

£3 million investment to replace non-compliant ACM cladding on housing association tower blocks

The three residential high-rise buildings are the only ones in the Welsh social housing sector confirmed as having Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) systems corresponding with those which failed large-scale combustibility tests.

Rebecca Evans said:

“Since the terrible events at Grenfell Tower last year, we have worked closely with local authorities, building owners, managers, both the private and third sectors and others to gather a full and accurate picture of high-rise residential buildings in Wales, and to ensure that owners and agents are aware of Government safety guidance and taking necessary action.

“Newport City Homes acted quickly to safeguard residents, putting in place a number of fire safety measures, including fitting sprinklers. Now it’s our turn to support them with this investment, which will enable Newport City Homes to continue their commitment to resident safety, without compromising their vital plans to build more social housing in the city.”

£1.35m for museums, archives and libraries in Wales

The Transformation Capital Grant Programme is supporting, museums, archives and libraries to transform services for users, and ensure their future sustainability.

The Fund will modernise three libraries, in Ringland, Pyle, and Tonypany, creating new community facilities, and supporting the establishment of wider ‘hubs’ where people can access library services alongside a range of other amenities. Funding is also provided to contribute to the integration of library and heritage services in Carmarthenshire and Conwy. A new archive repository will be added to the existing library building in Carmarthen, and the Conwy Culture Centre development will see the establishment of a new cultural destination, providing access to the library, archive and heritage

collections.

Four museums will receive transformation funding to widen access to their collections, with support for refurbishment of The Judge's Lodging in Presteigne and for Llandudno and Pontypool Museums, to improve facilities and safeguard collections. Funding is also provided for Cardiff Story to create an innovative new 'guerrilla' service, which will travel around local communities.

Announcing the funding, the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

"I am delighted to be able to announce this funding of over £1.35 million for our museums, archives and libraries. I have seen first hand the improvements this fund has already made in creating bright, modern and welcoming spaces for everyone.

"The Welsh Government remains committed to supporting these important services. This fund will widen access for our communities, promoting cultural engagement, providing learning opportunities and supporting community cohesion and prosperity. I look forward to visiting the new facilities in due course, and encourage everyone to see what their local museum, archive or library has to offer. "

During his visit to Glamorgan Archives, the Minister viewed the 'Parliament and the First World War' exhibition which will run until the 28th of June. And during Year of the Sea, the Minister also had the opportunity to view material from the maritime and coastal communities collections.

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

"It's been a fascinating visit to Glamorgan Archives, and an excellent opportunity to learn about the excellent work of the service. The six authorities that fund Glamorgan Archives are to be congratulated on the outcomes of this partnership, which has resulted in a state of the art building and an excellent and innovative approach to service delivery. There's such a wealth of information on offer at the Archive – where people can find out about their families, communities – their story."

[Kirsty Williams announces focus on](#)

healthy relationships in major reforms to 'Relationships and Sexuality' education

Following a [review](#) of the subject by an expert panel led by Professor Emma Renold, Professor of Childhood Studies at Cardiff University, the Education Secretary has announced that this area of study will become Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) – a statutory part of Wales' new curriculum which will be in place from 2022.

At present, SRE is a statutory part of the basic curriculum in Wales but it is down to schools to decide their approach to the subject and this sometimes doesn't stretch beyond the biological aspects of human relationships.

RSE represents a major departure from these traditional approaches because it broadens this area of study and places an emphasis on forming and maintaining healthy, happy and fulfilling relationships.

Learners will also be given a much broader understanding of sexuality that is fully inclusive of LGBTQI+ learners and includes wider issues such as consent, domestic abuse and respecting diversity.

The decision to change the focus of this area of study to relationships and sexuality, as well as the decision to make it statutory, reflects its immense importance in terms of how learners understand themselves, each other, their community and society.

When Wales' new curriculum is in place in 2022, RSE will become statutory from the age of 5 to 16, but learners will not be taught about topics for which they are not developmentally ready.

