

£33m for health innovation to boost economy and create jobs

£24m of funding comes jointly from the European Regional Development Fund and Welsh Government which over three years, will support Accelerate: the Welsh Health Innovation and Technology Accelerator. Accelerate will bring together clinical, academic and business expertise to develop and deploy new, innovative products and services within the Welsh health and care system.

A further £9m of Welsh Government funding will be used to create additional health innovation centres across Wales. The core aim of the centres will be to develop cutting edge health technology to improve the prevention, treatment and management of long term chronic conditions and take advantage of new and emerging technologies.

The money was jointly announced today (Wednesday, 13 June) by the Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething and Economy Secretary, Ken Skates.

ACCELERATE is led by the Life Sciences Hub Wales in partnership with Cardiff University, Swansea University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. It will work with industry partners to speed up the translation of ideas into new technology products and services, and to accelerate the deployment and adoption of new technology products and services into health and care, creating lasting economic value in Wales.

Organisations will be able to bid for money from the £9m fund to develop health innovation centres, similar to the Welsh Wound Innovation Centre and Respiratory Innovation Centre. The centres will bring together experts in health and business to develop, test and implement new ideas for the prevention and cure of chronic conditions as well as new and emerging technologies. The funding is on a loan repayment basis and it is expected that the centres will become self-financing by generating profits and drawing in funding from other sources.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Developing innovative new ways to prevent, treat and cure illness and disease is a vital part of the Welsh Government’s vision for the future of the NHS in Wales. The Accelerate programme and new health innovation centres fund will help develop new ideas for health products and services more quickly for use in our NHS and across the world.”

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“Our life sciences sector is thriving and worth around £2bn to the Welsh economy. This investment will help build on the expertise and

talent we have already built up in his sector. In the long-term I expect to see this investment result in hundreds of highly skilled jobs and support economic growth.”

Cari-Anne Quinn, Chief Executive Officer at the Life Sciences Hub Wales said:

“We are thrilled to lead the ACCELERATE Programme to support commercialisation and product innovation across the life sciences, health and care. The ground-breaking Programme offers an opportunity to deliver economic and patient benefit on an unprecedented scale in Wales. Formally launching on 2nd July, the Life Sciences Hub Wales looks forward to collaborating closely with our partners to support Wales in becoming the place of choice for innovation in health, care and wellbeing.”

[Letting Fees Bill to make renting simpler and fairer](#)

The Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Bill will:

- ensure tenants are no longer charged for an accompanied viewing, receiving an inventory, signing a contract, or renewing a tenancy
- permit letting agents and landlords to only charge fees relating to rent, security deposits, holding deposits, or when a tenant breaches a contract
- provide a regulation-making power to limit the level of security deposits
- cap holding deposits to reserve a property before the signing of a rental contract to the equivalent of a week’s rent and create provisions to ensure their prompt repayment
- create a clear, simple and robust enforcement regime for when offences occur.

The enforcement regime will allow for fixed penalty notices to be issued against anyone requiring a prohibited payment; if penalties are not paid Local Housing Authorities can prosecute offences through the Magistrates Court. Convictions for an offence could result in an unlimited fine, and will be taken into account by Rent Smart Wales when considering whether to grant or renew a licence.

Rebecca Evans said:

“In recent years we have seen a significant increase in the number of people renting in Wales. The private rented sector now accounts for 15% of all housing.

“This Bill builds on the work we have already done here in Wales through the Housing and Renting Homes Acts to ensure that those wishing to rent in the private sector can expect high standards, fair treatment and transparency.

“Fees charged by letting agents often present a significant barrier to many tenants, especially those on lower incomes.

“The Bill will mean that tenants no longer face significant upfront fees when they start renting. In most instances they will only need to pay their monthly rent and a security deposit.

“No longer will tenants be charged for an accompanied viewing, receiving an inventory or signing a contract. No longer will they be charged for renewing a tenancy. And no longer will they have to pay check out fees when they move out.

“I want renting to be a positive and widely accessible choice for people and this Bill will ensure that rental costs become more reasonable, affordable and transparent.”

Ready, set... Celebrate!

parkrun UK is collaborating with the NHS to help celebrate their milestone anniversary by hosting several special events across the UK, as part of their mission to encourage participation to make the world a healthier and happier place.

