

Housing and Regeneration Minister visits Anglesey homelessness project

Housing First is an innovative approach which has been proven to work, providing those who need it with accommodation and then offering them the support they need to be able to sustain a tenancy themselves.

Rebecca Evans met service users and staff at The Wallich in Llangefni and talked to them about how the project, which has been running for five years, is working.

Rebecca Evans said:

“It’s particularly impressive that 78% of people supported by the project have successfully secured and maintained accommodation, and although this project is small in scale, it is helping to improve peoples’ lives and is having a big impact.

“Last month the First Minister asked me to chair a new Ministerial group to support our work tackling youth homelessness, and to oversee the development of Housing First in Wales. We will carefully evaluate how Housing First is working as part of this work, including the Anglesey project.

“I am keen to see what lessons can be learned from this inspiring team, and what we can share with other pilot projects as we work with councils to spread best practice and develop Housing First approaches across Wales.”

Lindsay Cordery-Bruce, Chief Executive of The Wallich said:

“We were delighted to welcome the Minister to visit our team and our service users on Anglesey.

“We have learnt a lot from being the pioneers for Housing First in Wales and we look forward to sharing our best practice with the Ministerial group.

“The Wallich strive to design innovative projects to benefit vulnerable people using the latest and best evidence we have available to us. Our experience in Housing First has laid the foundations for working in implementing Psychologically Informed Environments across our projects.

“It is really encouraging to see the commitment from the Minister to allow this innovation to influence policy.”

Adventure hub to celebrate the best of Valleys natural resources and heritage

This week, Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas visited Pontymoile canal basin, Pontypool to meet with project partners and see the plans for the area.

The Joint project between Caerphilly County Borough Council; Torfaen County Borough Council and Glandwr Cymru – Canal and River Trust in Wales, is part of a wider Welsh Government EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to create 11 must see destinations across Wales. The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle project aims to develop outdoor recreation, tourism and leisure activity along the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal in Torfaen and Caerphilly and connecting upland area of Mynydd Maen.

Through investment in infrastructure and adjacent visitor hubs, the project will help develop the economic potential of the canal as a prime location to visit, live and work generating investment and employment for local communities. Visitors will be encouraged to take up adventure sports by making the most of the natural upland landscape and rich heritage that exists between Torfaen and Risca.

The main elements of the project are as follows:

- the construction of a Visitor Activity Centre at Pontymoile canal basin in Pontypool,
- infrastructure to enhance access to a new canal basin development at South Sebastopol,
- restoration of the canal in Cwmbran and along the canal corridor.
- increasing the navigable length of canal to form a working heritage attraction,
- providing additional visitor accommodation (glamping) and adventure hub at Cwmcarn Forest. This will link with new car parking and improved walking and cycling routes from the canal into the wider landscape.

The Valleys Taskforce has also this week published a first-year progress report, detailing the breadth of the work over the last 12 months. The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal is a key project that will deliver on the commitment within Our Valleys, Our Future to increase tourism in the South Wales Valleys.

Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“Projects such this one are at the heart of our ambition to help Valleys communities celebrate and make the most of their natural resources and heritage. Our aim through the Tourism Attractor

Destination programme is to focus efforts and investment on key projects in each region so we have a real impact on Wales' profile in this globally competitive market. This development will give people compelling reasons to visit the area and I look forward to plans which I have seen coming to fruition."

Councillor Fiona Cross, executive member for the environment at Torfaen council, said:

"In Torfaen we can offer a huge variety of adventure sports, from hiking, mountain biking, fell running and even paragliding in the hills of Blaenavon, to water sports on the canal and Llandegfedd reservoir in Pontypool. We also have our own ski slope and some of the best cycling routes in south Wales.

"This project will allow us to connect visitor facilities across Torfaen and Caerphilly using the canal and Mynydd Maen as a focus for water sports, walking, cycling and in some places horse riding between the various locations. The improvements it will allow us to make along the canal will also help support new local businesses and create local jobs."

Cllr Sean Morgan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Caerphilly County Borough Council with responsibility for economy and tourism said:

"I am delighted that the Mon & Brec Canal Adventure Triangle has been awarded EU funding, as this investment will encourage more visitors to explore the fantastic natural landscape that the area has to offer, as well as the superb facilities on offer at Cwmcarn Forest. The funding will enable a number of projects including the building of additional glamping pods and an adventure hub at Cwmcarn Forest. The new hub will provide a fantastic opportunity for informal recreation which includes an exciting new zip wire facility".

Richard Thomas, Glandŵr Cymru regional director, says:

"The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal is one of the most beautiful canals anywhere in the world. It's full of activity, wildlife and offers a completely different pace of life. We're delighted that it's been awarded this funding. The adventure hub will bring further interest to the canal, meaning more people can enjoy it and get the health and well-being benefits from its unique environment."

£3m investment for Wales' growing geospatial and space technology sector

Aberystwyth University, in collaboration with QinetiQ, will lead the Geographical Data and Earth Observation for Monitoring (GEOM) programme, which uses state-of-the-art earth observation satellites.

The initiative will help Welsh companies exploit satellite and drone technology to capture vital information for use by sectors, including agriculture, energy, security, environment, transport and infrastructure. This will enable them to develop market-ready products and services.