RSE would simply continue with the same approach as the Foundation Phase in Wales (for children aged 3-7) which ensures that children learn about relationships with friends and family and how to stay safe.

Recognising that these changes must be accompanied by the right training and support for teachers, the Education Secretary also announced that there would be changes to SRE training in both initial teacher education and within the existing workforce.

To kick-start this process, £200,000 will be made available to education consortia so they can begin the process of identifying professional learning needs in this area. A further £50,000 has also been awarded to Welsh Women's Aid to develop resources and training for schools.

The Education Secretary joined learners at Ysgol Casnewydd in Newport to see how they are working across the curriculum to understand issues such as gender and sexual equalities and rights.

Kirsty Williams said:

“The days of traditional sex education are long gone; the world has moved on and our curriculum must move with it.

“Sex should never be taught in isolation for the simple reason that it is about so much more than just sex; it’s also about relationships, rights and respect and that must go hand in hand with a much broader understanding of sexuality. Anything less does a disservice to our learners and teachers.

“The fact is relationships and sexuality shape our lives as well as the world around us. They are a fundamental part of who we are and how we understand ourselves, each other and society.

“By creating RSE as a statutory area of study in our new curriculum for Wales, we will support our young people to develop healthy relationships, maintain good mental health and keep physically and sexually safe.

“Of course, thirty years on from the introduction of Section 28, we will also ensure that RSE is fully inclusive of all genders and sexualities and meets the needs of LGBTQI+ learners.

“Crucial to all of this will be ensuring that our teachers have the knowledge and confidence to provide the RSE our learners deserve. That’s why we’re providing to ensure that we get the training and professional development right.

“Thirty years ago Margaret Thatcher denounced local education authorities for teaching children that “they have an inalienable right to be gay”. I want all our learners to know that they have an inalienable right to be happy – this is the driving force behind the changes we’re proposing.”

Professor Emma Renold said:

“I am delighted that the expert panel’s recommendations have been met with such unequivocal enthusiasm by Kirsty Williams. Embracing and implementing the panel’s evidenced-based vision to transform Relationships and Sexuality Education, from effective pedagogy to teacher training, will, over time, ensure a relevant, engaging and high quality RSE that meets the needs of all children and young people.

“Underpinning the new curriculum with the core principles of rights, equity, inclusivity, protection and empowerment makes for a very promising future for RSE in Wales and takes forward some of the best practice already underway in primary and secondary schools in Wales, and internationally.”

While Relationships and Sexuality Education will become statutory as part of the new curriculum when it is rolled out in 2022, the change in name will be actioned as part of a refresh to guidance for the current curriculum. It is intended for this guidance to be published early next year.

As well as reflecting this name change, the guidance will provide schools with greater support on a range of topics such as education for LGBTIQ+ learners and prevention of violence against women and domestic abuse.

More information

Current Provision for Sex Education in Schools

All secondary settings in Wales, including special schools and pupil referral units, have the statutory obligation to provide sex education to their learners.

Sex education forms part of the “basic curriculum” in Wales (alongside Personal and Social Education (PSE) and Work Related Education). Schools are able to decide on the content and approaches they use when delivering the basic curriculum.

The Sex and Relationships Expert Panel

Giving learners the tools they need to maintain good physical, emotional and mental health and well-being is a priority if we are going to support them to achieve and maximise their life chances. This is a key priority in the Welsh Government’s Prosperity for All strategy and Education in Wales: Our National Mission.

To support these aims, the Cabinet Secretary for Education asked Professor Emma Renold from Cardiff University to chair an expert panel on Sex and Relationships Education. The panel was remitted to identify opportunities for children, young people and practitioners to inform the future SRE curriculum as part of the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience.

The Report of the Sex and Relationships Expert Panel

The SRE Expert Panel published their recommendations on the 13th December 2017. They made 11 recommendations.

The panel’s recommendations included that this subject area should be renamed Sexuality and Relationships Education and that it should be a statutory part of the new curriculum for all learners aged 3-16. To support this it was also recommended that specialist professional learning opportunities be created for the education workforce, both for those in initial teacher training and those already practicing.

