

Welsh Government to invest over £2m to develop Welsh ports

The Ports Development Fund will support the growth of Welsh ports, helping ensure they continue being a key contributor to economic growth and providing opportunities for new jobs within the industry.

Economy Minister Ken Skates said:

“It’s clear that continuing and improving links both within Wales and internationally is as important today as it has ever been, and our ports play an important role in this regard.

“We want to see our ports continue to contribute on a local, regional and national level, helping drive a more prosperous and united Welsh economy and I’m delighted to announce this new fund today, which will see our ports come forward with proposals for how best they would use public funding to achieve this.

“I look forward to seeing the proposals and to carry on working with ports across Wales to build on the good work already evident, ensuring they are ready to overcome any challenges and maximise all opportunities.”

Looking forward to summer following Epic Easter

The Year of Legends 2017 has had a great start with Wales being named as one of the top must-visit destinations globally from the likes of Lonely Planet TripAdvisor, Wanderlust and Rough Guides. The recently launched Year of Legends campaign, which includes an advert starring Luke Evans has also been hailed as a game changer by industry leaders. With the busy holiday season in full flow, the work of marketing Wales continues.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“Campaign work now continues to convert early 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 41% increase has enabled us to pull together a more ambitious programme than ever before for 2017.

“In what is an extremely competitive market place, tourism in Wales is in a strong position. We’ve had two record breaking years and our aim is to sustain growth – being aware that global events and competition will mean that not every year will be a record breaking one. The overall picture – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – indicates that Wales saw an increase of almost 16% in overall tourism volumes during the first nine months of 2016.”

Figures published today shows that one of the measures of tourism performance – [The Great Britain Tourism Survey](#) – showed a decrease in the number of British staying visitors. These provisional figures for overnight visits from the GB for the year ending September 2016, are one indicator of tourism performance in Wales. Although they show a fall of 1.5% in terms of trips, this is in line with figures for the GB as a whole.

The Economy Secretary, continued:

“Last week I announced that £24m will be available for the development and marketing of tourism through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 -2020. With the existing EU tourism funded projects currently in development with partners in Wales, we are looking at more than a £100 million investment in the sector up until 2020 which will have a big impact on Wales’ competitiveness in the global marketplace.

“We’re also poised to make the most of one of the greatest shows on earth – the UEFA Champions League Final – coming to Cardiff in June. This will not only mean a boost to visitor numbers and economic impact during the event – but will also have an impact on Wales global profile long after the matches come to an end.

“We look forward to working with the industry on making 2017 a legendary year for tourism in Wales.”

Confidence is high among the industry following the first Bank Holiday of the Year.

The EPIC installation had a great reception at Margam Park.

Margam Park Manager Michael Wynne said:

“We are delighted that Visit Wales chose Margam Country Park as the first stop on the EPIC sign’s tour of Wales during the Year of

Legends campaign, and the response has been fantastic. We've had a lot of visitors to the park over the Easter Weekend and many selfies have been taken in front of the sign already!

"Margam Park has a long history and more than a fair share of its own myths and legends so this year's campaign is a great way to showcase what we have to offer. Our bank holiday events saw the park host some epic battles involving medieval knights, archers and horsemen and we are looking forward to welcoming visitors throughout the Easter holidays and beyond to enjoy the beautiful surroundings here at the park."

Speaking on behalf of The Welsh Rarebits Collection, Wales' premier marketing consortium for the best independent boutique hotels, Mike Morgan, said :

The whole sector has benefitted from continued capital investment by our member Hoteliers. We know, from over 30 years of marketing high end hotels, that there is always strong demand for genuine quality, but that intangible 'Croeso' helps us to compete on the global stage. A notable Year of Legends campaign is the icing on the cake, and Visit Wales has given us all something to get behind and take the Welsh hospitality industry to the world. A strong set of Easter figures usually points to a busy summer season, and we can't wait to welcome the many new converts to Wales who are visiting for the first time as a result of the exchange rate.

