

Aled Roberts to be appointed new Welsh Language Commissioner

Mr Roberts, who will be appointed for a term of seven years, will replace Meri Huws, when her term comes to an end on March 31st 2019.

Making the announcement, the First Minister said:

“It gives me great pleasure to announce my decision to offer the appointment of Welsh Language Commissioner to Aled Roberts. As a former lawyer, local government leader, school governor and of course, respected Assembly Member, he brings with him a range of skills and experience that make him ideal for the role.

“More recently, Aled has led the work of reviewing the system for planning Welsh medium education and worked closely with local authorities to improve their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, a role he will relinquish in order to become the Commissioner.

“I would also like to thank Meri Huws for everything she achieved during her term as the Welsh Language Commissioner. Meri has undertaken the role with great conviction and has worked hard to extend the rights of Welsh speakers. She has laid a firm foundation upon which Aled can build.”

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan added:

“The Welsh Language Commissioner’s main aims are to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh and to uphold the rights of Welsh speakers. Aled’s appointment is therefore vitally important in realising the Welsh Government’s vision that has been set out in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. It sets the ambitious target of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and increasing the proportion of Welsh speakers who use the Language on a daily basis from 10% to 20% which will require a great deal of commitment from everybody, including the Commissioner.

“I look forward to working with Aled to achieve these aims and to build on the work Meri has done over the last seven years.”

Aled Roberts said:

“I have always been passionate about the Welsh Language and have greatly enjoyed recently working with local authorities on their plans for Welsh medium education and assisting the Welsh Government

with their ambitions for the future of Welsh in education.

“I am excited about taking on this role, building upon the work of Meri Huws, and look forward to working to achieve the target set out in Cymraeg 2050 and ensuring Welsh speakers’ rights are upheld. I have no doubt of the scale of the challenge ahead and I am committed to forging effective relationships across Wales and beyond to meet it head on.”

[First Valleys Regional Park Gateway sites revealed](#)

Chair of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys Alun Davies named Dare Valley Country Park, Caerphilly Castle, Cwmcarn Forest, Blaenavon World Heritage Visitor Centre, Cyfartha Park and Bryngarw Country Park as the first sites.

Local Government Secretary Alun Davies said:

“The Valleys Regional Park is at the heart of our ambition to help Valleys communities maximise their rich natural and cultural heritage to deliver real social, economic and environmental benefits.

“Our Valleys contain some fantastic natural landscapes and cultural treasures. This Valleys Regional Park will kick-start work to raise their profile internationally, while better connecting them to our towns and villages and encouraging more active lifestyles.”

The £7m investment will start to connect Valleys with high-quality walking trails and cycle routes. It will support the development of a high-quality network of uplands, woodlands, nature reserves, country parks, rivers, reservoirs and canals, as well as heritage sites and connect them with our towns and villages.

Alun Davies will today announce the Discovery Gateways as part of an oral statement updating Assembly Members on the Our Valleys Our Future Delivery plan for 2018.

He said:

“As part of this work I have visited other regional parks across Europe, and the Discovery Sites announced today have a great deal

to offer visitors. From the fantastic mountain biking on offer in Cwmcaern Forest, to the industrial history of Blaenavon and the pageantry of Caerphilly Castle, there is so much to offer. With this investment we will work to make these sites world-renowned, while doing more to attract people locally to the landscapes and heritage on their doorstep. I intend to announce further sites in the coming weeks.”

Poultry farmers and pet bird keepers urged to prepare for winter Avian Flu threat

Since June 2017, there have been no detections of avian influenza in poultry or kept birds in the UK and the UK has retained its OIE country freedom status since September 2017.

There are some simple measures that all bird keepers, whether they are running a large commercial farm, keeping a few birds in their back garden or rearing game birds, should take to protect their animals against the threat of avian influenza in the coming winter months. These include:

- keep the area where birds live clean and tidy, control rats and mice and regularly disinfect any hard surfaces. Clean footwear before and after visits.
- place birds' feed and water in fully enclosed areas that are protected from wild birds, and remove any spilled feed regularly.
- put fencing around outdoor areas where birds are allowed and limit their access to ponds or areas visited by wild waterfowl.
- where possible, avoid keeping ducks and geese with other poultry species
- for poultry keepers in England, Wales and Scotland, sign up to a free APHA service to receive text or email alerts to any outbreaks of bird flu in the UK. In Northern Ireland, all bird keepers are encouraged to subscribe to a free text alert service by simply texting 'BIRDS' to 67300.

These measures are particularly important if you are in or close to one of the GB Higher Risk Areas. You can check whether or not you are in a Higher Risk Area by using our interactive maps.

A joint statement by all four of the Chief Veterinary Officers in the UK today said:

“Avian flu continues to circulate in many parts of the world and with the colder months soon upon us the risk of disease from migrating birds is increasing. It is critical that all keepers of poultry, including game birds and pet birds, act now to reduce the risk of transmission of avian flu to their flocks.

“Good biosecurity should be maintained at all times, including regularly cleaning and disinfecting the area where you keep birds and separating them from wild birds wherever possible.

