

Children's Minister announces £1.7m funding boost for play in Wales

Wales was the first country in the world to legislate for play. Under The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, local authorities have a duty to assess for and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

The legislation also directs local authorities to consider the diverse needs of all children and young people in their area, including those with disabilities.

The funding announced today will go to projects across Wales, which include:

- New facilities and equipment, such as a proposal by Blaenau Gwent Council to develop a splash park at Parc Brynbach in Tredegar;
- New technology, such as geocaching tracking equipment which will allow children and young people with additional needs and impairments to participate in treasure hunts and other games with support from their families, carers and support staff;
- Improvements to open space play areas, including improvements to park areas, woodland areas to ensure the best use of open space, including disabled access;
- Play initiatives and schemes delivered by the third sector for children and young people, including provision where families of disabled children can drop in at any time and offer support to each other whilst their children play;
- Play libraries which give children with disabilities access to therapeutic and specialist toys on loan;
- Free access to leisure provision for disabled children and young people, including free swim sessions;
- Art workshops to encourage team building and increase the participation of children with learning difficulties, gypsy traveller children and children from an armed forces background;

Funding will also go towards training on recognising the signs of autism and specialist activity training to enable play workers to engage with disabled children and young people.

In addition, the Minister has announced £30,000 funding for Play Wales to develop and deliver a social campaign aimed at parents and communities to help make their communities more playful.

Announcing the funding, the Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“I want Wales to be a country where all children and young people have a wide range of challenging and interesting opportunities to play and to enjoy their leisure time.

“There is increasing concern about the mental and physical health of children and young people. At the same time, there is growing evidence that playing makes a significant contribution to the fitness and well-being of children and improving perceptions of well-being amongst children and their families.

“The £1.7m funding boost will help local authorities across Wales to improve play opportunities for children across Wales – helping us to work towards creating a play friendly country.”

[Wales secures an extra €4.3m with Welsh Universities leading the way on collaborative projects with EU partners](#)

The projects are being supported through the EU Territorial Co-operation (ETC) programmes – a range of funding initiatives which bring together expertise from European regions to address common challenges and take forward innovative projects.

Welsh universities are leading on four of the projects through the North West Europe and Atlantic Area programmes.

The ALG-AD project, led by Swansea University, will receive more than €1.1m from the North West Europe programme and €700,000 from the Welsh Government. The project uses algae to develop new technology to clean up waste and cultivate animal feed and other products.

Swansea University is also leading on the MONITOR project, which investigates the reliability of tidal energy converters. The project is backed by €393,000 of EU funding from the Atlantic Area programme.

The USER-FACTOR project, funded by €376,000 from the EU, is led by PDR, a design consultancy which is part of Cardiff Metropolitan University. It will work with other design innovation agencies to develop new products and services, such as consumer goods and medical devices.

The NASPA project, which is led by Bangor University and involves Swansea-based Emerald Crop Sciences and Aberystwyth University, will develop products to improve soil biodiversity. It will benefit from €903,000 of EU funding.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“This package of funding will create new opportunities for our universities, businesses and specialist organisations to collaborate across Europe in a range of exciting areas, including tidal energy, medical devices, food and tourism to promote growth and jobs.

“As an outward-facing nation, we want to maintain and build on our international networks after the UK leaves the EU, especially through continued participation in co-operation programmes. I am delighted to see Welsh universities taking the lead on so many projects in innovative fields.”

The remainder of the 10 projects are:

- Atlantic Food Export, which aims to improve competitiveness and exports in the food sector. BIC Innovation, Bridgend-based business consultants is the Welsh partner on this project and will receive €189,000 of EU funding.
- BLUEHUMAN will develop blue biotechnology along the Atlantic coast. JELLAGEN in Pembrokeshire will benefit from €150,000 of EU funds
- The COCKLES project, which has Welsh involvement from Bangor University, NERC Bangor and Natural Resources Wales, will help develop aquaculture and recovery of natural stocks of cockles. It will receive €475,000 of EU funds.
- Swansea University is the Welsh partner in the biosciences project Enhance Micro Algae working on the industrial use of algae and are backed by €244,280 EU funds.
- Promoting geotourism, the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the GeoMon park in Anglesey are the Welsh partners in the Atlantic-Geoparks project, which will receive €226,000.
- The community energy scheme ECCO, will see Green Valleys, a community interest company in the Brecon Beacons receive €273,000 from the North West Europe programme.

A [funding call for the North West Europe programme](http://www.nweurope.eu/news-events/latest-news/new-targeted-call-on-renewable-energy/) is open until 26 April. In addition, €50m is available for renewable energy proposals. The deadline is 31 July. Welsh organisations interested in participating should visit: <http://www.nweurope.eu/news-events/latest-news/new-targeted-call-on-renewable-energy/>

The Atlantic Area programme is also seeking partnership projects proposals. The call runs until 1 June. For more information please visit: <http://www.atlanticarea.eu/news/60>

Brexit trade deal must not damage Welsh ports – Ken Skates

The latest figures show Welsh port share of overall UK freight traffic was 53.6 million tonnes, around 11% of the UK total.