Following refurbishments over the winter months, Folly Farm had a busy start to the holiday season:

Chris Ebsworth, Managing Director at Folly Farm, said;

"We're feeling confident about the season ahead following heavy investment in a new visitor entrance and gift shop, a new pirate themed playground and improvements to several of our zoo enclosures. Easter is generally a good measure for the season and we've had an excellent weekend with visitor numbers up by 25%. Visit Wales' marketing campaign for this year is bold and confident, building on their success last year and we feel that Pembrokeshire is well placed to play a significant role in helping Wales achieve long term success."

[£422k awarded to Credit Unions across](#)

Wales

The funding will help credit unions continue to support financially excluded members as well as help their longer term sustainability. Projects will include schools savings schemes and community engagement programmes.

Carl Sargeant said:

“We know the importance of credit unions in helping people who are struggling to manage their money. The Welsh Government funding provided between April 2014 and December 2016 has helped credit unions support more than 29,000 financially excluded members with just over £23 million provided in loans to those who need this help. This demonstrates the role credit unions play.

“Credit unions are ideally placed through their relationships with local employers, schools and other community organisations to help strengthen the financial resilience of communities, through improved access to responsible credit and saving opportunities. In reaching out to local schools they help to encourage a savings habit from an early age.”

Vale of Glamorgan landmark locations feature in new psychological thriller

Born to Kill, from Line of Duty producers World Productions, was filmed predominantly in the Vale of Glamorgan with scenes shot in Barry and Dinas Powys with the production also using interior sets constructed at Enfys Studios in Cardiff.

Funding support from the Welsh Government helped secure the production for Wales with the four hour-long episodes produced by World Productions using Welsh crews and facilities. Supported by Wales Screen, part of the Welsh Government’s creative industries team, the production is estimated to have spent £2.5m in Wales.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This is another example of how support from the Welsh Government is helping to bring productions to Wales that present a range of significant opportunities for those working in the sector. Wales Screen work closely with all these productions to encourage the use

of Welsh crews and facilities in order to maximise the benefits and local spend.”

Jake Lushington, Head of Drama/Executive Producer at World Productions, said:

“From the amazing array of locations, to the experience and dedication of the local crew, filming in and around Cardiff has been an absolute pleasure and one World Productions looks forward to returning to on many future projects.”

Born to Kill explores the mind of a teenage boy trying to suppress psychopathic desires while falling in love for the first time. It also follows the teenager’s family and community who are unaware of what he is capable of.

Born to Kill is the first commission for duo Tracey Malone (Silent Witness) and first time TV writer and BIFA nominated actress Kate Ashfield. The four part drama starring Romola Garai and Daniel Mays was directed by Bruce Goodison (Murdered By My Father, Doctor Foster), produced by Lucy Robinson and executive produced by Jake Lushington (The Devil’s Whore).

World Productions is a leading TV drama production company with an impressive track record of producing high quality drama series for all major UK broadcasters having produced hundreds of hours of globally acclaimed drama including the acclaimed drama Line of Duty.

[Faster access to surgery to reduce hearing loss – Vaughan Gething](#)

The waiting time targets for adult cochlear implant surgery will be reduced to 26 weeks for standard cases and 36 weeks for complex cases. The Welsh Health Specialist Services Committee (WHSSC) will work with health boards to introduce the new referral to treatment (RTT) targets in a phased approach over the next three years.

This is a significant cut to the current 52 week target for RTT, which was set by the WHSSC. The reduced 26 week RTT target for standard implant surgery will bring the adult target in line with the RTT target for children.

There are specialised Cochlear Implant service providers, located in at University Hospital Wales in Cardiff and in Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, North Wales. These services are planned and commissioned by the WHSSC.

A cochlear implant is a medical device that can replace the function of the inner ear. This surgery can enable profoundly deaf people to hear again and therefore has a significant impact on the quality of people's lives.

The Health Secretary said:

"We want to ensure that people who need cochlear implants are able to have surgery as soon as possible, so their hearing can be improved or restored.

"For many people deafness can have a significant impact on their quality of life, affecting employment, recreation and relationships.

"Restoring people's hearing with cochlear implants as soon as possible will help people who are deaf or hard of hearing to lead more normal lives again."