

Free drinking water along Wales Coast path to tackle plastic pollution

Addressing an Environmental Summit at the Volvo Ocean Race today, Environment Minister Hannah Blythyn will name the 870 mile Wales Coast Path as the first location for the roll out of a Refill scheme for Wales as part of the Welsh Government's ambition to become the world's first refill nation.

As the first delivery phase of a Refill Nation, the Minister will commit to delivering Refill into communities along the Wales Coast Path within the next year. The Welsh Government will work with towns, villages and food and drink businesses to sign up to become refill points.

Those signed up to this drive to decrease use of single use plastics in Wales will be visible to walkers through window stickers and be listed in a bi-lingual refill app.

The app will provide the public with a list of locations where free drinking water is available making it easier for people to refill their water bottles without needing to purchase further single use beverages.

In a further bid to improve the management of plastic waste, the Minister also said that the £6.5 million Circular Economy Capital Investment Fund would be prioritised on the recycling of plastics.

The fund will help Welsh businesses manufacturing plastic products to increase the recycled content of their products, keeping resources in circulation locally instead of being exported for recycling elsewhere, used as a fuel or ending up in landfill.

Hannah Blythyn said:

"I'm delighted to announce today that the Wales Coast Path will be the first location in our drive to make Wales the world's first refill nation.

"Wales is the first country in the world to have a dedicated footpath that stretches the entire coastline and we as a Government as very much looking forward to working with the communities along these 870 glorious miles to curb the use of single use plastic. This is just the first step in our ambition to become the world's first 'Refill nation'.

"More refill points along our coast will help reduce the number of plastic bottles ending up in the sea, which can have a devastating effect on our marine environment.

"2018 is Wales' Year of the Sea and with the Volvo Ocean Race here in Cardiff, it's great to be able to make this announcement at the

Environment Summit, which is an important step towards eliminating plastic from our seas.”

Anne-Cecile Turner, Volvo Ocean Race Sustainability Programme Leader, said:

“By committing to reduce plastic waste through the coast path refill scheme, Wales has, yet again, shown true global leadership in the continuing fight to address the impacts plastic pollution is having on our seas and the vast range of biodiversity they support.

“Collectively, we have a unique opportunity to preserve our Blue Planet. The Ocean Summit plays a vital role in helping to solve this crisis and announcements, such as the Welsh Government’s, only help to amplify that message and the need for urgent action.”

Clare Pillman, Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales, who manage the Wales Coast Path on behalf of the Welsh Government, said:

“I am delighted that the iconic Wales Coast Path is to play a leading role in Wales’ refill ambitions. NRW is committed to supporting this initiative in order to help protect our fantastic marine environment.

“Taking steps to eliminate avoidable waste will ensure that we manage our limited resources in a better way, which is good for the people, economy and environment of Wales.”

[New ovarian cancer drug approved for use in Wales](#)

Following the recommendation from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and an agreement between the manufacturer Tesaro and NHS Wales, Welsh patients with ovarian cancer will be able to benefit from the treatment.

Since the introduction of the Welsh Government’s £80 million New Treatment Fund new medicines such as niraparib (Zejula®) are available much more quickly, with the average time for new medicines to be become available after a NICE recommendation down to 10 days, well ahead of the 60-day target.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

“I am delighted that niraparib (Zejula®) will now be available to treat ovarian cancer patients in Wales, following the recommendation by NICE and negotiations with the manufacturer.

“This is another example of a new medicine becoming available to patients in Wales much more quickly, thanks to our £80m investment in the New Treatment Fund. Since its introduction more than 100 new medicines have been made available on the NHS Wales much more quickly than before.”

£5 billion investment to transform rail services across Wales

Following a rigorous procurement process under the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016, First Minister Carwyn Jones today (4 June) announced the Welsh Government has contracted KeolisAmey to operate and develop the Wales and Borders rail service and South Wales Metro working in partnership with Transport for Wales.

The 15-year contract will run from 4 June, 2018 until 16 October, 2033, with KeolisAmey taking over the Wales and Borders rail service from Arriva Trains Wales on 14th October, 2018.

A joint venture partnership of international public transport operator Keolis with infrastructure asset management specialist Amey, KeolisAmey will work in partnership with Transport for Wales, running all services under the Transport for Wales brand.

Transport for Wales is the not-for-profit company driving forward the Welsh Government’s vision of a high-quality, safe, integrated, affordable and accessible transport network in Wales.

