

# Laboratory investment is improving patient care across Wales

Mr Gething saw how high-tech molecular diagnostic equipment is being used to test samples, speeding up gastro-intestinal results and identifying genetic markers that help to better tailor care to the individual patient. This should mean more accurate testing with quicker results, improving treatment for patients. The project is receiving £2.5million investment over three years to fund the new system across Wales.

This year, the Welsh Government invested more than £7m through the Efficiency Through Technology Fund, supporting projects using innovative technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare services.

Mr Gething said:

“It is vital that Wales can keep up-to-date with the latest medical technology. The new laboratory offers more accurate testing, which leads to care tailored to the individual.

“The Efficiency Through Technology Fund has invested in projects across Wales to bring new innovations into our NHS, projects that improve outcomes for patients and deliver more from public funds.

“The team initially received over £144,000 funding so they could rapidly evaluate how well the pilot project was working. We have seen the positive results, which is why this funding is being scaled up so people across Wales will see the benefits.”

Dr. Quentin Sandifer, Executive Director of Public Health Services and Medical Director, Public Health Wales, said:

“Developing molecular capability and capacity in our laboratories will be a major piece of work for us over the next three years, made possible by the funding we have received from the EETF.

“Among our first priorities will be providing a diagnostic service for gastrointestinal illness, which cause very significant morbidity and mortality across Wales. This is an exciting development for the laboratories and, more importantly, for the benefits it will bring to patients in terms of rapid and accurate diagnosis. Patients across Wales will have equitable access to the best tests available allowing healthcare professionals to treat and care for them using prudent evidence based medicine”.

Other projects which have received Efficiency Through Technology funding

include the Welsh Wound Innovation Centre which is developing a digital pressure ulcer reporting system within care homes that will support and educate staff leading to more effective treatment. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board are evaluating a system to help reduce frequent attenders calling for ambulances and attending Accident and Emergency and help them to receive the most appropriate care.

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## [Consultation on park homes commission rate published](#)

Plans for a formal consultation were announced in March following a review of the economics of the sector commissioned by the Welsh Government which made several recommendations to improve standards in the sector.

Announcing the publication of the consultation [the consultation](#), the Cabinet Secretary said:

“The review into the industry rightly highlights that commission rates are a complex issue with the potential for significant consequences. We know there are strongly held, but conflicting views amongst park owners and residents on this issue.

“As the review I commissioned last year into the economics of the park homes sector did not provide sufficient evidence to determine the future of the commission rate, I wanted to provide a further opportunity for those affected to have their say. The options published for consultation include reducing or even abolishing the commission rate, as well, of course, as retaining the status quo.

“I hope all interested parties will take advantage of the opportunity this consultation provides to submit further information and to provide robust evidence to support their views. In particular, park owners should provide access to detailed financial information if they wish to justify maintaining the current position.”

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## [Kirsty Williams opens “wonderful” new](#)

# Panteg Primary

The new site has been made possible thanks to £20.5 million of investment in three schools in the area, with funding of £10.25 million under our 21st Century Schools and Education Programme.

The 21st Century Schools programme represents the largest investment in Welsh schools and colleges since the 1960s, and will see over £1.4 billion being invested in the five years to 2019.

Kirsty Williams said,

“We are committed to provide our students with the best and most inspiring learning environments. From what I’ve seen today I think your wonderful school is a perfect example of this.

“It is fantastic what we can achieve in partnership with local government and our schools, in terms of bringing together resources to deliver new bespoke facilities for our communities.

“Schools like this one are also crucial to achieving our aim of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Learning through the medium of Welsh is pivotal to successful language acquisition and provides a building block to the creation of confident Welsh speakers.”

Ysgol Panteg opened in September 2010 with 36 children – that’s why 36 daffodils encircle the school badge on the school sign, with each child planting a daffodil bulb on that first day.

