

Innovative products keep Wales competitive in global marketplace

- Over 1 million international visits to Wales in 2016 with record-breaking spend
- Industry leaders gather for Tourism Summit to discuss future challenges
- £2 million announced for projects to celebrate Year of Legends and Year of the Sea
- The Wales Way will be launched during Year of Legends while 2019 is named as Year of Discovery.

The number of international visits to Wales in 2016 was 1.074 million, and the associated spend was £444 million.

This is the first time since 2008 that Wales has attracted over a million international visits, while these are the highest spend figures ever recorded for Wales.

The news comes as leaders from the tourism industry in Wales and the UK have gathered for a Tourism Summit, organised by Visit Wales, to discuss future trends and challenges for the industry.

The Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“The tourism Industry in Wales is in very good shape. And the fact that we saw record breaking spend from overseas visitors last year and crossed the million visitors for the first time in 8 years is excellent news. We fully recognise how competitive the market is and the challenges facing the industry. Our future vision – especially in light of the EU Referendum result – is to do more again to build on this sense of confidence and to internationalise our reputation and approach.”

The first of Wales’ themed years was a great success, Visit Wales marketing activity for 2016 generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – which is an 18% increase on 2015. This shows visitors were definitely influenced by Visit Wales marketing before taking a trip to Wales. Today, the Cabinet Secretary announced the continuation of the themed years with a new ‘Year of Discovery’ in 2019 which will build on the three themes of adventure, culture and great outdoors.

The main focus of the Tourism Summit – which took place at the Metropole Llandrindod Wells, and was attended by 150 tourism leaders and speakers, was to discuss how Wales can remain vigilant to new emerging trends and changing market conditions.

Innovative projects are key to future success. Today, the Cabinet Secretary announced that £2 million had been approved for a total of 38 projects across

Wales under the Tourism Product Innovation Fund and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund. This funding will enable the private and public sectors to develop innovative projects that will stimulate demand and improve the visitor offer through supporting the Year of Legends campaign while also looking forward to the Year of the Sea.

The Economy Secretary also announced another innovative project which will be launched to visitors at the end of the Year of Legends. 'The Wales Way' will be a new world class family of tourism routes. The Economy Secretary, said:

“Although the routes will be centred around core road networks – which I can confirm will include the A55 Cultural Corridor to the north, the A487 to the west, and the A470 through the heart of Wales – they will be much more than driving routes. They will celebrate various modes of transport, encouraging visitors to discover hidden gems and immerse themselves in local experiences, providing the ‘glue’ that draws together and amplifies our existing tourism offer.”

A period of engagement with key regional and local industry partners and stakeholders will take place over the next few months to ensure that each route represents the very best of the regions.