

More than 1000 Welsh businesses benefit from free ICT advice service

The Superfast Business Wales service is backed by the Welsh Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Part of the Business Wales service, it provides Welsh SMEs with comprehensive ICT advice and guidance about how they can use online technologies such as cloud computing, online apps and software, social media, mobile working, and much more, to grow and develop their businesses further.

The service is independent and free and includes access to an online needs review, masterclasses and workshops, 1:1 ICT support, and a full website diagnostic. Businesses can also download the new Software Directory, as well as a number of online tools, guides and top tips available on the website: business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales.

To date, 1081 businesses have received a telephone consultation with an online business adviser, 860 businesses have attended workshops and masterclasses, and 545 have received 1:1 advice from a digital business adviser.

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James said:

“I’m pleased over a thousand businesses have taken advantage of the Superfast Business Wales service since it was launched a year ago and I would encourage more to do so. The service offers free independent advice and guidance on how to make the best use of the digital technology which is becoming ever more important in the business world.

“Superfast broadband can make a real difference to the way business communicates with its customers and helps to deliver a better quality and more efficient service. The Welsh Government is committed to investing in superfast broadband infrastructure which is vital in supporting growth and prosperity in Wales.”

Monmouthshire-based consultancy business Chris Jones Regeneration has benefited from the free service. Chris Jones said:

“The workshop enabled us to check where we were in terms of the wide platform of digital technologies, helped validate activities we were doing well, and identify gaps that required plugging.

“The 1-1 session with a digital business adviser which followed was holistic and client-focused from the start. My adviser identified ways of making efficiencies and working smarter in relation to customer reach and relationship handling. She also looked at

project management and visualization tools and provided advice on low cost digital solutions. A diagnostic report was prepared with some clear realistic actions for the business to implement over a period of time.

“Overall the service was personal, responsive and above all action based.”

New specialist subjects for 2017 include: How to grow your food and drink business with digital technology, Cyber security, Data Protection and CRM systems, and How to grow your construction business with digital technology.

To find out more and to register onto the Superfast Business Wales service call 0300 060 3000, email superfast@businesswales.org.uk or visit [Superfast Business Wales](#).

[Jahr der Legenden 2017 – at the world’s largest travel show](#)

The show is attended by 120,000 trade and media visitors and around 26,000 consumers. Visit Wales will host meetings with the German, Swiss and Austrian travel trade, press and media over the first 3 days, and promote Wales to consumers over the final 2 days of the show. The team will be joined on the stand by industry partners Blaenavon World Heritage Site, Cambria DMC, Cadw, and Destination Conwy

This year, Wales will host one of the world’s greatest annual sporting events, the UEFA Champions League Final. The countdown is on to Wales hosting this prestigious sporting event in June, and Visit Wales will be showcasing the men’s and women’s UEFA Champions League Final trophies to ITB Berlin from 8- 12 March.

Visitors to the stand will have the opportunity to have a photo taken with the trophies and Visit Wales will be running a prize draw to win a legendary week in Wales for two people during June with tickets to the Women’s and Men’s UEFA Champions League Final. The competition will also be promoted in the German and UK markets throughout March and April as part of the UEFA Champions League marketing activity.

Attendance at ITB is one element of a marketing drive in Germany. January to March is a key booking period for German visitors to Wales, and the campaign aims to inspire potential visitors to come to Wales in 2017. The new TV advert featuring Welsh Hollywood star Luke Evans, which has been well received since its launch, will also be shown to visitors at ITB.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“During these times of great change we are committed to promoting Wales to the world like never before – taking our nation’s story out to new audiences with creativity and confidence. Germany is one of Wales’ three key overseas markets. In 2015, Wales attracted 96,500 visitors from Germany who spent £30 million in the Welsh economy. We’re looking forward to a legendary sporting summer – and hosting the UEFA Champions League Final – the single biggest sporting event in the world this year will be the highlight. ITB gives us an excellent platform to raise awareness of the event coming to Wales this year and we have international campaigns planned in the build up, during and post UEFA Champions League Final which will aim to maximise the impact of hosting the event for Wales, and drive longer term visitor benefits from the UK, German, French and Spanish Markets.”