Relationships and Sexuality Education in the new curriculum

The Cabinet Secretary for Education will be accepting the recommendation that this area of study will be a statutory part of the new curriculum.

Both the Expert Panel report and Estyn's recent thematic review of healthy relationships education (published in July 2017) provided evidence that schools needed greater support to provide consistently high quality RSE. By including RSE within the new curriculum, it is intended to signal the greater importance being placed on this area of study and encourage improvements in provision.

A change in name – Relationships and Sexuality Education

It has been decided, in discussion with the chair of the expert panel, that the name of this subject should be changed to "Relationships and Sexuality Education" (RSE). "Relationships" has been placed first to emphasise the importance of healthy relationships as a central topic within this area of study.

"Sexuality" has been included in the name of this area of study to move it into line with the World Health Organisation's definition of 'sexuality education', which encompasses the cultural, historical, biological and social factors that impact on how we establish relationships.

Relationships and Sexuality Education for Younger Learners

The Cabinet Secretary will be accepting the recommendation that Relationships and Sexuality Education should be provided to learners from the point they enter the education system. Relationships and Sexuality Education will be statutory within the new curriculum from the age of 5, as this is the age of statutory schooling.

All Relationships and Sexuality Education provided for children and young people must be appropriate to their age and developmental stage.

Delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education for younger learners is likely to reflect current provision, which is delivered as part of the Foundation Phase's Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity Area of Learning. Within this area of learning children learn about relationships with family and friends and how to keep safe.

Professional Learning

Professional learning will be crucial to translating the intentions of curriculum reform into practice, including future provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education. 'Education in Wales' reinforces our commitment to developing approaches to professional learning to ensure that all schools are better able to plan for curriculum change.

Inclusive RSE

At its core, Relationships and Sexuality Education acknowledges we are all different and have different needs. Through improved professional learning for RSE we will ensure that our teaching profession can better support all learners, including those that identify as LGBTQI+.

The parental right to withdraw from Relationships and Sexuality Education

There are no plans to change the principle of a right to withdraw.

Schools with a Religious Character

There is currently a statutory duty on schools to provide teaching regarding sex education which is appropriate to the age and religious background of their learners.

There are no plans to change the duty for schools, including those with a religious character, to provide Relationships and Sexuality Education that is consistent with their ethos.

Annex – The Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel

The Cabinet Secretary for Education convened the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel in March 2017. The group met 5 times over the summer and autumn. Their report was published on 13 December 2017.

The report and associated research paper can be found at the following links:

The panel was chaired by Professor Emma Renold, Professor of Childhood Development at Cardiff University. The panel membership was drawn from a range of stakeholders:

- Welsh Women's Aid
- BAWSO
- Public Health Wales
- Barnados Cymru
- Hafan Cymru
- Principle Youth Officers Group Wales
- Children's Commissioners Office
- Wales' Police Forces (All Wales School Liaison Core Programme)
- Estyn
- National Safeguarding Board
- NSPCC Cymru
- South West Grid for Learning
- Schools Health Research Network
- Schools
- Stonewall Cymru
- Learning Disability Wales.

New Economic Contract for Businesses

seeking Welsh Government support

The Economic Contract is one of the key policies of the Welsh Government's Economic Action Plan, which was launched by Economy Secretary, Ken Skates in December.

The Plan sets out the Welsh Government's new approach to economic development, which is focussed on building strong foundations for inclusive growth, supercharging the industries of the future and empowering Wales' regions.

Under the new Economic Contract, businesses seeking Welsh Government support will need to commit to the principles of growth, fair work, reducing carbon footprints, health, skills and learning in the workplace.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Our new Economic Contract is the start of a new and dynamic relationship between Welsh Government and business that is based on the principle of public investment with a social purpose.

"It means businesses seeking our support will actively collaborate with us and commit to the principles that we believe in – the principles of growth, fair work, health, skills and learning and decarbonisation.

