

Welsh Government to help end use of unethical palm oil

This is the message from Economy Secretary Ken Skates who has said he wants to follow the lead of Greenpeace and food retailer Iceland, by taking a stance against the use of non-ethical palm oil, an ingredient which is becoming increasingly notorious for the damage and destruction it causes to wildlife and the wider environment.

The Economy Secretary wants companies operating in Wales to move away from using non-ethical palm oil which has been widely linked to issues including deforestation, habitat degradation, climate change, animal cruelty and indigenous rights abuse.

To progress this changes will be made to the Welsh Government's Economic Contract – a key component of the Economic Action Plan – which requires businesses seeking Welsh Government support to enter into an agreement with the Welsh Government that is specifically designed to drive responsible business behaviours.

Ken Skates said:

“The devastation and destruction caused by the use of non-ethical palm oil is high on the news agenda at the moment and I would like to pay tribute to the supermarket Iceland, Greenpeace and others for their work in raising the profile of this important issue.

“The campaign against the use of non-ethical palm oil is very much in line with the ethos of my Economic Action Plan which has driving sustainable growth and encouraging responsible business behaviours at its very core.

“It is now nearly a year since I launched the Economic Action Plan and I have been really encouraged by the positive response it has received from the business community. Indeed as a result of the Action Plan we now have 100 Economic Contracts in place with companies across Wales who are seeking our support.

“The Economic Contract is an obvious vehicle through which we can influence business behaviour and encourage responsible action . With that in mind I want to use the Economic Contract to encourage and assist companies to move away from the use of non-ethical palm oil to help reduce the use of this damaging and destructive product.

The Welsh Government is also considering how it can reduce the use of unethical palm oil in food and drink produced in Wales.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

“The impact of the unsustainably produced palm oil is increasingly becoming part of the public’s consciousness. The government and Food and Drink Industry Wales Board are committed to promoting sustainability. We want to encourage the food and drink industry to use sustainably sourced palm oil and this will feature in our joint consultation in spring 2019 on a successor food and drink action plan.”

[Search begins for new Chair of Social Care Wales](#)

Social Care Wales has a responsibility to protect, promote and maintain the safety and well-being of the public in Wales. It is an integral part of the Welsh public service and is a Welsh Government sponsored body.

Social Care Wales is responsible for promoting and maintaining:

- high standards in the provision of care and support services;
- high standards of conduct and practice among social care workers;
- high standards in the training of social care workers, and;
- public confidence in social care workers.

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The main duties of the Chair to the Social Care Wales Board is to make decisions, provide leadership, approve strategies, monitor performance and provide a final decision on how best to utilise expenditure within Social Care Wales.

The Board is lay led which means that there will always be more people who use services, carers and members of the public, on the Board than professionals from the care sector.

The new Chair will be eligible for remuneration of £337 per day and travel and subsistence in accordance with Welsh Government guidance, for a time commitment of 8 days per month (this includes Board, Committee and stakeholder meetings).

The new Chair would be expected to take up post from 1st August 2019.

The Welsh Government is also seeing to recruit one new Member (currently there are 13 lay Members on the board and this is the appointment of the 14th

Member.)

Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“This is an exciting opportunity for someone with a real commitment to improving the social care and early years’ sectors in Wales to use their skills and experiences to make a difference to both these vitally important sectors. They would be expected to help build confidence in the workforce, and to lead and support improvement in social care throughout Wales.

“I want to encourage anyone who thinks they can make that difference to apply for these important roles.”

[Minister tries out Glynllifon Digital playground](#)

Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig working with Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor is trialling LoRaWAN technology which allows things to talk to the internet without 3G or WiFi.

It features low battery usage, long range and low bandwidth which is particularly useful in rural and remote areas.

The trial, which also involves Gwynedd Council, will assess how the Internet of Things could benefit rural communities in Gwynedd.

Local tech developers and students have been working together to think how the Internet of Things could help solve some of the problems rural areas face and a number of sensors have already been placed around Glynllifon’s extensive grounds which, for example, can send an alert if a litter bin needs emptying, if a vaccine fridge is getting too warm or if a gate is opened during the night.