A digital marketing campaign focusing on the theme of Legends runs until the end of March, attracting visitors to the Visit Wales website and [Facebook page](#). Print campaigns will include a supplement partnership with VisitBritain and women’s lifestyle magazine ‘Brigitte’ and a direct marketing campaign to Visit Wales’ database. Visit Wales will also work with influential partners such as Flybe, P&O Ferries, Dertour, Tui Wolters Reisen, DFDS Seaways and KLM Germany.

[Finance Secretary urges Treasury to abandon austerity and boost investment for vital public services and the economy](#)

In a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford set out Wales’ priorities ahead of the Spring Budget on 8 March.

The Cabinet Secretary outlined his concerns about the UK Government’s intention to press ahead with £3.5bn of cuts to public spending in 2019-20 – cuts which could result in a further £175m reduction to the Welsh budget.

And he called on the UK Government to use the Spring Budget to announce extra funding for health and social care services.

Professor Drakeford said:

"I remain very concerned about the impact of further cuts to public spending and the UK Government's intention to press ahead with £3.5bn of cuts in 2019-20.

"Our budget is already substantially lower in real terms than it was in 2010 as a result of the UK Government's years of austerity – additional cuts on top of those we are already facing could mean a further £175m reduction to our budget.

"These cuts are unnecessary and counter-productive – now is the time for the UK Government to end its damaging policy of austerity and provide a much-needed fiscal stimulus to boost economic confidence and support vital public services.

"Over the winter, we have seen significant pressures in health and social care services across the UK. It was disappointing that the UK Government did not take the opportunity to provide extra funding for these services in the Autumn Statement.

"I urge the UK Government to take action in this Budget to increase funding for health and social care in recognition of the very real pressures these services are facing."

In his letter to the Chief Secretary for the Treasury, the Cabinet Secretary reiterated the Welsh Government's commitment to the Swansea Bay City Deal proposal and called on the UK Government to act to ensure the wider ambitions for the Swansea region are realised, including:

- Using the Spring Budget as an opportunity to sign the Swansea Bay City Deal;
- Taking forward the Hendry Report on Tidal Energy and calling for detailed discussions between the Welsh and UK governments to maximise the opportunities for the Welsh and UK economies;
- Confirming the electrification of the Great Western mainline to Swansea will be delivered immediately after electrification to Cardiff is completed in 2018.

Professor Drakeford added:

"Good progress has been made with the Swansea Bay City Deal proposal and it has been my – and the Welsh Government's view that the deal is ready to be signed.

"The Budget is an ideal opportunity for the UK Government to bring this deal to a conclusion and I welcome the positive comments by the Chancellor in the House of Commons recently, which provided a strong signal this is achievable."

Welsh Government and GPC Wales agree changes to the GP contract for 2017/18

As a result of the agreed changes to the contract investment in general medical service will increase by approximately £27m.

This investment includes an uplift of 2.7% for GP pay and expenses for 2017/18 which covers:

- a pay increase of 1%;
- a general expenses uplift of 1.4% to cover practice costs;
- a contribution towards the rising costs of professional indemnity;
- a contribution towards the increased costs of the pensions administration ;
- an increase in funding for maternity, parental leave and sickness absence;
- a contribution towards the business improvement levy.

The investment also includes provision for new enhanced services covering care homes; warfarin management , diabetes and the delivery of secondary care initiated phlebotomy test. GP practices will provide;

- an enhanced service to all 22,700 nursing and residential care home residents in Wales, aimed at reducing variations in care;
- a new Diabetes Local Enhanced Service will be offered by all GP practices providing a more comprehensive package of care to patients across Wales;
- all GPs in Wales will offer a new Warfarin management service., meeting NICE guidelines ensuring the service is carried out in the practice where other health issues and prescribing changes are discussed;
- resources to recognise the workload associated with undertaking phlebotomy requests generated from outside the practice.