The First Minister, with Transport Secretary Ken Skates, announced the new contract at a special event at the Railway Training Centre at Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw, accompanied by Keolis President Jean-Pierre Farandou and Amey Chief Executive Officer Andy Milner.

The First Minister said:

“This is an important moment for transport in Wales and begins a new chapter for rail services in this country.

“The way we shaped this procurement was different. We put passengers’ priorities at the centre of our thinking and threw out a challenge to all of the bidders to address the concerns they had

about seat capacity, journey times and service frequency. People said they wanted affordable fares and newer, cleaner trains and we have worked hard to ensure this is reflected in what we are launching today.

“This is a chance not simply to build a modern, forward looking transport system, but to use it as an important tool to shape the life of the nation around us. This is a landmark moment in the future development of Wales.”

The announcement comes as rail powers are devolved to the Welsh Government. This follows detailed discussions between the Department for Transport and the Welsh Government.

The agreement takes into account the fact that many of the rail services operate on both sides of the border between England and Wales and includes safeguards to protect all passengers using these routes.

Major benefits of the new Wales and Borders rail contract include:

- An additional 600 staff will be recruited to deliver the service in a range of roles and 450 new apprenticeships (30 every year) will also be created over the life of the contract.
- £1.9 billion will be invested in improving passengers' travel experience, including an £800 million investment in trains, boosting overall service capacity by 65 per cent.
- All trains will be replaced by 2023 when 95 per cent of journeys will be on brand new trains, half of which will be assembled in Wales.
- £194 million will be invested to modernise all 247 stations and build four new stations: Gabalfa, Crwys Road, Loudoun Square and the Flourish.
- Stations will be powered 100 per cent by renewable energy, at least 50 per cent of which will be sourced in Wales. This is just one of the ways that the new service will contribute to achieving the policy goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.
- Investment in active travel initiatives will include the installation of new cycle lockers and a target to achieve Secure Station accreditation for all stations.
- Passengers will start to see improvements in service levels from December 2018, with increased capacity on the valleys lines and new services between Chester and Liverpool.
- By the end of 2023, passengers will be able to take advantage of an additional 285 services each weekday across Wales (a 29 per cent increase). This will include improvements to the Ebbw Vale and Wrexham – Bidston lines as well as the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines.
- Sunday services will be boosted by 61 per cent with an additional 294 services across Wales, creating a true seven-day-a-week service.
- Smart ticketing will ensure that fares are more flexible and cheaper off-peak fares will be introduced including fare reductions in North Wales and at approximately 50 per cent of stations in the valleys.
- New technology will also help to reduce disruption and improve services.

- In response to customer demand, more frequent trains, reduced journey times and more flexible fares will make travelling easier and more cost effective.
- Greater capacity and improved services will also help to maximise the economic development opportunities provided by the new service, enabling people to take advantage of more and better employment opportunities.

Welcoming the benefits for transport and economy in Wales, Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure said:

“This is the first time a rail service has been procured and awarded in Wales, for Wales. It follows over four years of intense work to develop a bespoke, innovative approach and responds to the lessons learned from rail franchising and infrastructure delivery across the UK in recent years.

“Too often in our history, we’ve talked about the ownership models for rail, without also thinking through clearly enough what we wanted to do with the network itself. We now have a once in a generation opportunity here to correct this.

“I will be using the new cross-government delivery board I have set up through the new Economic Action Plan to work with Transport for Wales, ministerial colleagues across government and partners such as the Development Bank of Wales and the Valleys Taskforce to ensure we maximise the economic development opportunity we have in front of us.”

James Price, Chief Executive of Transport for Wales said:

“This is the beginning of an exciting journey of transformation that will dramatically improve rail services throughout Wales and its borders and we’ve put our customers’ needs at the heart of this transformation.

“This is more than a significant investment in rail services, it’s also an investment in the future prosperity of Wales. The people and communities of Wales will be better connected by new and improved rail services, opening up a wealth of employment, leisure and other opportunities.”

UK Rail Minister Jo Johnson said:

“This is a historic day for passengers because it puts more control of regional train services into local hands and benefits rail users on both sides of the border.

“We have worked closely with the Welsh Government to secure the

best deal and the new franchise will bring extra services and record investment. We are also investing £125 million to establish a new metro service connecting towns and villages across South Wales.”

Alistair Gordon, Chief Executive of Keolis UK, said:

“We are excited about the transformation we’re going to deliver here in Wales, working alongside Amey once again and in partnership with Transport for Wales.