Hundreds of parkruns take place in parks and open spaces across Wales and the rest of the UK every Saturday. The community-led events are designed for people of all ages and abilities – including walkers and are all free of charge.

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can help control your weight, it reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. This is why increasing levels of physical activity is an important commitment within the national strategy Prosperity for All.

To stay healthy, the Chief Medical Officer guidelines say that adults should try to be active daily and aim to achieve at least 150 minutes of physical activity over a week through a variety of activities. Yet at present only 54%

of adults in Wales get enough exercise.

Before making his way to the start line, Dr Atherton said: "Participating in your local parkrun is a great way to get fit, for free.

"As a nation, we need to be healthier and more active to help reduce the risk of a range of conditions such as obesity, heart disease and to improve our mental health. These are issues that are putting pressure on the NHS, but that we can take steps ourselves to try and improve."

Double Olympic gold medallist Dame Kelly Holmes, who is supporting the parkrun NHS 70th birthday celebrations this year, said: "There is no doubt that increased levels of activity lead to improved mood, self-esteem and a wide range of health benefits. I know from first-hand experience how sociable and welcoming parkruns are, so it's fantastic to see it join forces with the NHS to encourage even more people to get active in this special year."

[Finance Secretary launches plan to end prison sentences for non payment of council tax](#)

Regulations will be brought forward in early 2019 to prevent any more people being jailed for council tax debt in Wales, pending the outcome of a 12-week consultation.

Unlike other forms of civil debt, courts have the power to send people to prison for up to 3 months for non-payment of council tax. A recent judicial review, brought by a woman from Bridgend, highlighted the number of people being sent to prison for council tax debt, in some cases unlawfully.

Professor Drakeford said:

"My view is that getting into debt is not a crime. The sanction of imprisonment is an outdated and disproportionate response to a civil debt issue.

"There is significant additional cost to the public purse of imprisoning individuals and such action does nothing to address the reasons for the debt owed to the local authority or to reduce the debt. In many cases, it makes the situation worse.

“We must also consider the longer term impact on the wellbeing and future prospects of people who are committed to prison and the effect on their families. There is also a knock-on impact on other public services, as more support is often needed by someone who is committed to prison and their family.”

Cases of council tax debt have increased following the UK government’s decision to abolish council tax benefit in April 2013. In Wales, to mitigate the impact of this decision, the Welsh Government in partnership with local authorities, developed a national Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS).

To increase uptake of CTRS by eligible households, the Welsh Government is running a campaign with local authorities and third sector organisations to raise awareness of the different types of support available to households.

Professor Drakeford added:

“The Welsh Government cannot take action in respect of the operation of the courts, as responsibility for this is not devolved.

“But we do have powers to amend the existing enforcement regime to remove the power to commit people to prison in Wales for non-payment of council tax. I believe this is the right thing to do at this time.

“There are other, more appropriate enforcement actions which local authorities can use to seek payment of civil debts.”

The consultation about the removal of imprisonment for non-payment of council tax is the next step in the Welsh Government’s commitment to make council tax fairer.

[Removal of the sanction of imprisonment for non-payment of council tax](#)

[Paddington passengers peruse Welsh food and drink](#)

First Minister Carwyn Jones will call in to visit the eight Welsh food and drink companies who are showcasing their products at the station and offering passengers the opportunity to sample and buy a range of high quality Welsh produce.

Passengers will be able to savour the delights of products from across Wales,

including award winning cheeses, preserves, cakes, ice cream and cured meats washed down with cider, ales and soft drinks.

It builds on previous events held at the station and is further recognition of the quality reputation of the Welsh food and drink sector in the UK.

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

“Welsh food and drink has gained a growing and well-deserved reputation for uniqueness and high quality. We have ambitious targets to grow the industry by 30% to £7bn by 2020 and are very near to meeting this early.

“Today’s event is yet another opportunity for Welsh food and drink companies to showcase their products outside Wales and is further recognition of the regard the sector is held in.

“It is particularly timely as we prepare to leave the EU. The food and drinks industry is a key ‘foundation’ sector for us post-Brexit. We are determined to do all we can secure a resilient and thriving industry in Wales after leaving the EU.

“I hope passengers at Paddington enjoy savoring the Welsh delights on offer at the station and take the opportunity to snap up the high quality products on sale.”