

More than £10m for new ambulances and passenger transport in Wales

The new ambulances will be more manoeuvrable and meet the latest Euro 6 emissions standards.

The fleet, to be deployed across Wales, includes 25 new ambulances, 33 rapid response vehicles, 33 non-emergency passenger transport vehicles and 9 specialist emergency vehicles for major incidents.

The Welsh Ambulance Service currently has over 700 vehicles in its fleet, which cover an area of more than 8,000 square miles across Wales.

Since 2011, the Welsh Government has invested almost £55m in new ambulance vehicles for the Welsh Ambulance Service.

Mr Gething said: "I am pleased to be able to announce funding of £10.23m to replace some of our ageing ambulances and other passenger transport vehicles with more modern, fuel efficient and greener versions. This investment will enable the Welsh Ambulance Service to upgrade its fleet to ensure it has the most appropriate vehicles to deliver the best care for the people of Wales."

Richard Lee, the Welsh Ambulance Service's Director of Operations said: "Our ambulances and response cars in Wales are some of the most modern and well equipped in the UK and this funding will allow us to continue to replace our vehicles and crucially the clinical equipment that they carry as they reach the end of their working life.

"Modern ambulances and equipment are essential in order that we can continue to provide the best treatment and patient experience possible. It is also key for our staff who spend the majority of their working day out and about in the community.

"We are very grateful to the Welsh Government for their continued support."

Preparing the social care sector in

Wales for Brexit

£200,000 has been allocated from the Welsh Government's EU Transition Fund to fund research into how the Brexit process could impact on the social care workforce in Wales, and to help the sector plan for any eventualities.

The £50m EU Transition Fund was set up to help business, public services and others prepare for the impacts of Brexit.

The research will collect data on the make-up of the social care workforce and determine whether there are any geographic regions or particular roles within social care that are particularly dependent on EU nationals, which could be adversely affected, depending on the transitional arrangements and migration policy agreed by the UK Government and the European Union.

Having a clear understanding of the make-up of the social care workforce and the extent of EU nationals currently employed will allow stakeholders across local government, the independent and third sectors to identify whether there are any areas of particular vulnerability and to support them plan accordingly to ensure continuity of care.

It will allow stakeholders to ensure any contingency planning and preparations are proportionate to the level of potential risk. It will also provide reassurance both to the sector and to people receiving care and their families.

Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"Social care is a significant employer and contributor to the economy in Wales, with the adult social care sector employing more than 80,000 staff across Wales. The care and support provided by the workforce protects and supports some of the most vulnerable members of our society. This is why it is a cross-cutting priority within our national strategy, Prosperity for All.

"The sector is already facing a range of pressures, including recruitment and retention difficulties and increasing demand for care. The potential uncertainty Brexit could cause the workforce, especially for EU nationals and nationals who are from outside the EU, exacerbate these challenges. It is also important everyone working in social care feels welcome and valued for the role they play in delivering care to the people of Wales. This is why it's essential the UK negotiates a sensible Brexit, which puts people, jobs and the economy first.

"Having robust and complete nationality data which covers all aspects of the market, as well as other workforce data which could effectively be collected at the same time, will enable the Welsh Government to support the sector in identifying and planning for its workforce requirements post-Brexit."

Gerry Evans, Director of Regulation and Intelligence and Deputy CEO at Social Care Wales said:

“Having a skilled workforce with the right values is at the core of delivering high quality social care in Wales. Ensuring we have such a workforce to meet the growing demand for care and support is one of the main challenges the sector faces over the next decade.

“We know that individuals from the EU have made an important contribution to delivering quality care in Wales and this research will help us to understand approaches that need to be adopted to maintain and extend the social care workforce into the future. Social Care Wales looks forward to working with Welsh Government on this important work over the coming months.”

The data gathered will also be integral to the development of a targeted workforce strategy which will contribute to the delivery of A Healthier Wales, the Welsh Government’s long Term Plan for Health and Social Care in Wales.

Environment Minister announces National Park funding to continue at same level

To mark National Parks Week, the Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn, has today announced that Welsh Government funding for Wales’ three National Parks will continue at the same level as last year.

Friday 27 July 2018

The confirmation of the funding will provide financial security for the National Park Authorities through an additional £1.5million over the next two years.

The Minister has also published Valued and Resilient: the Welsh Government’s Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

The document outlines the Minister’s priority areas and provides clarity for the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), following a period of review and in preparation for the UK’s exit from the EU. It calls on the managing bodies to deliver on a number of priorities, including the Nature Recovery Plan, a refreshed woodland strategy for Wales and Cymraeg 2050.