The project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government. It’s also funded by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Gwynedd Council.

Julie James said:

“It’s been great to see this development at Glynllifon using LoRaWAN technology, which is ideal for developing the Internet of Things in rural areas. I’m pleased it has been supported by the Rural Development Plan and I look forward to hearing the impact the project has made and what lessons can be learned for other rural

settings.

“In our Mobile Action Plan we have said we need to support innovative and emerging technologies, particularly in rural areas, and this is very much an example of that.”

Debbie Tebbutt, the college’s Assistant Principal, said:

“It is hugely exciting to trial this kind of technology at Coleg Glynllifon and shows our commitment to promoting innovation in agriculture and countryside management systems.”

Rhian Hughes, from Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig, said:

“There is huge potential for this type of technology in rural areas. This project shows the relevance of Internet of Things to rural areas and how it could help some of the challenges facing areas such as Gwynedd, like how to deliver better public services in remote areas, can community buildings be cheaper and easier to run and how to stop theft from farms; and if develop our own answers there are great opportunities for local companies to design and build new devices.”

Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig is one of Menter Môn’s LEADER programmes which looks for innovative solutions to the challenges facing the Gwynedd economy by piloting new initiatives.

Over the coming months, a Gwynedd Agri-tech IoT challenge has been created aimed at a group of students (from the Agri, Computing and Engineering dep) to develop their ideas, with input from local experts and a prize will be awarded to the best proposal/prototype in May 2019. For the computing and engineering students, this is a great opportunity to use cutting edge technology in a real-world setting and they will gain valuable experiences and what it is like to try to develop solutions for industries they may know nothing about. The Agri students will get a head start by learning how technology can be used on a working farm.

New bond powers for infrastructure investment

The new powers, part of the 2015 St David’s Day Agreement, enable the Welsh Government to issue redeemable bonds to fund projects such as schools,

hospitals, roads and public transport.

They increase the range of borrowing options available to the Welsh Government.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“At a time when our capital budgets are continuing to fall, these additional powers provide us with the full suite of borrowing levers so we can continue to invest in our ambitious infrastructure plans for the whole of Wales.

“We will always use least expensive forms of capital first when investing in infrastructure before using other sources of repayable capital, such as bonds.”

The bonds – in common with other forms of borrowing – must be repaid with interest and will have an impact on the revenue available to the Welsh Government to fund day-to-day public services.

[Consultation aims to strengthen support for autistic people in Wales](#)

The consultation proposes a new Code of Practice to strengthen support for autistic people and their families and carers. It will set out the requirements placed on public authorities in the following areas.

- Arrangements for assessment and diagnosis
- Arrangements for accessing care and support
- Arrangements for awareness raising and training
- Arrangements for planning, monitoring and stakeholder involvement

The consultation aims to ensure local health boards and local authorities and their partners understand their existing duties to provide needs based services, including support for carers.

Visit: [Code of practice on the delivery of autism services](#)

Vaughan Gething said:

“We have made a firm commitment to improve autism services here in Wales.

“We listened when we were told that despite progress, some autistic

people and their families and carers were still struggling to access the support they need. We renewed our national plan in 2016 which ensured we had in place a needs based approach to the development and provision of autism services.

“We also put in place a National Integrated Autism Service which is available in five regions in Wales and will be available in Western Bay and West Wales this financial year. At the same time we made significant investment in neurodevelopmental services for children and young people to improve assessment and diagnostic waiting times.

“Crucially, through existing legislation, the Code we will put in place will have strong powers enabling Welsh Ministers to take action to intervene where services do not meet satisfactory standards.

“This includes ensuring staff training, compliance with requirements to undertake assessments in a timely manner and to collect data as required. We will require local authorities and health boards to consider autism as a stand alone key theme when undertaking future population needs assessments, to be published in local area plans.

“The publication of this consultation document takes place at a time when there is significant discussion and debate about autism specific legislation in Wales.

“It is not additional legislation which is needed to make faster progress, but rather effective implementation of existing legislation and the new plans and services that are currently being put into place. The Code we are consulting on is key to guiding this.