The programme is being backed by £1.9m of EU funding through the Welsh Government.

Professor Drakeford said:

“This is another great example of how the Welsh Government is investing EU funds to position Wales as a competitive and outward-facing nation.

“Driving innovation through world-class research and expertise in our universities alongside businesses will secure investment and employability in this fast-growing sector.

“Wales has benefited hugely from EU funding over the years and this once again highlights the importance of securing replacement funding for Wales once the UK leaves the EU.”

Aberystwyth University will work with up to 25 companies, which are already using satellite and drone technologies, to help address challenges affecting the different sectors. These include using drones to precisely map hazards such as overhanging trees or over steepened embankment slopes along railways lines. This type of information would be dangerous and expensive if collected on the ground.

Peter Bunting, from Aberystwyth University, said:

“With the advent of mobile technologies, apps and smart systems linking with geospatial data derived from space systems, these technologies are playing an ever-increasing role in our economy and day-to-day life.

“This rapidly-growing area is just beginning to realise the potential for extracting spatial intelligence from drone

technology. The GEOM programme ensures Welsh companies are at the forefront of this exciting and growing area, enabling job creation and the development of new products and services.”

Welsh Government seeks views on a low carbon future for Wales

‘[Achieving our low Carbon Pathway to 2030](#)’ presents a series of ‘ideas for action’ to reduce greenhouse gases, while maximizing the opportunities a low carbon economy will present.

The Welsh Government is required by law to reduce emissions in Wales by at least 80% in 2050, compared to levels in 1990, with interim targets for 2020, 2030 and 2040. The consultation focusses on key areas including agriculture, industry, power, transport and waste, to help reach the Welsh Government’s proposed target of reducing emissions by 45% in 2030.

Recent years have seen growth in a number of new greener industries, including electric vehicle and battery manufacturing, low-carbon energy technologies, low energy buildings and heating and cooling systems.

However, a large proportion of Wales’ energy still comes from fossil fuels, while a high share of the UK’s heavy industry is based here. Many homes have solid walls, making them more costly to insulate, and many homes are ‘off-grid’. The rural nature of much of Wales can make environmentally-friendly travel more difficult.

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

“The Paris Agreement not only sets the context for tackling climate change, but for the decarbonisation of the global economy. Action on climate change will result in cleaner air and water and will not only improve our health and wellbeing, it will lift people out of fuel poverty and create new opportunities for green industries.”

This consultation will open up a dialogue on how we tackle the challenge of climate change together in Wales.”

Economy and Transport Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“From embracing new modes and mechanisms of transport, to pioneering and manufacturing green technologies, there is huge

potential for growth in a low carbon economy. That is why my Economic Action Plan has helping business to future proof, innovate and become carbon light, or carbon free, right at its heart.

We must ensure Wales takes advantage of the transition to a low-carbon society so we can continue to compete with the rest of the World and ensure that the benefits of low carbon economy are felt in communities right across Wales.”

[Kirsty Williams praises schools following year of major reforms to Welsh education](#)

Last September, the Education Secretary announced a national mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap, and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.

At a conference held in Cardiff today, the Education Secretary explained how major changes to what pupils are taught, how they are taught and how their teachers are trained and developed are helping to transform schools as we know them.

One of the most significant and wide-reaching of these changes is the new curriculum to be rolled out from 2022. Over 200 pioneer schools across Wales are involved in developing six different Areas of Learning and Experience. This work includes embedding digital competence into all areas of teaching and learning and supporting teachers to develop the new curriculum.

A new independent report published today found that these schools strongly support the changes being made and are enthusiastic about their part in developing Wales’ new curriculum.

Teachers’ professional learning and development has been similarly instrumental to the national mission for education, with this school year seeing:

- New professional standards for Teaching and Leadership developed with the profession, for the profession;
- The establishment of a new National Academy for Educational Leadership to support all leaders in education at all stages of their careers;
- New accredited Initial Teacher Education programmes to be delivered in the academic year 2019/20;
- Plans for a new part-time PGCE and Employment Based Route into teaching from 2019/20.

Teachers and pupils will also soon begin to see the benefits of a £36 million fund to reduce infant class sizes, with the appointment of over 80 new teachers across Wales and a capital fund to build new classrooms.

Reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for teachers continues to remain a priority, with this year seeing a £1.2 million investment in the appointment of school business managers – helping headteachers to manage their workload and focus on raising standards and school improvement.

Kirsty Williams said:

“When I announced our national mission for education last September I said that we would never be able to achieve our ambitions if we just stayed still.

“That’s why the past year has been all about momentum – a drive for self-improvement that reaches right across our education system.

“We still have much work to do but I’m proud of the reforms that we have introduced in a relatively short space of time. I am also genuinely impressed by how everyone in the education system has responded.

“When I visit schools and talk to teachers and pupils, I am always struck about what they’re achieving and how they are improving – whether that’s in developing the new curriculum or discovering new ways of teaching and learning.

“In return, we are introducing the most comprehensive changes to teacher training and development in years, ensuring that our teaching profession are fully prepared and equipped when they start to teach our new curriculum.

“Our schools are changing, education in Wales is changing and I’m confident that our national mission is well on course to deliver the wholesale reforms that we need.”