

Marketing partnership agreement with Qatar Airways will raise Wales' profile globally

The Qatar Airways service is Cardiff Airport's first route into the Middle East, with 150 onward connections from Doha. Links to and from Australia, New Zealand, China, India and Japan will be the most significant markets for Wales' tourism and business priorities.

The two year agreement will see extensive activity in key markets to raise the awareness of routes into Cardiff Airport. This will include consumer marketing activity and travel trade engagement in the key markets of Australia, China, India and Japan.

The announcement comes as Visit Wales, Qatar Airways and Cardiff Airport are on a travel trade mission in Australia and New Zealand to raise awareness of the new routes and what Wales has to offer visitors from Australia. During the past week, the team have met with more than 300 travel trade representatives in Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Auckland including appointments with influential travel trade representatives such as Flight Centre, Helloworld and Tempo Holidays.

The focus has been on promoting our world-class products, activities, events and experiences during Year of the Sea 2018 – as well as The Wales Way – the new family of three national scenic touring routes which cross the country's most epic landscapes as a way of showcasing Wales' fascinating history, coastlines and attractions – and give overseas visitors the confidence and information to explore more of Wales.

Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“It's extremely good news that we've been able to work with Qatar Airways on this significant marketing partnership agreement. The new route provides an unprecedented opportunity to enhance global tourism and trade links and showcase Wales internationally. The majority of international visitors to Wales visit as part of a UK-wide tour. This new route into Cardiff provides an additional UK entry point from Asia-Pacific markets.

“Our joint marketing agreement with Qatar Airways means that this is the first time for Wales to have an active consumer campaign in these markets and more activity will follow at key booking times over the next year. This will increase Wales' visibility in these markets both with consumers and with the travel trade and we look forward to developing and maintaining relationships as we work to increase awareness of Wales and what we have to offer – and welcoming more international visitors to Wales.”

Economy Secretary, Ken Secretary said:

“The launch of direct flights between Doha and Cardiff later this year offers huge opportunities for us to grow our economic links, not only with Qatar but also with a host of other significant markets including Australia, New Zealand, China, India and Japan.

“We know that Wales is a great place to live, visit and do business, but as we all work to negotiate the challenges and opportunities of Brexit , it is more important than ever that this message is being heard loud and clear across the globe. I welcome this Marketing Partnership Agreement which is one of many ways in which we are working to increase Wales’ visibility and grow our share of overseas markets.”

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker said;

“We are very excited to commence direct flights between Cardiff and Doha from 1st May this year, opening Wales to a global network of over 150 destinations. Cardiff offers not only a unique gateway directly into the heart of Wales but also expands our footprint in the UK offering visitors an even greater choice of destinations when planning their trip. We look forward to working with the Welsh Government to showcase all that Wales has to offer to our overseas passengers.”

Roger Lewis, Chairman of Cardiff Airport said,

“The opportunities that this new route offers Wales are going to be transformational for both business and passengers.

“Cardiff Airport is immensely proud to serve the people of Wales.”

Wales secures €90m of EU research funding to drive innovation

The Horizon 2020 Annual Report 2017, which was published last week, shows Welsh businesses have attracted more than €16m of funding and Wales continues to achieve a higher proportion of private sector participations than the rest of the UK.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Horizon 2020 provides real opportunities for businesses and organisations to be at the cutting edge of research and innovation.

“Our white paper Securing Wales Future and policy paper Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit emphasised the importance of Horizon 2020 to Wales and that it will continue to receive Welsh participation after Brexit.

“Horizon 2020 creates valued partnerships, which lead to direct economic benefits and has helped put Wales at the forefront of science and innovation.”

In the last year, Welsh organisations have won more than €30m of Horizon 2020 funding to drive forward ground-breaking projects with partners across Europe.

Cowbridge-based company Cymru Coal Ltd has benefited from Horizon 2020 funding, securing €1.3m to participate in the €7m IMP@CT project. It is part of a consortium led by the University of Exeter and involving organisations from France, Finland and Germany. Cymru Coal is sharing its significant expertise in mining and related machinery to create viable new methods of excavating small and complex deposits of metal.

