

Welsh food and drink companies embark on trade mission to Milan

As part of the Welsh Government's commitment to raise Wales' global profile as a first-class place to do business, it is supporting nine producers to visit Milan from the 24-28 June.

This follows Italian interest in some of these products during the recent TasteWales event organised by the Welsh Government, which showcased over 800 Welsh food and drink products to buyers from all over the world.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

"We are extremely proud of our high-quality food and drink and recognise the enormous value it brings to our economy. Food and drink is a priority sector for the Welsh Government and this is why we have set an ambitious target to grow the sector by 30% by 2020.

"In light of the UK's decision to leave the EU, it is now more important than ever we promote the very best the food and drink industry has to offer and continue to make an impact in global markets. I am delighted we are supporting this group of producers to go to Milan and follow up on the exciting leads made with Italian buyers during our successful TasteWales event."

The producers range from cereals, preserves and tea, to free-from foods and brewing companies.

Italy is one of the biggest markets for gluten-free products in Europe and craft beer producers; Evan-Evans and Samosa Co will be joining the trade mission to promote their gluten-free options.

The organic market is also growing significantly in Italy and Pembrokeshire based company, Daioni Organic, will be in Milan to take advantage of these growth opportunities.

During the four day visit the companies will have an opportunity to showcase products to selected buyers and develop new business through a series of market briefings, store visits, and meet the buyer/showcasing.

The producers attending the trade visit are:

Daioni Organic, Deeside Cereals, Evan-Evans Group, Sims Food – Samosa Co, Baa Brewing, Clarks, Lurville Delight, Radnor Preserves.

Help us decide the future of Community Councils in Wales

Local Government Secretary Mark Drakeford today announced that the Welsh Government was looking for two members to join a panel co-chaired by former Assembly Members, Gwenda Thomas and Rhodri Glyn-Thomas.

The co-chairs will be joined by another former Assembly Member, William Graham, and Powys councillor, Kathryn Silk.

The Welsh Government is seeking expressions of interest from clerks of community councils and those working directly with communities – whether in the public, voluntary or private sectors.

The review is part of the Welsh Government's broader plans to reform local government and aims to ensure that the most local level of government works well and delivers results.

Panel members will be asked to look at the potential role of community councils; define the most appropriate model/structure of local government to effectively deliver this role; and consider how this model could be applied across Wales.

Announcing details of the review today, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“We should never underestimate the difference that good community councils can make. They are often the closest to the people they serve and, with that kind of insight, are well placed to deliver services for the local area.

“However, while there are some very good community councils across Wales, their size, responsibilities and community involvement can vary.

“That's why we need an honest debate about what the future role of Community Councils might look like and how we can put in place a consistent structure that serves all of our communities well.

“We have representation on the panel from all the main political parties in local government in Wales and there will also be extensive political engagement as part of the panel's work.

“We now need two extra members who can bring their own experience to bear on the work of the panel. We would encourage anyone with a strong community-based background to apply.”

The evidence-based and inclusive review of Community Councils is expected to start in July and take a year. All relevant stakeholders will be invited to contribute including, but not limited to, community and town councils, principal councils and community and third sector groups.

Focus of Brexit negotiations must be on securing transitional deal – First Minister Carwyn Jones

“A year on from the EU referendum it is becoming increasingly clear that it will be impossible to both negotiate a withdrawal agreement and put in place the basis for a future relationship with the EU within 2 years,”

Mr Jones said.

“Therefore the priority in negotiations with the EU must now be on agreeing transitional arrangements to come into effect in April 2019. This will be vital in helping reduce the uncertainty around Brexit, which is damaging to the economy.”

Despite an eventful and often challenging year, the Welsh Government’s Brexit position has remained clear and consistent from the day immediately after the referendum; that the result must be respected and the economy must come first.

The First Minister said:

“Our 6 point plan was greeted with raised eyebrows when we proposed it the morning after the referendum, but it has stood the test of time and has formed the basis for our white paper, Securing Wales’ Future.

“Our balanced and coherent approach to leaving the EU, which puts economic interests at the heart of the agenda, is the closest thing the UK has to a realistic negotiating position, which meets the needs of all regions of the UK.”

Looking back at the past 12 months, the First Minister spoke about the Welsh Government’s achievements in their Brexit approach – from convening an

exceptional meeting of the British Irish Council in July last year, launching our white paper – Securing Wales’ Future and the subsequent policy paper on Brexit and Devolution, establishing the European Advisory Group and the Agriculture and Environment Roundtable Group, developing the Business Confidence Plan, and also seeking assurances from the UK Government that our departure from the EU will not negatively impact on our NHS and universities.