The original buildings were shared with Griffithstown Infant School after which they amalgamated with Griffithstown Junior School to form a primary school on the site.

They outgrew those buildings in 2014 and work began on the new site in January 2016. The new school, which has a nursery and 420 primary places, opened its doors for the first time to pupils on in February this year.

The Cabinet Secretary also took the opportunity to congratulate and thank all involved in creating new school, including the project managers, the design and construction team, Torfaen Council, Wilmot Dixon Construction, Powell Dobson Architects and the school itself.

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## Mark Drakeford welcomes Mike Russell MSP to Wales for Brexit discussions

The two ministers will discuss how both countries will continue to work together to get the best Brexit deal for Wales and Scotland as the UK negotiates to leave the European Union.

During the meetings, the Finance Secretary will highlight the importance of EU funds to Wales and the rest of the UK and the need to ensure the devolved administrations do not lose out as a result of Brexit.

The Welsh Government's European Advisory Group, which brings together individuals with experience and expertise of European issues from across civic society and political sectors, will meet in Cardiff later today. Mr Russell will attend the meeting and will also visit the EU funded Swansea University new Bay campus.

Professor Drakeford said:

“ I'm pleased to welcome Mike Russell to Wales to discuss how we can continue to work together to get the best Brexit deal for Wales and Scotland. It is also an opportunity to show first hand how EU funding has benefitted people, businesses and communities across Wales.

“The new Swansea University Bay campus, which Mike Russell will visit today, demonstrates the difference EU funds have made to our higher education sector – creating state-of-the-art facilities for students and providing a real boost to the local economy.

“That is why we have always been clear that we must get the best Brexit deal for Wales and ensure we don't lose a penny as a result of leaving the European Union.”

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## Tourism industry gears up for busy half term

The Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“The tourism Industry in Wales is in very good shape. And the fact

that we saw record breaking spend from overseas visitors last year and crossed the million visitors for the first time in 8 years is excellent news. We fully recognise how competitive the market is and the challenges facing the industry. Our future vision – especially in light of the EU Referendum result – is to do more again to build on this sense of confidence and to internationalise our reputation and approach.”

The ONS International Passenger Survey for 2016 shows that trips to Wales are up nearly 11% compared to 2015, while spend on trips to Wales is up by over 8%. The number of international visits to Wales in 2016 was 1.074 million, and the associated spend was a record £444 million.

The first of Wales’ themed years was a great success – Visit Wales’ marketing activity for 2016 generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – which is an 18% increase on 2015. This is based on those definitely influenced by Visit Wales marketing before taking a trip to Wales. The Economy Secretary recently announced the continuation of the themed years with a new ‘Year of Discovery’ in 2019 which will build on the three themes of adventure, culture and great outdoors.

The Economy Secretary, continued:

“Although most of our performance indicators look good and feedback from the industry is positive, overnight GB figures are showing a fall in 2016 compared with the record year of 2015, in line with reductions for Britain as a whole. However, the overall picture for Wales – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – suggests that Wales will see a substantial increase in overall tourism volumes compared with 2015 the total of visits across all three categories was 16% up over the first nine months – which builds on the previous two record-breaking years.

“Campaign work now continues to convert interest and opportunities arising from the weak pound into bookings for the summer. A boost to the Visit Wales budget means that there is £26.3m available to invest in marketing and product development this year this increase has enabled us to pull together a more ambitious programme than ever before for 2017.”

Innovative projects are key to future success. £2 million had been approved for a total of 38 projects across Wales under the Tourism Product Innovation Fund and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund. This funding will enable the private and public sectors to develop innovative projects that will stimulate demand and improve the visitor offer through supporting the Year of Legends campaign while also looking forward to the Year of the Sea.

The number of overnight trips made to Wales from Great Britain in the 12 months ending November 2016 was 9.56 million. The number of visits made to Wales from Great Britain in the first 11 months of 2016 was 8.62 million, 9.3% down compared to the first 11 months of 2015.