GPC Wales, Welsh Government and NHS Wales have also agreed to work in close collaboration in 2017/18 to modernise the contract to better meet the needs of the public and GPs. This includes:

- improving access to services;
- reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and improving ways in which the quality of care is monitored;
- addressing the rising costs of GP professional indemnity.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“In Wales, our collaborative approach to the challenge of providing high-quality healthcare sets us apart.

“We have worked closely with our GP colleagues to create solutions that deliver the best care for patients. I’m confident that this approach of working in partnership is the right one, as we continue to transform primary care in Wales. It provides a strong platform for GPs to continue to provide high quality, sustainable, healthcare”

Chair of GPC Wales, Dr Charlotte Jones said:

“GPC Wales welcomes the collaborative approach taken by Welsh Government to help address the challenges facing GPs in Wales. I am certain that this approach will deliver the best outcomes for GPs and patients alike.

“The contract changes announced today will be part of a longer piece of work to review the entire contract and make it fit for the future.

“GPC Wales is looking forward to engaging in ongoing collaborative discussions over the months ahead.

“Additionally, we welcome the ongoing investment into clusters, the recently announced £40m for premises development, and the £95m for training healthcare professionals that will support primary care. These funds go hand in hand with today’s announcement, with the ultimate aim of strengthening primary care.”

[Welsh teachers return from CERN to teach what matters](#)

Last month 24 physics teachers from all over Wales visited the site of the large hadron collider in Geneva to learn more about the latest discoveries in particle physics, as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The CERN teacher placement scheme, organised by Welsh Government, supported by the National STEM Learning Centre in York and funded by Project ENTHUSE and Dr Lyn Evans, provides teachers the opportunity to attend lectures and learn about CERN’s facilities, functions and operation from the scientists and engineers who work there. Dr Evans from Aberdare, is the former Director of the Large Hadron Collider project, and acts as course co-ordinator for the four-day visit.

Dr Evans said,

“Our teachers are our greatest asset and deserve all the support we can give them. At CERN they experience a vibrant atmosphere and interact with front-line scientists. I hope that they can take their enthusiasm back to the classroom and inspire more budding young scientists, engineers and technicians, which are needed for Wales to compete in the 21st century high-tech world.”

Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams said,

“Opportunities like this are vital if our teaching workforce is to better understand and communicate the application of real world science and technology. I want to ensure that our teaching workforce is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to guide our young people’s learning in STEM subjects.

“Last month I announced the creation of a National Network for Excellence in Science and Technology (NNEST). The Science Network will be critical to supporting teachers of science and technology for those aged 3 to 18 through ready access to global developments in teaching and learning. I expect the network to consider closely the type of professional development offered by CERN, how that can be best communicated to teachers and expand such opportunities in the fields of chemistry, biology and engineering in the future.”

Chris Allton, professor of Theoretical Physics at Swansea University, said,

“To witness cutting-edge science first hand and to be able to bring this experience to life back in the classroom will prove inspirational for our pupils. We are proud that we can showcase antimatter research done by Swansea physicists to the visiting teachers while they are in CERN. The feedback we have received from the group is that the knowledge and experience gained from this trip should make teaching of physics much more enjoyable and meaningful for the students.”

Simon Ealey-Fitzgerald, Curriculum Area Leader for Science at Llanidloes High, who attended this year said,

“The event was inspiring and enthusing (at times confusing!), and the wealth of subject knowledge of the CERN participants, along with the pedagogical knowledge and insight of our teachers is to be celebrated. This really was a chance for Welsh teachers to share ideas and strategies for the ultimate benefit of our pupils.”

The programme has been organised and designed by our own STEM team and CERN Teacher Programme co-ordinator Jeff Weiner to ensure the teachers have the opportunity to appreciate CERN and the work undertaken there; by attending lectures on Particle Physics, the development of particle accelerators, particle detectors, visiting the Large Hadron Collider, the Magnet test facility, the Compact Muon Solenoid detector and finally a visit to the Antimatter Factory.

Later this year, and for the first time, teachers will be able to attend a two week summer placement at CERN; the first time a residential stay has been offered to all school science teachers (not just physics).

Teachers who wish to apply should contact the team at Dysg@wales.gsi.gov.uk