“For too long the railways in Wales have suffered from under investment and, while the changes we need to make will take time, we are creating a platform for future economic growth and prosperity that will benefit all of Wales now and for generations to come.

“In five years’ time, the railway will be unrecognisable from what it is today thanks to the vision of the Welsh Government. We can’t wait to get started.”

Andy Milner, Amey’s Chief Executive, said:

“Building on our successful partnership with Keolis, which already sees us deliver two high performing services – the Greater Manchester Metrolink and London’s Docklands Light Railway – we are excited to be taking on the Wales and Borders contract.

“This is a great opportunity for us to use our joint capabilities to deliver a first-rate service for Wales and its communities. As well as creating new jobs and apprenticeship opportunities, we will be focused on upgrading the existing infrastructure and introducing new trains to significantly improve the passenger experience.

“We are looking forward to working with Transport for Wales in a partnership which will see the full replacement of all trains, and major upgrades.

“We are also looking forward to working with the very proud and dedicated men and women running the railway in Wales today, who will join us on this exciting journey.”

Lesley Griffiths visits Catalonia and Basque Country to promote Welsh food and drink exports

During the visit, the Cabinet Secretary will meet with various food clusters to see how they are used in the promotion of their food and drink industry and how Welsh Food Clusters can learn from these to help our own businesses increase their trade and competitiveness.

In the Basque Country, the Cabinet Secretary will meet the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to discuss the development of a new EU network of 'renowned food regions' – the REGAL network. The network is focused on developing food culture and supporting entrepreneurship and innovation. This visit is one in an ongoing exchange of Ministerial visits between Wales and the Basque Country as we continue to strengthen collaborative links between the two.

Food clusters are groups of businesses with a common interest working together for the benefit of all. They aim to remove the isolation of firms, especially SMEs and connecting them to innovative systems. There are over 450 companies involved in the Welsh Clusters, generating business through increasing collaboration within the sector.

In February, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the Welsh food and drinks industry turnover has increased and stands on the edge of meeting the Welsh Government's ambitious 30% growth target.

Welsh food and drink exports increased overall by 8% from £403.8m in 2015 to £435.6m in 2016, including a rise in the value of these exports to the EU.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Cabinet Secretary said:

"I am pleased to be visiting Catalonia and the Basque Country to promote our thriving Welsh food and drinks industry, to learn from the success of their pioneering cluster initiatives and explore future collaborative opportunities.

"We've seen Welsh companies become global brands, such is the high quality of food and drink we produce in Wales. Our Welsh food and drink Clusters are powerful engines for driving future growth and opening up new market opportunities for our industry. This visit will help us to build on this, enabling us to learn from the experiences of Catalonia and the Basque Country and to strengthen the links between our countries.

"There are undoubtedly challenging times ahead. The EU remains our biggest export destination by quite a stretch. That is why it is more important than ever that we use every opportunity to build

collaborative partnerships within Europe and learn from the successes of their food and drink industries.

“The food and drinks industry is a key ‘foundation’ sector for us post-Brexit. This visit is therefore particularly timely as we work to secure a resilient and thriving industry in Wales after leaving the EU.”

£2.5m to develop new ways to tackle respiratory disease in Wales

The money will be used to create a Respiratory Innovation Centre, bringing together health professionals, academic and business people to more quickly develop, test and implement innovative methods to tackle respiratory illness.

By helping to make new products and services commercially viable the Centre will also help create jobs and support economic growth as well as the obvious health benefits for patients.

The funding is for three years after which time it is expected the Centre will become self-financing by generating profits and drawing in funding from other sources. Three sites within the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University and Hywel Dda University Health Board areas are being considered to house the centre and a decision on that will be announced shortly.

It will be the first innovation centre for respiratory disease in the UK.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Improving the respiratory health of the people of Wales is a major challenge for our healthcare services. In 2016-17, 8% of the Welsh population reported having a respiratory condition, and respiratory diseases caused just over 15% of deaths in 2016. This new centre will identify promising new ideas to prevent, diagnose and treat respiratory disease and help develop them into products and services that can be used by the health service.”

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates added:

“Wales’ life sciences sector is punching well above its weight on a global stage and we have a wealth of academic and entrepreneurial talent here. This investment will help bring together the academic and business world to create new products and services to help

tackle respiratory disease. In the long-term this will help create highly skilled jobs and grow an industry that is already worth around £2bn to the Welsh economy.”