

# Further £3m support for fisheries, environment and food industry to prepare for Brexit

Over £1.2million will help support research into future fisheries management. Leaving the European Union has the potential to significantly change fisheries management in the UK with issues around access to waters, sharing of quotas and tariff and non-tariff barriers. This project will help identify potential new Welsh fisheries and opportunities.

An initial £700,000 will develop sustainable brand values which will differentiate Welsh food products in a changing market.

Natural Resources Wales will receive £700,000 to assist with the provision of transitional Permitting and Licencing arrangements.

A further £550,000 will help meet the EU's stringent rules on wood packaging materials entering the EU from third countries and £96,000 will support the possible need for Export Health Certification to export produce of animal origin from Wales to the EU, if the UK should leave the single market.

The £50 million EU Transition Fund was announced in January 2018 and is already providing direct financial support to sectors across Wales to plan and prepare for the significant changes of Brexit.

Earlier this week, First Minister Carwyn Jones announced multi million pound support for Advanced Manufacturing through the EU Transition Fund to help some of our largest companies up-skill and prepare for a post-Brexit world

The Cabinet Secretary will outline the details of the five new projects at her Brexit Roundtable group later today.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“It is just over six months until the UK leaves the European Union and the risk of a ‘no deal’ looms large. A ‘no deal’ departure from the EU would have a catastrophic impact on our economy and jobs. The publication of the latest set of technical notes only further highlights the possibility of a world of new burdens, red tape, disruption and uncertainty.

“That is why it is so crucial that our industries put themselves in the best position and prepare for a post-Brexit world. We have said from day one that it is our role as a government to do all we can to help sectors prepare and adapt to these challenges.

“I am therefore pleased to announce today that five new projects will receive £3.2 million through our EU Transition Fund – it is a

big step forward in supporting our industries to get ready for what's ahead. In total, we've invested £6m through the fund for projects relating to my portfolio, providing crucial support at this critical time.

"We know that leaving the EU will be particularly difficult for the fishing and food industry. The funding they will receive through this fund will help ensure they maximise any emerging opportunities, ensure their competitiveness in changing markets and enable them to thrive in a post-Brexit world."

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## Thousands of children already benefiting from Welsh Government-funded childcare offer

The Welsh Government is committed to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year. The 30 hours is made up of the existing minimum of 10 hours of Foundation Phase and up to 20 hours of childcare with a registered provider.

The childcare offer is currently being roll-out across Wales, and is available in at least some areas in half of Wales' 22 local authorities. It will be available across the country by 2020.

During the offer's first year:

- 3,395 children have taken up places in settings offering the childcare offer;
- More than 574 providers are taking part in the offer.

During a visit to Buds to Blossoms Day Nursery in Ebbw Vale, Blaenau Gwent, the Minister also confirmed that following positive discussions with local authorities and using robust modelling, he is increasing the pace of expansion over the coming months and into 2019, having listened to working parents who wanted the Offer rolled sooner.

Since the introduction of the childcare offer at the nursery, the number of childcare workers employed there has increased from 8 to 26 – split over two sites.

By the beginning of 2019, every local authority in North Wales will be delivering the offer to eligible parents. The Vale of Glamorgan, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend, Monmouthshire,

Swansea and Neath Port Talbot are proposing to deliver the offer across their local authorities during 2019.

Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly and Ceredigion are already providing the offer across their areas to eligible parents. Newport will be delivering the Offer across their entire authority from October and Cardiff will begin once all the IT application systems are fully functioning and tested.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Since taking up post as Minister for Children in November 2017, I’ve seen for myself how well-received our ground-breaking childcare offer is among families right across the country.

“I’m delighted so many children and their families have benefited from the childcare offer during the first year. It’s allowing parents to either take-up or return to work – which is not only good for the Welsh economy, but it’s also reducing strain on family incomes.

“But that’s not all – our offer is helping to create high quality childcare jobs in communities across Wales, delivering on the Welsh Government’s pledge to help create better jobs, closer to people’s homes.”

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## **Housing adaptation system needs to be consistent and fair – Rebecca Evans**

At present the system for delivering housing adaptations in Wales is complex, which reflects the range of different funding sources and organisations involved in care and support arrangements.

The [consultation](#) sets out a range of standards that service providers of housing adaptations should work towards to make their delivery more consistent and fair throughout Wales. This includes setting expectations on communication and the quality of the service provided. The standards also include expected timeframes and provide clarity on what eligibility checks are required for each level of home adaptation.

The consultation also aims to set clear definitions of Small, Medium and Large Housing Adaptation. For example small adaptations may require minor modifications and minimal maintenance, such as hand rails or additional plug sockets. Large adaptations could include building an extension or relocating

a kitchen.

