

£300,000 to drive up participation in culture and the arts

Speaking at this year's Heritage Volunteering UK Conference the Economy Secretary, Ken Skates announced that the Welsh Government's successful [Fusion programme](#), which engaged nearly 5000 people in culture and the arts in its pilot phase, would continue for another year as a result of £280,000 of Welsh Government funding.

Since its inception in 2015 the Fusion programme has delivered a huge range of projects to young people and adults that have enabled them to widen their horizons and increase their confidence, skills and qualifications by taking part in cultural activities. It has seen young people taking over the running of museums and castles, famous artworks being taken into primary schools, and opera being performed on school buses.

And a range of adult volunteering opportunities in museums and arts bodies have helped adults to gain new skills and qualifications that in some cases have been a stepping stone into work.

The latest round of Fusion funding will support a new phase of the programme focused on partnership working in some of Wales' most disadvantaged areas and concentrated on the priority areas of early years, employability and skills, learning and health and well being.

It will also work to increase opportunities for people to volunteer with cultural and arts bodies.

Speaking about the extension of the Fusion programme, Ken Skates said:

"We know that culture and the arts can make a real difference to people's lives and can help to drive confidence, open up interests that can last a life time, increase skills levels and help people into employment and training.

"The pilot phase of our Fusion programme was a real success, engaging nearly 5000 people in culture and the arts and enabling them to get involved in a huge range of projects.

"I am therefore delighted that we have been able to extend the programme for a further year and will be able to provide £280,000 to local authorities, housing associations and charities to increase opportunities for people through culture.

"I am also pleased to announce partnership between the Welsh Government and the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) who will work to develop and support cultural volunteering and the Kids is Museums charity who will continue their innovative, empowering work with young people. Both will be focussing on those who are

hardest to reach and stand to gain the most.”

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales has been leading the research and practice on addressing poverty and exclusion through cultural participation on the pioneering Fusion programme. Nia Williams, the Museum’s Director of Learning and Engagement said:

“We very much welcome this funding announcement by the Cabinet Secretary, for a programme which has proven its success in engaging people with their heritage and culture and has also enabled organisations from different sectors to tackle the impact of poverty in Wales together.

“At Amgueddfa Cymru for example, our Volunteer Co-ordinator has conducted workshops for partners involved in the Pioneer Areas across Wales in volunteer management and partnership working. Five pioneer areas have received this training with over 50 attendees so far.

“Thanks to continued funding our work in supporting projects all over Wales will continue.”

Economy Secretary launches UK’s first statutory list of historic place names

The List of Historic Place Names of Wales aims to promote Wales’ rich legacy of place names through the ages and encourage their modern day use. The statutory list is the first of its kind in the UK and is being launched by the Economy Secretary at an event in Yr Hen Lyfrgell in Cardiff.

The online list pulls together place names gathered from a variety of historical sources. It provides fascinating insights into the land use, archaeology and history of Wales and reflects how place names have evolved over centuries of Welsh life.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Wales’ historic place names are an important part of our history and culture, which is why the Welsh Government included the requirement for a statutory list in its Historic Environment (Wales) Act.

“It is just one of a series of historic firsts that the Act has introduced for Wales and it is important to stress that the list we are launching today, with already nearly 350,000 entries, is just the beginning.

“With ongoing support from the Welsh Government, the list will continue to expand to record the rich legacy of our nation’s historic place names. It will help to emphasise their value to our heritage and encourage individuals and public bodies to keep these precious names alive.”

Dr Eurwyn Wiliam, Chair of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, who have compiled the list on behalf of the Welsh Government said:

“We are delighted to be launching this ground-breaking website today. The enormous value of historic place names is that they can record the sometimes forgotten people, practices, monuments or events of the past, fixing them at a point in the landscape.

“The study of these names reveals the legacies of past environments, battles, invasions, industrial and agricultural revolutions. They are a hugely important element of the historic environment of Wales and we hope that many people will enjoy using this new website to learn more about, and recognise the value of, the historic place names of Wales.”

£12m Welsh Government investment is catalyst for world’s first compound semiconductor cluster

The state of the art facility is the first project to be supported by the £1.2bn City Deal and is the latest development in the Welsh Government’s plans to make Wales the global centre of expertise for compound semiconductors.