The First Minister added:

“It is clear our white paper has influenced the UK government’s approach in important areas such as upholding existing employment rights and the crucial importance of transitional arrangements. We have also secured guarantees from the UK government that they will replace the EU funding Wales would have received up to 2020.

“The uncertainty and instability the UK government has allowed to develop over the past year is now being compounded by the ongoing chaos around the Prime Minister. With no mandate, no clear negotiating strategy and a cabinet riven with disagreement over how we should approach Brexit, the UK government must prioritise transitional arrangements to ensure that the Britain’s interests are best served.”

Celebrating digital skills in Welsh teaching

The NDLE brings together educators from across Wales to identify and share examples of good digital practice currently taking place in schools and colleges across Wales.

Changes to the Welsh curriculum mean digital skills are now developed and taught through all parts of a pupil’s schooling and not just isolated to specific ICT or computer science classes.

The Cabinet Secretary said this new approach means more than just using computers and she wants to equip pupils with the digital skills necessary to succeed in the modern world.

Kirsty Williams said, “I am determined to support learners in Wales so that not only are they competent users of technology, but that they become creative authors of technology also.

“I am clear we need to help both teachers and learners develop the

skills and confidence to navigate this new world and make good use of the opportunities it provides.

“I am delighted to be here to celebrate the work of our finest practitioners and hope we can all learn something from the very best and brightest in our profession.”

The theme for NDLE 2017 is ‘Creative approaches to implementing the Digital Competence Framework’ building on the introduction of the Digital Competence Framework on 21 September 2016.

The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) was developed by Pioneer schools supported by external expertise and Welsh Government staff. At the beginning of this school year, the Digital Competence Framework was made available to schools in Wales, and this is the first element of the new curriculum to be introduced in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary was keen to praise the work of all schools in integrating the DCF and explained how her office had been inundated with positive comments, from the UK and around the world, about Wales’ commitment to and ambition for digital skills

This year’s National Digital Learning Awards recognises the best digital practice in four categories, and the winners for each of those categories were as follows:

- Digital Project Award – awarded jointly to Year 2 pupils at Cadoxton Primary School, Barry for their project ‘Challenging Pioneers’, and Ysgol Bro Banw, Ammanford, for their project ‘The Superheroes’.
- Online Safety Award – also Ysgol Bro Banw, for their project Developing Digital Competence through flip teaching.
- Hwb Community Resource Award – Alexandra Roe from Coedcae School, Llanelli, for the WJEC RS Judaism Playlist.
- National Digital Learning Council’s Pupil Award – Phillipstown Primary in New Tredegar, for Techno Tribe Teaches.

“NHS Wales performance stable, despite growing demand” – Vaughan Gething

The vast majority of people waiting for NHS treatment continue to be seen within access and treatment targets, despite increasing demand for services across Wales, new statistics published today show.

Thursday 22 June 2017

The latest statistics show:

- 79.4% of immediately life-threatening ambulance calls received a response within 8 minutes in May 2017, above the 65% target, which means the target performance has been met above 70% for 13 consecutive months. The median response time for this category of calls has remained less than 5 minutes since August 2016. Around 50% of amber calls were responded to in around 14 minutes
- The target for non-urgent cancer performance in April 2017 was met for the first time since May 2016 – with 624 out of 635 people (98.3%) seen within 31 days, exceeding the 98% target. Urgent cancer performance remains at its highest since November 2014, with 502 people out of 562 seen within 62 days
- Referral to treatment performance has remained stable since early 2016. In April 2017, 86.7% of patient pathways had been waiting less than 26 weeks to start treatment, the best April performance since 2014
- The number of people experiencing delayed transfers of care from hospital in May 2017 remains close to record lows, despite the increasing demand for health and social care services
- The number of people waiting over 8 weeks for a diagnostic test in April 2017 is the second lowest since March 2011 and the lowest April figure since April 2010
- In May 2017, fewer patients spent 12 hours or more in an emergency care facility, from arrival until admission, transfer or discharge compared to May 2016
- Demand for NHS services is increasing across every single activity and performance measure monitored included in the monthly report.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Our health and social care services continue to experience increasing demand – but despite that, the statistics released today show the vast majority of people continue to be seen within access and treatment targets.

“Recognising the ongoing growth in demand and costs of services, we’re investing more than ever before in health and social services.

“I want to thank NHS and social care staff for the tireless work they do to deliver first class services across the country. Together, we will continue to do everything we can to drive up performance so that every patient receives timely, quality care.”