Gareth Thomas, Cymru Coal’s managing director, said:

“We are delighted a small Welsh company is playing such a crucial part in providing the expertise needed to deliver a bespoke piece of equipment to the Horizon 2020 IMP@CT project. It’s rewarding to work as part of a team of partners with such varying areas of expertise.

“This project has enhanced our knowledge and understanding of hard rock mining. We are very appreciative of this opportunity and look forward to the potential benefits it can bring to Cymru Coal, the project partners and the countries of Europe and beyond.”

Business rates support for high streets extended

The scheme, which is unique to Wales, will provide additional support to around 13,000 small and medium-sized high street businesses across the

country, including shops, restaurants, cafes, pubs and wine bars.

The Welsh Government-funded scheme, which was originally set up for 2017-18 only, will provide eligible businesses with a reduction of up to £750 from their non-domestic rates bills.

Professor Drakeford said:

“This additional support, which extends the high street rates relief scheme into 2018-19, together with our decision to put the £100m small business rates relief scheme on a permanent footing from April ensures ratepayers across Wales are receiving support to pay their bills.

“Targeting support to high street retailers will help those businesses, which are affected by the current economic conditions and competition from online and out-of-town providers.”

[Almost £7.6m to revitalise town centres across Wales](#)

The Minister will visit a boutique hotel and also a bunkhouse in the town to learn how these projects benefitted from the funding.

The Welsh Government’s £20m Town Centre Loans Fund is helping to bring underused sites in town centres back to life. Once loans are repaid, the money is used again to fund new loans.

Caernarfon has benefitted from over £700,000 of Town Centre Loans, £250,00 of which has been used to help redevelop the Grade II listed building Tŷ Castell into a boutique hotel and restaurant. £60,000 was used to completely renovate a second property, Tŷ Glyndŵr, to create a bunkhouse, bar and café.

Rebecca Evans said:

“The Town Centre Loan Fund brings empty and derelict sites in town centres back into use. It supports activities that increase footfall on our high streets, tackle empty sites and help businesses to grow and prosper. Once loans are repaid, the money is used again to fund new loans.”

Projects to benefit from the £7.595m announced today include:

- In Gwynedd, a loan of £500,000 will be used to extend the regeneration programme in Caernarfon and Bangor town centres, and to also extend the regeneration work into Bethesda;
 - In Rhondda Cynon Taf, £975,000 will be used to help redevelop buildings in Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres;
 - and Swansea will benefit from £2,000,000 to regenerate sites across the city centre.
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Over £1.7m EU funding boost for Holyhead tourism sites

The aim of the project is to transform Holy Island into an iconic destination, making the most of its strategic location as a gateway for international visitors to Wales and the UK.

The project will include improving the visitor welcome at Holyhead port and railway station highlighting what Holy Island, Anglesey and North Wales have to offer the visitor.

The plans also feature improvements to key sites on Holy Island including the iconic St Cybi's Church and Roman fort site, and Holyhead Breakwater Park, including improved facilities and interpretation. Signage will also be provided to assist with connections between attractions.

The developments at Holyhead are part of the Welsh Government's wider EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to create 11 must see destinations across Wales. The project is designed to address business investment and employment growth within the tourism sector in the regions, and put Wales on the world map as a holiday destination.

Ahead of a visit to St Cybi's Church and Roman Fort site the First Minister said:

"Holyhead is the gateway to Wales and the UK for thousands of visitors every year. It has a rich history stretching back to roman and medieval times and has a wealth of natural attractions.

"This funding boost will improve and raise the profile of these attractions, encouraging visitors to spend more time in Holyhead. It will allow the town to make the most of its unique strategic location.

"This announcement is part of a wider programme of major investment in tourism to create a number of must-see attractions across Wales

and is a vote of confidence in Holyhead and what it has to offer.”

Anglesey County Council Leader, Councillor Llinos Medi Huws said:

“We very much welcome this announcement of investment to improve and enhance Holy Island’s role as a key visitor gateway into Anglesey and other parts of North Wales. This package will help us to improve the visitor experience at key locations, helping to promote what the area has to offer, making sure that visitors are made aware that they are in Wales and giving them a flavour of Welsh culture and heritage. In this way we aim to see greater economic benefits from tourism to local businesses and communities.”