The service standards will be applied to all housing adaptations and relevant to:

- Local Authorities
- Care and Repair Agencies
- Registered Social Landlords
- Housing Associations
- Occupational Therapists
- Healthcare and Social Service Professionals

Rebecca Evans said:

“We want to ensure that the system of providing housing adaptations is more straightforward and that people who request adaptations can expect a consistent standard of service.

“Housing adaptations bring essential benefits to individuals and their families’ mental and physical wellbeing, as well as helping to reduce pressure on frontline services. I want to create a housing adaptation system in Wales that is consistent and fair and easy to navigate for people who need extra support to stay in their homes.

“I am keen that we continue to work with the sector to create service levels that apply regardless geography or type of accommodation. However, I want to ensure that we give flexibility to service providers to determine the best way to use their resources to meet these standards.

“We have worked closely with the WLGA, Care and Repair Cymru, the Older People’s Commissioner, Tai Pawb and many other organisations in the sector to create these standards.

“I hope to hear many more views from people who have experience of the system to help us make these standards as effective as possible.”

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## **Wales leads the way in helping people access crucial council tax discount**

The Welsh Government has been working to tackle low rates of awareness and take-up of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the various council tax discounts and exemptions which are available to support households.

It has been working jointly with MoneySavingExpert.com – the UK's biggest consumer website – over the last 6 months – to develop simple and consistent advice to ensure all households in Wales have access to information about their council tax entitlements.

MoneySavingExpert.com has an ongoing campaign to make sure people diagnosed as 'severely mentally impaired' and who are eligible for certain benefits receive the correct discounts on their council tax.

The Welsh Government has dedicated web pages and a simple guide that summarises the key information about the council tax support households can receive. It has also worked with MoneySavingExpert.com to improve communication, particularly about entitlements available to those diagnosed as 'severely mentally impaired'.

MoneySavingExpert.com is now calling on the rest of the UK to follow Wales' lead following an investigation it conducted across England, Scotland and Wales last year, which raised concerns about the inconsistent messages households receive on council tax discounts.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"Ensuring every household in Wales receives what they are entitled to in terms of council tax support is an important part of the Welsh Government's commitment to making council tax fairer.

"Our guide brings together all the relevant information and puts it in one place. I am grateful to MoneySavingExpert.com – and local councils – for helping us to develop this important and useful guide.

"We will continue to work with councils to encourage and ensure consistency in approaches to administering discounts and exemptions, not just for those with a severe mental impairment, but for everyone who is eligible."

Martin Lewis, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com, said:

"What should happen is those diagnosed as 'severely mentally impaired' and their carers should be informed of and offered the 'SMI' discount. Yet disgracefully, our investigation showed the majority of councils gave out the wrong information. Some staff in our cold-calling exercise even told people the discount doesn't exist, meaning there are huge differences in take-up across the country. That simply isn't right. We should be looking to help some of society's most vulnerable, not hinder.

"Plaudits to the Welsh Government for listening to our call and taking on the cause of those with a 'severe mental impairment'. Proper communication and education of staff is a great start.

“The hope is now that we can point to Wales as an example, the rest of the UK will follow suit. We’ll continue to make sure the changes made by the Welsh Government have actually worked for those trying to start a claim and suggest improvements if we come up with any.”

A full list of eligibility criteria is available on the [Welsh Government website](#) or [this leaflet](#).

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## “Ambition is critical for Wales’ historic past and future” – Lord Elis-Thomas

Priorities for the Historic Environment of Wales sets out how Wales’ historic sites can make a contribution which extends beyond their value to society and to our knowledge of the past.

The vision is based on four interdependent themes:

- Caring for our historic environment – to build on the great strides that we have made in recent years in caring for our irreplaceable historic sites
- Making skills matter – so that we have the skills across the sector to support their conservation
- Cherishing and enjoying our historic environment – to encourage greater access and more active participation in looking after our heritage
- Making our historic environment work for our economic well-being – to fully unleash the contribution the historic environment can make to Wales’ economy

Lord Elis-Thomas will tell Assembly Members:

“The historic environment sits at the very centre of our cultural identity as a nation. It tells the story of Wales’ place in the world, from its early beginnings to its role at the heart of the making of the modern world. It’s a precious inheritance that we must care for and pass on to our children to love, cherish and enjoy.

Many observers, both inside and outside Wales, have hailed us for having the most progressive legislation for the protection and management of the historic environment anywhere in the United Kingdom. I am very proud of that.

We now have a real opportunity for our outstanding heritage to be positioned at the centre of our future well-being. Heritage contributes so much to so many of our goals: a healthy and active lifestyle, our economic vitality, opportunities for lifelong learning and skills and a sustainable environment.

The historic environment is at the heart of our sense of pride as a nation – let's now unlock its potential to form the backbone of local economies, both rural and urban".