

Welsh Castles lit up to celebrate LGBT History Month

LGBT History month aims to increase the visibility of LGBT people, their history, lives and experiences in our communities. This year's theme is Geography: Mapping the World.

The National Assembly for Wales has also organised for the Senedd in Cardiff Bay to be lit up with the rainbow flag colours.

Leader of the House, Julie James, said:

“As well as celebrating the contribution LGBT people have made to our communities, LGBT History Month provides an opportunity to reflect on the history of discrimination and prejudice LGBT people have faced, and for us to show our commitment to tackle these inequalities.

As this year's theme is Geography: Mapping the World, I'd like to recognise and celebrate with those countries around the world who are advancing equality for LGBT people, like Australia who have recently passed a bill allowing same-sex marriage. But there are also countries where LGBT citizens are not afforded the same rights as the UK and our thoughts are with those communities.”

New Plan to transform dementia care in Wales

Supported by an extra £10m a year, the Dementia Action Plan aims to create new ways of caring, training and increasing the number of support workers, increasing rates of diagnoses and strengthening collaborative working between social care and housing.

At a visit to Ysbyty George Thomas in Treorchy, Mr Gething met with support workers and volunteers who are taking part in new, innovative ways of delivering care for people living with dementia.

The community-led projects include intergenerational work with a local school and Grow Rhondda, a gardening project based at the site.

Since 2015 the Welsh Government has provided additional funding to support improvements in dementia care, including the introduction of dementia support

workers, occupational therapy support in older people mental health units, and dementia flexible resource teams working within our district hospitals.

The Health Secretary said the Action Plan would build on this work and bring together health, social services, the voluntary sector and communities to not only deliver support as flexibly as possible but also make Wales a leader in innovative dementia care.

He said:

“I have a clear vision for Wales to be a dementia friendly nation that recognises the rights of people with dementia to feel valued and live as independently as possible in their communities. This plan, developed with those who have lived with dementia and supported by an extra £10m a year, will accelerate achieving that vision.

As the Parliamentary Review made clear we need to look at new ways of delivering health and care services. Today I have seen some excellent examples of new ways of caring for people living with dementia in the community, like working with local schools and gardening projects. I want to see similar successful ideas rolled-out across Wales and this plan will help achieve that.

“It also sets out how we will raise awareness of ways to reduce the risk of dementia, ensure the wider population understands the challenges of living with dementia, improve diagnoses and support the families and carers of those living with dementia.”

County Director for Alzheimer’s Society Cymru, Sue Phelps said:

“For the 45,000 people affected by dementia in Wales and their families, the launch of Welsh Government’s Dementia Action Plan today is pivotal.

“We have campaigned long and hard, through our #45000reasons campaign, for a plan that recognises the rights of people affected by the condition. We hope this initial three year commitment through the Dementia Action Plan will bring about the changes that people with dementia have told us they need, such as; receiving a timely diagnosis and access to support services to enable people to live well with dementia.

“The real work starts now and the implementation of this Plan at a national and local level is key to improving the experiences of people with dementia and their families. This will only work with the continued inclusion and engagement of people who live with the condition, and by building and strengthening our dementia-friendly nation, where we all play an active role and are united against dementia.”

Progress against delivery of the plan will be overseen by a Dementia Delivery Assurance Implementation Group, and will include people living with dementia and their carers and families. The plan will be subject to a review after three years to ensure the actions remain ambitious and relevant.

“Tackling loneliness and isolation in Wales is a national priority” – Huw Irranca-Davies

The Minister said loneliness and social isolation is one of the most significant issues facing people in Wales, especially people aged over 80; as a result, tackling it is one of his top priorities.

Wales is already leading the way when it comes to improving people’s well-being. Two key laws have been passed in recent years – the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – which require public bodies to consider people’s wider well-being when providing services, to think more about the long-term, to work better with each other and with communities, to look to prevent problems arising or situations worsening and to take a more joined-up approach.

The Welsh Government’s national strategy, Prosperity for All will help direct the energy and resources of the whole public service to develop a coherent, holistic and long-term response to loneliness and isolation in Wales.

A number of initiatives are already in place to help reduce loneliness, including improved mental health support, free bus travel, free swimming for older people and inter-generational support to help older people get online.