The creation of the compound semiconductor industry facility will put Wales at the forefront of technological advancements in this area and is expected to attract up to £365m of private sector investment over the next 5 years.

Compound semiconductors are the key technology driving advances in a host of

areas ranging from wireless technology and smart phones, to solar energy and power stations, from healthcare for new imaging devices and diagnostics, to transport.

Describing the project as a major coup for South East Wales, First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“I am delighted our initial £12m investment has kick-started the creation of the world’s first compound semiconductor industry cluster in Newport.

“Our support for the Institute for Compound Semiconductor Technology has been widely recognised as the catalyst for developing this world-leading cluster, which is expected to create more than 2,000 well paid jobs and be the cornerstone of a truly transformative project for the area.

“Today’s major investment puts Wales at the cutting edge of this exciting technology, which has the ability to change the way we live. This is great news for Wales – and the first of many new exciting projects set to make a real difference to the economy of South East Wales.”

[Kirsty Williams wishes finalists of prestigious new teaching awards good luck](#)

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams has today sent a message of good luck to all those who have made it through to the finals of the prestigious new Professional Teaching Awards Cymru (Fri 5th May).

Thursday 04 May 2017

17 outstanding education professionals and schools have been shortlisted with the winners being announced at a special event in Cardiff City Hall on Sunday 7 May.

The awards have been established by the Welsh Government to recognise the best in schools across the country and to celebrate the commitment, dedication and inspiration of the teaching profession in Wales.

A panel of Wales-wide judges have selected the 17 entries for the seven categories, which include:

- Teacher of the year.
- Headteacher of the year.
- Award for promoting pupil wellbeing and or inclusion in school.
- Award for supporting teachers and learners.
- Whole school award for promoting relationships with parents and the community.

Kirsty Williams said:

“These prestigious new awards are an opportunity to say thank you to our teachers and educational professionals and formally recognise the best leadership and teaching from across Wales.

“I am looking forward to meeting all the finalists at the ceremony on Sunday and I wish all of them the best of luck and hope everyone has a great day.”

Winners will be presented with a ‘Griff’ in honour of Griffith Jones of Llanddowror, who turned the Welsh into one of the world’s most literate nations during the 1700s.

[May 2017](#)

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[Temporary suspension of bird gatherings will be lifted from 15 May](#)

The temporary suspension was introduced in December 2016 after the declaration of the whole of Wales as an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone. This followed the confirmation of the H5N8 strain of Avian Influenza across European countries, the Middle East and North Africa.

Last week, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone would not be replaced after its expiry on 30 April. The temporary suspension on gatherings of some species of birds in Wales, however, remained.

The lifting of the temporary suspension, from 15 May, follows an updated

evidence-based risk assessment and is dependent on no further outbreaks of H5N8 in poultry or other captive birds or findings in wild birds.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I have taken this decision based upon the latest qualitative risk assessment, which considered the risk of incursion of H5N8 into poultry farms from contact primarily with resident wild waterfowl, but also with other possible pathways.

“The updated assessment concluded the overall risk should now be assessed as low, this is defined as being ‘rare, but may occur occasionally’. The overall risk is determined by the likelihood of the virus remaining in wild birds and the environment and the exposure to poultry.

“Expert opinion is that the risk to poultry is reduced as migratory wild birds leave Great Britain and as the resident wild waterfowl enters its breeding season. Environmental contamination will also reduce with warmer, drier weather and higher UV levels. Therefore, the risk of exposure to poultry is low as the resident wild waterfowl enters the breeding season they become less gregarious and the possibility of environmental contamination reduces.

“The overall risk presented by gatherings is also reduced, provided there are high levels of biosecurity at the gathering, ensuring species do not mix and cleansing and disinfection is carried out.

“Provided there are no further outbreaks or findings, the current general licence will be revoked and replaced on 15 May by a new general licence allowing all gatherings of birds.”

The Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Christianne Glossop added:

“While I am sure this news will be welcomed by poultry and other captive bird keepers I would remind them it is vital they remain vigilant for signs of disease and maintain excellent biosecurity practices.”