"This contract is about engagement, incentive and spreading good practice, a genuine reciprocal 'something for something' approach that encourages business and Government to explore and test how a company contributes to the wealth and wellbeing of its workers and wider community.

"Many successful companies are already taking steps to adopt responsible business and employment practices and we want to encourage and support others to take a similar path."

The launch of the Economic Contract follows four months of positive engagement with the business community that has helped to shape the Economic Action Plan's operating model now coming into force.

The Welsh Government's five Calls to Action, designed to future proof business, have also now come into effect.

This means from now on, companies looking to qualify for business finance will be required to develop proposals that align to at least one of the Calls to Action. These focus on innovation and entrepreneurship, R&D and automation, exports and trade, high quality employment and skills and decarbonisation.

The Welsh Government is also :

- Launching its Economy Futures Fund which, in response to calls from business, streamlines and simplifies six Economy, Transport and Tourism funds, with more to follow later.
- Unveiling membership of its new Ministerial Advisory Board, Chaired by Sir Adrian Webb, which will inform policy making and provide strong and challenging external advice. The Ministerial Advisory Board will replace a number of Welsh Government sector panels, groups and boards that are now being phased out, simplifying the way the Welsh Government receives external advice.
- Establishing a cross-Government Delivery Board, chaired by Economy Secretary, Ken Skates to ensure the principles of the Economic Action Plan are embedded right across Government.

The Economy Secretary added:

“I have been really pleased by the way our Economic Action Plan has been received by business, and impressed by the contribution they have made to shaping it.

“ I am excited that we are now moving to the implementation phase with changes to the way we engage with and support business and to how we receive external advice. All of this is geared to securing inclusive growth, future proofing businesses and empowering our people and places to become more productive.

“Today is just the start, and I look forward to implementing the next phase of the plan, which will focus on our new approach to regional economic development and wider cross-government activity, later in the year.”

[Caergwrle set to become Cadw's 43rd castle](#)

The castle dates back to 1277 having initially been built by Dafydd ap Gruffudd. It holds a unique place in Welsh history as the last castle to be built by a native Welsh Prince and played a significant role in events which culminated in Llywelyn's death near Builth in 1282 and Dafydd's own capture and gruesome execution at Shrewsbury in 1283.

Lord Elis-Thomas said:

From Caerphilly to Caernarfon, Conwy to Castell Coch, we are a

country blessed with some of the most magnificent, imposing castles in the world, attracting record visitor numbers and boosting the economies of many of our towns and cities.

But there are a whole host of castles on our doorsteps that are, perhaps, less well known but both individually and as a collective serve as precious physical reminders of our history and our heritage. These, to me, are the true Welsh castles – those built or inhabited by distinguished Welshmen of the past – by Llywelyn, Lord Rhys and Glyndwr amongst others. Welsh Princes who fought for and over Wales and helped shape the Wales and Welshness we recognise today.

Cadw already cares for many of these castles of the Welsh princes including Dinefwr and Dryslwyn in the south and Dolbadarn and Castell y Bere in the north. I'm delighted that we've been able to work with the community council to add Caergwrle to their number – ensuring it remains open, cared for and accessible to all.

The Minister added:

I am keen for us to make more of the castles of our famous Welsh princes and their legacy and to make sure the long, proud history of Wales is told and understood through our castles and supporting materials. I hope to say more on how I hope to achieve this in the coming months. In the meantime, I'd encourage those across Wales who have not yet visited their local castle or want to understand more about the legends that live through our stone walls to explore and appreciate their local sites.

Caergwrle is a special place and I look forward to this new partnership ensuring the good work of the community council is continued – making sure as many people as possible can continue to enjoy it for years to come.

Christine Cunnah, Chairman Cllr of Hope Community Council added:

Hope Community Council is absolutely delighted to be in partnership with Cadw, which will ensure that our unique historical site of Caergwrle Castle is protected for future generations to enjoy. Together, we will aim to provide a special place for the local community and visitors. The Council would like to thank Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas for supporting this venture and also it is extremely grateful to Cadw for recognising the great historical significance of this site.