

Wales has bin recycling even more

Provisional data for the 12 months ending March 2017, released today, shows:

- The reuse/recycling/composting rate increased to 64 per cent, compared with 60 per cent for the 12 months to the end of March 2016.
- The total amount of municipal waste generated in Wales in January – March 2017 decreased with the tonnage falling by 6 per cent, from 400 to 375 thousand tonnes, compared to the same quarter of 2016.
- The residual household waste generated per person decreased by 4 per cent, falling to 48 kilograms per person in January to March 2017, compared with the same quarter of 2016

The Welsh Government has set statutory targets of recycling 58 per cent by 2016-17, 64 per cent by 2019-20 and 70 per cent of waste by 2024-25. The latest data shows all but one local authority met the current 2016-17 target. Although Blaenau Gwent just missed the 58% target, its 57% rate was an increase on the 49% seen a year earlier.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths welcomed the publication of the data. She said:

“These latest recycling figures make for extremely satisfying reading. They reveal the waste we are generating is decreasing while the amount we recycle continues to rise.

“We should be extremely proud of our recycling performance here in Wales. This is an area where we lead the way in the UK and indeed just two countries in the whole world recycle now more than we do.

“We are always looking at how we can continue to improve. Only last week I announced I intend to consult on plans to halve food waste by 2025. I am confident this is achievable thanks to the continued efforts of Local Authorities and householders’ commitment to recycling. Today’s figures prove they clearly share our ambition for Wales to become a zero waste nation by 2050”.

GCSE pupils congratulated by Kirsty Williams

This year, for the first time, pupils are receiving their results for new

'made in Wales' English Language, Welsh Language, English Literature, Welsh Literature, Mathematics Numeracy and Mathematics GCSEs which are unique to Wales.

This year's results show:

- 62.8% of all learners, including early entry candidates, achieving A*-C grades.
- For 16 year olds only the figure rises to 66.7%.
- Results at A* have remained stable.
- There have been improvements in the summer results at A*-C in large entry subjects such as English Literature, History, Geography, and Welsh 2nd Language.

This year has seen a significant increase in the number of students entered before they have completed their full programme of study. A number of students who were entered early, either last summer or in November, have not returned to sit the exam again in the summer.

As a result, independent regulator Qualifications Wales have stated that "reliable conclusions cannot be drawn from direct comparisons between results in summer 2017 and summer 2016, or the comparison between summer results across the UK."

Visiting Cefn Saeson school in Neath, Kirsty Williams said:

"I would like to congratulate the thousands of pupils across Wales who are receiving their results today.

"These reformed qualifications are aimed at providing pupils with the right skills for the modern world. We can be proud of the way our pupils and teachers have handled the introduction of these new qualifications that are playing a vital role in raising standards.

"I am concerned about the high number of pupils being entered early for their exams. Many of these pupils, who are taking exams before they have completed their two years of GCSE study, have not had the opportunity to reach their full potential. This is putting unnecessary pressure on pupils, teachers and also puts an extra strain on school budgets. I will respond to Qualifications Wales's rapid review of this issue when I receive it in October, but the current situation is unsustainable and all options are on the table.

"Our radical overhaul of our education system is about raising standards and the aspirations of our learners. As well as reforming GCSEs, we are introducing a new curriculum and new professional teaching and leadership standards to make sure our pupils have the skills they need to succeed in life."

GCSEs in Wales are changing; six GCSE subjects have been reformed – English

Language, Welsh Language, English Literature, Welsh Literature, Mathematics Numeracy and Mathematics. The summer 2017 exams reflect these new qualifications, while other GCSEs are due to change.

Minister highlights alternative career options as thousands collect their GCSE results

The Welsh Government supports apprenticeships from level 2 through to higher levels. Last week the Minister visited IT Pie in Penarth to speak with one of the company's apprentices, Jaimie Warburton, and Creative Director, Aran Pitter, to hear more about why apprenticeships work for them, from both a learner and business perspective.