In addition, the Welsh Government will:

- Identify areas of work across the government that could be accelerated to tackle the issue
- During 2018, publish for consultation a cross-government strategy on loneliness and isolation with a final strategy published by March 2019
- Commission work to assess the impact of loneliness and isolation on health and well-being and whether people experiencing these issues make increased use of public services.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Loneliness and isolation is a public health issue which can affect many different groups of people at a variety of stages of life – but in particular, it’s a major issue for many older people in Wales.

“It can have and does have a significant impact on people’s physical and mental health. As a government, we are committed to securing the best possible health, well-being and quality of life for people in Wales. So preventing people from becoming lonely and isolated must be a national priority for us, because it will not only improve people’s lives, but it will also help reduce demand for health and social services.

“I’m determined to use the energy and resources of the whole public service in Wales to develop a coherent, holistic and long-term response to loneliness and isolation in Wales.”

[We love free Wi-Fi on all Arriva Trains Wales routes](#)

The £1.5m Welsh Government investment means the whole ATW fleet including Pacer trains, Class 153’s, and the carriages used on the north-south Express have now been retrofitted to provide free-to-use Wi-Fi for all passengers.

Every train will carry the following sticker:

There will be information leaflets available at stations and Arriva will also run an awareness campaign for passengers, handing out free ‘I love Free Wi-Fi’ chocolate treats at busy interchanges.

Speaking at a launch event to mark the completion of the on train Wi-Fi project, Economy and Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This rollout should be a real boon to commuters and business users alike. I expect it to make a real contribution to our ambitions for a growing economy with strong businesses in productive regions set out our Prosperity for All Economic Action Plan.

“Importantly, our investment means that Pacer trains, Class 153’s, and the carriages used on our north-south Express all now have free-to-use Wi-Fi for all passengers. These trains amount to almost one-third of the fleet.

“Passengers across the Valley Lines and West Wales – including the Heart of Wales line – will now benefit from this vital connectivity. This is another example of our strong record of investment in the current rail franchise where we continue to fund additional services and capacity across Wales.”

Ian Price, Director at Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Wales said:

“Over the last couple of years, we’ve seen a definite shift in attitudes around the importance of connectivity for businesses.

“There has also been a significant growth in remotely hosted computing applications, with data and processing hosted ‘in the cloud’. Both small and large enterprises are increasingly utilising internet-based applications to manage their businesses.

“This is even more so where supplier-client relationships are concerned; where not only access speeds are seen as critical, but the speed of responding to social media content, images and data are potential gauges of the efficiency of a business to respond to their customer needs.”

Tom Joyner, Managing Director for Arriva Trains Wales said:

“The fact all our customers will be able to use our free wi-fi on every single one of our trains is brilliant news and we are delighted to mark the completion of the project.

We know how important connectivity is and being able to be productive during your journey, check your onward travel plans or simply catch up on social media will make a real difference to our customers.”

“Customers have frequently been asking for Wi-Fi on-board our trains and this has been a really significant project which has taken careful planning and hundreds of staff hours to deliver successfully without impacting on services.”

[Vacant land tax idea to be used to test Wales Act powers](#)

The Cabinet Secretary will today set out the next steps for proposing a new Welsh tax as part of the tax policy work plan for 2018.

Since announcing a shortlist of 4 new tax ideas alongside the draft Budget in October, the Welsh Government has been examining the case for each of these.

The 4 tax ideas were: a social care levy, a vacant land tax, a disposable plastics tax and a tourism tax.

Although the vacant land tax idea will be used to test the Wales Act powers, work will also continue on each of the other 3 tax ideas.

The decision to take forward the vacant land tax idea follows engagement with stakeholder organisations, the public and across government.

A vacant land tax has been chosen both because it could help to incentivise more timely development, and because it could help prevent dereliction and aid regeneration.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Housing is a priority for the Welsh Government. A tax on vacant land could prevent the practice of land banking and land not being developed within the expected timescales.

“The Republic of Ireland vacant sites levy provides a useful starting point for how a vacant land tax could work in Wales.

“The existing model in the Republic of Ireland and the relatively narrow focus of the tax make this the most suitable of the 4 shortlisted ideas to test the Wales Act.”