“Keepers should also ensure they register on the Great Britain Poultry Register and we are pleased that new forms are now in place to simplify this process. Keepers in Northern Ireland must register their birds on the DAERA Bird Register. This can now be completed and submitted on-line”

All bird keepers across Great Britain should also register their birds on the Great Britain Poultry Register (GBPR). If you have 50 or more birds, this is a legal requirement, although keepers with fewer than 50 birds are also strongly encouraged to register. New simplified and user-friendly forms will speed up the process this year.

In Northern Ireland it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers to register every bird on the DAERA Bird Register, other than pet birds kept in the owner’s home.

Registering your birds means the government can contact you in the case of an outbreak and provide information on the steps to take to limit the chances of your birds getting the disease.

Last winter, the H5N6 HPAI strain of bird flu was only detected in wild birds and there were no outbreaks in domestic birds, either in commercial or small holdings. Although there have been no findings in the UK since June 2018 the virus is still circulating in wild birds in North Europe (including Denmark and Germany) and has caused outbreaks in poultry. In addition, the H5N8 HPAI virus continues to circulate in Eastern Europe, highlighting the need to stay vigilant.

The Government continues to monitor for incursions of avian flu and is working with the poultry and game bird industries; hen rehoming and pure and traditional poultry breeds stakeholders to help prevent incursions.

[Welsh solutions to celebrate Wales’](#)

rich sporting heritage and contemporary art

The two studies were published last week and over the past year, consultants have been working on two distinct studies. The Sport Museum for Wales was presented by Just Solutions while Event Communications worked on the National Contemporary Art Gallery Wales study.

Both sets of consultants spoke with a variety of stakeholders, the recommendations presented within the reports are drawn from those discussions.

The Sport Museum study recommends that there is investment in the current museum at Wrexham, to enable it to establish a National Football Museum for Wales. It goes on to recommend that a Sporting Heritage Expert Panel for Wales is established to be responsible for establishing a National vision for sporting heritage and an associated framework for action. Finally, the third recommendation recognises that many other sports in Wales merit attention but there are ways to do this other than creating more museums.

There are three phases to the National Contemporary Art Gallery study, and is a model that can be developed and taken forward in a number of different ways depending upon resources:

Phase 1 is the National Canvas, a co-commissioning of up to one hundred new works across Wales that would sit in the landscape, with artists working alongside local communities.

Phase 2 involves investing in the infrastructure already in place across Wales, providing us with a distributed method of delivery that can open up national collections and new works to audiences across Wales.

Phase 3 is the development of a national contemporary art headquarters, a permanent space serving as a vibrant platform for contemporary art.

The Minister, said:

“Wales is a nation rich in art and culture; our history and heritage are key elements of our character, and how those are expressed through art and sport is always worthy of further discussion and exploration.

This is an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on our successes in these two fields and consider how to adopt a Welsh solution to celebrate our sporting success and give a platform to our modern art. These studies are the beginning of a journey to finding an exciting Welsh model which will celebrate the best we have to offer and give as many people as possible access to these treasures.

We must ensure everyone can access, enjoy and participate in our rich and vibrant arts and culture.

It is clear that these actions are not for the Welsh Government alone and further conversations will need to take place. This report is the start of those conversations and following feedback on the recommendations, a decision on the way forward will be made in early 2019.”

View: [Sports museum for Wales feasibility study](#)

[Finance Secretary announces funding to improve employment prospects for people with sensory loss](#)

The £3.6 million JobSense project – supported by £1.8 million of EU funding and £1.1 million of Welsh Government funding – will work with 390 economically-inactive and long-term unemployed people with hearing or sight problems.

Each JobSense participant will have access to their own specialist caseworker to help them overcome barriers and towards employment – they will provide support ranging from overcoming transport challenges to raising awareness of the technology available to support sensory loss in the workplace.

Participants will also receive communication support from British Sign Language interpreters, lip speakers, palantypists (speech to text reporter), screen reading technology and advice about how to obtain grants from the UK government’s Access to Work fund.

The project will also work with employers to challenge stereotypes about sensory loss, identify suitable vacancies and inform employers about the support and technology available to people with sensory loss.

Professor Drakeford said:

“This funding will play a vital role in breaking down some the barriers people with a sensory loss face in entering work and helps to reduce the disability employment gap in Wales.

“Everyone deserves the opportunity to gain the skills they need to get a job. JobSense will help some of those furthest from the labour market enter the world of work and build rewarding careers.”

Rebecca Woolley, director of Action on Hearing Loss Cymru said:

“There are almost 90,000 people of working age in Wales with some form of sensory loss and we know that being deaf, having hearing loss or being blind or partially sighted does not limit anyone’s capacity for excellence in the workplace.

“We are delighted to receive this funding. Not only will it ensure that people with a sensory loss are supported to achieve their full potential but employers in Wales will be empowered to confidently support them to thrive in the workplace.”

JobSense will be delivered across north east Wales, Powys and south east Wales by [Action on Hearing Loss Cymru](#) working with Elite Supported Employment Agency and the [Centre of Sign Sight Sound](#) (COS).