Jaimie, now 28 and from Caerphilly, outlined that he always had an interest in IT and web development but after leaving school at 16 he initially struggled to find his vocation.

After working as an IT support officer at a variety of different businesses, Jaimie became despondent about his career and craved the opportunity to get his foot in the door of a web design company, however without any formal qualifications in web development or relevant work experience he struggled to secure a job.

He decided to go freelance for a short period of time in order to gain some experience and before long came across the opportunity to do a Level 4 apprenticeship in Front-End Web Development with IT Pie in Penarth.

He explained that the application process was very simple and he was lucky enough to be successful. Now twelve months on, thanks to IT Pie, Sgil Cymru and the Welsh Government, Jaimie is on the road to completing his apprenticeship and in the next few weeks he will become a fully-qualified web developer with a bright and prosperous future ahead of him.

Commenting on why an apprenticeship was the best route for him, Jaimie said:

“The course has been absolutely brilliant. I have received so much support and guidance from my colleagues who have taught me all the technical terms and language. It's been great to be able to apply everything I'm learning at college to real-life situations every day.

“I will finish my apprenticeship in September and become a fully-qualified web developer. I feel like my career is finally taking

off.

“I’d definitely recommend doing an apprenticeship. I didn’t even think they were available in things like web design. I thought you had to go to university to work in web development and coding, but that’s not the case. It’s been a brilliant way of gaining hands-on practical experience as well as all the relevant skills and qualifications. For me, an apprenticeship is a quicker way to get straight into the job you want.”

Highlighting why apprenticeships work for IT Pie, Aran Pitter said: “In our line of work – web development and design – technologies are constantly evolving so it is vital we stay ahead of the curve and remain current. The skills and on the job training our apprentices learn are shaped by business needs which makes this type of learning and development relevant to the individual and our company.

“Jaimie is an asset to IT Pie and has really hit the ground running. Over the last ten years we have taken on a number of apprentices and apart from one all of them continued to work for us after qualifying.

“The great thing about taking on an apprentice is that you can take someone from ground level, mould their learning and development around the needs of the company and its clients and this not only supports business growth but it enables the apprentice to develop skills that are relevant to real-life.”

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, added:

“Jaimie is just one example of someone who has a thriving career after securing an apprenticeship. It highlights just how valuable it is to gain practical, on the job experience and how it can provide them with all the skills and qualifications they need to have a rewarding and fruitful career. ”

“Apprenticeships are the start of an exciting and rewarding career and can benefit anyone of any age, giving them an opportunity to gain practical, on the job experience while gaining all the skills and qualifications they need.

“Apprenticeships are a key investment for employers who can train their workforce in the specialist skills they need within their organisation. Overall, apprenticeships play an important role in increasing the nation’s overall skill set and driving economic growth, making sure that Wales remains competitive on the world stage.”

For more information about becoming an apprentice, visit careerswales.com and follow the apprenticeship link or to find out how your business could benefit from recruiting an apprentice, visit Skills Gateway for Business, or call 03000 6 03000. Also find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/apprenticeshipscymru and on Twitter @apprenticewales.

The Apprenticeship Programme in Wales is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund.

[Wales brand shortlisted for The Design Museum London Exhibition](#)

London's Design Museum has recently announced the nominees for the 10th anniversary edition of the Beazley Designs of the Year award. The annual award and accompanying exhibition, which takes place at the Design Museum's site in Kensington, West London, looks to celebrate more than 60 of the best design projects from all over the world during the last 12 months. The overall winner from last year was Ikea's flat-packed refugee shelter Better Shelter.

Alongside Smörgåsbord's work on the Wales Nation brand thirteen projects have been nominated in the Graphics category, ranging from the creation of a Refugee Nation Flag designed for the first ever Olympic refugee team to a new logo and identity for the Reykjavik Art Museum.

The refreshed Wales nation brand was first introduced in January 2016 through the Year of Adventure tourism campaign. The work was conducted in response to Welsh Government's ambitions to develop a more integrated approach to promoting Wales to the world as a place to visit, trade, invest and live.