524,000 lorries and trailers travelling to and from the Republic of Ireland passed through Welsh ports in 2016, with the vast majority passing through the Port of Holyhead.

This activity plays a crucial role in the Welsh economy, with the Welsh Ports Group estimating around 11,000 direct and indirect jobs were connected to Welsh ports.

The Welsh Government wants any Brexit deal between the UK and the EU not to disrupt this trade and include full access to the European Single Market and membership of a customs union to protect the Welsh economy.

Ken Skates said:

“Welsh ports play a significant role in the commercial life of Wales and the wider UK economy, acting as a gateway to economic hubs in the Republic of Ireland, the UK, the rest of Europe and the wider world.

“They support thousands of jobs and this must not be threatened by a Brexit. Any deal between the UK and the EU must preserve the efficient movement of goods and people that are, as a minimum, no more burdensome than the current Customs Union regime.

“Any changes to customs rules which add to costs, time, inconvenience and regulation could have an impact on the economy of Wales. 80% of goods carried in Irish registered HGVs between the Republic and Europe pass through Welsh ports. The UK Government must be transparent on how it plans to maintain a frictionless ‘soft border’ between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Welsh Government will not accept any outcome which has the potential to stimulate traffic away from the ports of Holyhead, Fishguard and Pembroke Dock in favour of another part of the UK.”

The Welsh Government’s Brexit trade paper outlines how the Welsh economy is best protected by retaining full access to the European Single Market and membership of a customs union. The EU is Wales’ biggest market, with 60% of identifiable Welsh goods exports going to the EU in 2017, worth £16.4 billion.

Lesley Griffiths thanks agencies for the progress made in Holyhead marina clean up

The clean-up operation, which is being undertaken by a number of agencies, got underway immediately after the Marina was badly damaged in last month's extreme weather and by Storm Emma.

Significant progress has already been made with an estimated 30.9 tonnes (916.5m³) of polystyrene recovered. An estimated 2752 litres of oil has also been recovered to date.

The Salvage operation to recover the vessels affected by the storms is also progressing well with 28 vessels recovered from shore and sea bed. With fair weather and steady progress, it is hoped this area of work will be completed within four weeks.

Outside Holyhead Harbour Authority area, more than four tonnes of polystyrene has so far been collected from Anglesey beaches since the incident.

A Control and Co-ordination Group was established to co-ordinate and help with the clean up operation and the salvage recovery. Responsibility for the clean up operation include:

- clean up operation within the Port Authority boundaries – Stena Port
- wider clean-up operation outside Port Authority – Isle of Anglesey County Council and Local Authorities further afield.
- vessel salvage operation at Holyhead Marina – Holyhead Marina/Stena Port
- advice on waste management plans – Natural Resources Wales
- technical assistance – Marine and Coastguard Agency.

Welsh Government officials provide advice on fisheries related matters related to the incident through the control and coordination group.

The Cabinet Secretary visited the Marina days after the disaster to see the damage first hand and has been receiving daily updates on the progress being made with the clean up.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“There is no doubt that the damage to Holyhead Marina has been disastrous for all the businesses and individuals affected. There has also been a significant environmental impact with debris and polystyrene entering the water.

“From day one, agencies have been working tirelessly on the clean

up operation and I want to thank them for their hard work and efforts. I saw first-hand the damage when I visited the Marina a few days after the storm and I have since been having daily updates from all the agencies involved.

“I have been clear that I am happy to give consideration to possible financial support for public infrastructure repair and environmental damage clean up and my officials are in contact with the Isle of Anglesey County Council on this.

“Thanks to the hard work of all agencies involved, significant progress has been made with the clean up operation with a great deal of polystyrene and oil recovered. This work will continue and I hope this provides some reassurance to the community that every effort is being made to restore the Marina and its local environment.”

Over £150,000 awarded to projects celebrating women

To celebrate the centenary of the first votes for women, over £150,000 of funding has been awarded to innovative projects that celebrate women in Wales, educate and support participation in public life.

Tuesday 10 April 2018

The twelve successful projects include:

- 4thcommunity in Rhyl will receive £14,146 to deliver a community arts project called A VOTE IS A VOICE with women from disadvantaged and under-represented groups, including the production of a short play on an emancipation theme
- Women Connect First will receive £19,975 to work with black and minority ethnic women in Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff and the Vale of Glamorgan to create innovative create innovative and practical solutions to increase their representation in public life
- Plant Dewi in Carmarthenshire will receive £11,433 to provide a programme of activities, including democracy workshops, a memory book and sessions on women’s suffrage.

Leader of the House Julie James said:

“We have funded projects across Wales that celebrate and increase people’s understanding of the women’s suffrage movement, projects

that help to improve people's understanding of democracy in the UK, encourage and inspire people, especially women to participate in public life, and involve women from under-represented groups.

"There are so many inspirational women who have shaped our history, and so many inspirational women out there today shaping our future. As we celebrate a hundred years since the first women in Wales got the vote, this project will celebrate and promote the role of women in our public life."

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