government in the Business Park and associated infrastructure was one of the key decision making factors in our assessment of the St Athan site."

Karen Botting, Senior Manager – Learning and Development said:

"Aston Martin will offer a number of exciting career path opportunities at its new manufacturing facility and will be opening its apprentice programme in St Athan from 2019. School visits such as the visit to Cowbridge Comprehensive are an excellent opportunity for our apprentices to meet with pupils, and to explain exactly what future careers are available at Aston Martin."

Aston Martin are planning a full engagement programme with education establishments for 2018.

Alison Rees, Business Development & Community Liaison Manager for TRJ:

"This is a great opportunity for both companies to demonstrate what they have to offer, especially to the pupils of local schools who would be considering apprenticeships in the near future.

"We are extremely grateful to pupils and teachers at Cowbridge Comprehensive who gave us a warm welcome when we visited the school to deliver two sessions of the ICE Bridge (Institution of Civil Engineers' Bridge) to two groups of pupil, showcasing the dynamics of Civil Engineering. We look forward to future opportunities with Cowbridge and other schools in the area."

Since Aston Martin Lagondas decision to choose Wales as the main location for the manufacturing of its new DBX crossover vehicle, TRJ have been playing an active part in ensuring the community benefits of this landmark economic development project are felt throughout the local area.

Welsh Government will also be supporting TRJ, facilitating a 'meet the buyer day' where local trades and suppliers will be encouraged to make themselves

known to TRJ, the main contractor to Aston Martin, allowing the local supply chain to be extended further.

Wales attracting GB visitors for longer stays

Figures published today on visitors to Wales from GB show that Wales performed better than the rest of GB in the 12 months ending May 2017.

Thursday 07 September 2017

During this period, there were 9.657 million overnight visits to Wales by GB residents, with 34.554 million nights spent in Wales. Figures may indicate that people coming to Wales from GB are now finding more and more reasons to stay for longer – as the number of nights has increased by nearly 5%.

In comparison, the number of visits to GB as a whole has decreased by 3.7% over the same period, and the number of nights has decreased by 3.2%.

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, said:

“These indications are very positive for 2017. In what is an extremely competitive market place, tourism in Wales is in a strong position and these figures continue to reflect the success we have experienced over the last two years. In addition to this, 87% of respondents in our tourism barometer survey undertaken in June said they were confident about how their business would perform over the summer.

We will continue with our campaign work to ensure that we make the most of the opportunities to attract those looking to holiday at home due to the weak pound.”