At the heart of the new approach is a confident new strategy and compelling narrative that provides a platform for promoting Wales internationally. Another key aspect of the brand is the visual identity, including a core marque featuring a contemporary rendering of the familiar dragon icon from Wales' national flag. There is also a distinctive new photography style and a bespoke typeface, Cymru Wales Sans inspired by the Welsh typographical heritage including digraphs unique to the Welsh language.

The award nomination for the Beazley Designs of the Year exhibition focuses in particular on the new typeface. This follows a previous accolade from the European Design Awards 2017 where the typeface won the prestigious Best of Show Gold for overall design across all categories. Recognition for the new approach has also come from the travel sector with awards won at the 2017 Travel Marketing Awards.

Dylan Griffith from Smörgåsbord, explains:

“Wales has its own language and Welsh is one of the oldest languages in Europe. Bearing few similarities to English, we felt it was necessary to create a bespoke typeface that brings the country’s rich history and the provenance of the Welsh language to the forefront. The Cymru Wales Sans typeface is the cornerstone of the new Wales brand and has quickly become the golden thread that unifies the graphic language across all sectors.”

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates, said:

“Our aim was to create a compelling and visually consistent identity to help reveal new, engaging stories about Wales to complement our country’s rich history, beauty and culture. Being shortlisted for this prestigious award shows that our innovative approach is standing out in the global marketplace.

“This approach has received a fantastic response through the Year of Adventure and Year of Legends campaigns. It has also been used to strengthen how we present Wales as a location for businesses to trade and invest, the quality of our food and drink, and has even been used as a foundation for a successful campaign to recruit more GPs into Wales. I am delighted by the level of support and enthusiasm the new approach has already attracted – particularly from the tourism and business community in Wales, and also from quality private sector brands who have shown an interest in working more closely with us to promote Wales to the world.

“Although these awards are important, we’ve also seen evidence that the new Wales brand approach and associated campaigns are already making a difference to the economy. For example, Visit Wales’ 2016 campaign generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – which is an 18% increase on 2015.”

Amendments to UK Brexit bill will be proposed

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones and First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon today agreed to work together on amendments to the UK government’s EU Withdrawal Bill.

These changes will be designed to protect devolved powers and responsibilities and provide effective powers to ensure devolved law works on withdrawal from the EU.

The First Ministers also committed to coordinate advice to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly to ensure that both are fully informed of the risks posed by the UK government bill and the proposed changes.

Both governments have previously made clear that they could not recommend legislative consent is given to the UK government's proposals as they impose unacceptable constraints on current devolved powers, and are impractical and unworkable in practice.

Following their meeting, the First Ministers said:

"We are approaching the 20th anniversaries of the referendums that established the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. Those votes, and the development of devolution since 1998, provide the secure democratic basis for self-government in Scotland and Wales.

"Since the vote to leave the EU, the approach of the UK government to withdrawal has been a rejection of the principle of devolution, and the sharing of decision-making across these islands, clearly chosen by the people of Scotland and Wales.

"Most recently the UK government has published position papers which involve the vital interests of Scotland and Wales but which have been prepared without the involvement of the devolved administrations.

"Most seriously, the UK government's EU (Withdrawal) Bill is an unashamed move to centralise decision-making power in Westminster, cutting directly across current devolved powers and responsibilities.

"The Scottish and Welsh Governments have already made clear that they cannot recommend that the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly give their necessary legislative consent to the bill. We believe that the bill must not be allowed to progress in its current form.

"To provide a constructive way forward, the Scottish and Welsh Governments are now working to agree potential amendments to the bill which would address our concerns. We are also coordinating our advice to the Parliament and Assembly to ensure they fully understand our concerns and our alternative proposals.

"It will now be for the UK government to respond positively to our suggested amendments to move negotiations forward, and ensure there is a functioning legal system on withdrawal from the EU, and agreed UK structures, – where these are required – that reflect the views and interests of all parts of the UK, and respect devolved powers and responsibilities."