Earlier this year, the Minister confirmed all of Wales' National Parks and AONBs will be retained and their role will not be weakened. The Minister has also allocated £3.4million to support a wide range of additional projects, including improving access, promoting conservation and regenerating some of their most fragile areas.

The Minister said:

"I want to provide security for National Parks during these uncertain times. I'm therefore reversing the cuts the Park Authorities were facing in their budgets, which means an additional £1.5million over the next two years.

Our stunning Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks play a vital role in delivering rich ecosystems, vibrant and resilient communities and provide a wide range of recreational opportunities. This announcement is proof of my continued commitment to ensure the designated landscapes and their communities prosper and flourish."

Time to "challenge ideologies" behind forced marriage and honour based violence

Every July, a National Remembrance Day is held to commemorate the victims of forced marriage and honour based violence across the world.

To commemorate the day in Wales, Bawso organised a Dialogue Day, held at the Butetown Community Centre in Cardiff yesterday, to raise awareness of forced marriage and honour based violence and to highlight services available to support victims and reduce isolation.

Yasmin, who alongside Nasir Afzal, was appointed as National Adviser for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) earlier this year, was invited to deliver the key note speech at the event and update on the work of the Welsh Government.

She said,

“We must start to challenge the ideologies which frame forced marriages and honour based violence. These are crimes, and we cannot ignore them.

“If we are to meet our ambition through the VAWDASV Act 2015, we require a societal culture shift. We must ensure we prevent this abuse of human rights where possible, protect those at risk, and support those who present themselves to services.

“We recently published Our National Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Framework which outlines some of the actions we will take to tackle forced marriage and honour-based violence. This will provide solid foundation and signal the Welsh Government’s commitment to making the aspiration of Wales being the safest place for women in Europe a reality.”

Mutale Merrill OBE, Chief Executive of Bawso said,

“Bawso has been working with victims of forced marriage and honour based violence for over 20 years and since 2011, we have supported 585 people affected by forced marriage and honour based violence.

We are pleased to hold a Dialogue Day which brings together professionals, members of the local community and survivors of forced marriage and honour based violence to share their experience and to discuss services and support available to people affected by honour based violence and forced marriage.”

Kim Ann Williamson MBE, who is the Inclusion and Community Engagement Officer for CPS Cymru-Wales, and co-chairs the Wales HBV/FGM Strategic Leadership Group said:

“Some of these crimes are among the most complex referred to the CPS. Being part of the Strategic Leadership Group allows us to share good practice and support those who report such serious crimes from an early stage.

“We are working with the police, Welsh Government and third sector bodies to ensure cases are recognised, robustly investigated and referred to the CPS.”

Young Carmarthenshire and Wrexham

farmers joint winners of Brynle Williams Memorial Award

Annie James runs a dairy farm in Llandysul, Carmarthenshire and is a new entrant farming in partnership with her husband Liam and her father Clive. Teleri Fielden is currently farming at Llyndy Isaf having been awarded the National Trust Scholarship in 2017.

The annual award was established in 2011 to recognise the contribution of the late Brynle Williams to Welsh agriculture, both as an Assembly Member and as a farmer. This year the award celebrates the achievements of young farmers who have excelled on the Welsh Government's newly established Young People in Agriculture (YpiA) forum and in preparations for its Future of Agriculture event in September.

Announcing the winner, alongside Brynle's widow Mary Williams, at the Royal Welsh Show, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs said:

"Brynle was passionate about agriculture and saw young farmers as the future of the industry. He believed, like I do, in the importance of investing in their future so they and the industry continue to thrive.

"Our newly established Young People in Agriculture Forum has helped us further develop a long term relationship with young people who aspire to be the future senior leaders of the agriculture industry in Wales. It is particularly important as we prepare for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead post-Brexit.

"All Forum members were considered for the award and this year as a first I have decided to present the award to two winners.

"Both Annie and Teleri have been enthusiastic members of the Forum, sharing with other members their personal experiences of establishing themselves within the industry whilst also contributing considerably to the arrangements for the YPiA Future of Agriculture event in September. I believe they are both worthy winners of the award.

"I would like to congratulate both Annie and Teleri and wish them all the best of luck with their farming careers."

Earlier this year a new £6m Young People into Agriculture scheme was launched to support new entrants into the industry. During today's event, the Cabinet Secretary announced that 94 people have progressed to the next stage and a new window for applications will open on 1 August until 29 August.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

"Attracting new and young entrants to the industry has been a priority of mine since I took over this role. Earlier this year we launched our Young People into Agriculture scheme, backed by £6m of revenue funding, and 94 people fully met the eligibility criteria.

"I will be opening a new window for applications on 1 August until 29 August to commit the remaining budget. This a great opportunity for young people to secure a sizeable level of support to kick start their business and I urge everyone who thinks they are eligible to apply."