

First Minister remembers victims of Holocaust at service

The national service for Wales, which will be held on Monday 29 January at City Hall, Cardiff will be hosted by the First Minister and the Leader of Cardiff Council Cllr Huw Thomas and led by the Reverend Canon Stewart Lisk.

The congregation will hear of first hand experiences from Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines MBE, who was one of the children to be saved from the Holocaust on the last Winton train in 1939. They will also hear from Dr Mukesh Kapila CBE, who was part of the first British team to go to Rwanda after the genocide and also worked in Bosnia where he witnessed the aftermath of the genocide in Srebrenica.

Eluned Anderson and Daniel Rees from Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr will also talk about their work as Holocaust Educational Trust Ambassadors which gives pupils from every school and college in Wales the opportunity to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau and speak to a Holocaust Survivor.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“I am proud to stand alongside the rest of the world to honour those who faced the most horrendous atrocities ever known.

“Today is an important opportunity to reflect on the way we live our lives today and challenge hatred and persecution that sadly still exists. It is our duty to keep the memory of those who died alive, and ensure such atrocities are never repeated again.”

Leader of Cardiff Council, Cllr Huw Thomas, said:

“Cardiff has a proud tradition as a welcoming city, a city open to people of all faiths and races. It’s important we remember those that died at the hands of the Nazis in the Holocaust and of course the other genocides which have happened across the world. Today we have a shared responsibility as human beings to fight these evils and to do what we can to stop them ever happening again.”

Representatives from Organisations including Race Equality First, Interfaith Council of Wales and various members of the Jewish Community will be in attendance at the service

Giving more people a say in local democracy

They reflect last year's Welsh Government consultation on reforming the electoral system in Wales, which received almost 1000 responses.

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies, said:

"Local democracy is all about participation. We want to boost the numbers registered as electors, make it easier for people to cast their votes, and give more people the right to take part."

Under the proposals to be announced this week, 16 and 17 year olds would be given the right to vote in council elections, along with all foreign nationals legally resident in Wales. Automatic registration would help ensure fewer people were missed from the electoral register.

Alun Davies said he wants councils to pilot innovative new voting methods, which reflect people's busy lives. These could include remote digital voting, mobile polling stations and voting at places like supermarkets, local libraries, leisure centres and railway stations.

To ensure that people have a clear choice, councils would have to post policy statements from the candidates on line and all those standing would have to declare any party affiliation. Voters will know what candidates stand for and have more reason to vote.

Alun Davies said:

"I am concerned we are still seeing far too many people, particularly young people, disengaged from the political process.

"There are many reasons for this but we must do more to make the process more attractive, welcoming and transparent. The proposals we're announcing this week will, we hope, help increase participation and improve the democratic process for everyone in Wales.

"I would like to see authorities in Wales take the lead and pilot a number of innovative voting methods, something put on hold at the UK level since the mid-2000s. I want to see whether, for example electronic voting or counting, voting on more than one day and in places other than traditional polling stations, could boost participation rates and improve the overall experience for Welsh voters."

Jessica Blair, Director of the Electoral Reform Society Cymru said:

“We are delighted to see the Welsh Government bringing forward these innovative ideas to modernise our democracy. It is an opportunity for Wales to lead the way in creating a political system that works for everybody and it is particularly pertinent as we recognise the centenary of the first women getting the vote.

“Last year our Missing Voices project, in which we talked about politics and voting with nearly 1,000 people across Wales, revealed an appetite for doing things differently. We believe these recommendations are the first step in making that happen.”

[UK and Welsh governments agree new Welsh taxes ready to go](#)

From 1 April 2018 Stamp Duty Land Tax and Landfill Tax will be replaced by Land Transaction Tax and Landfill Disposals Tax in Wales.

At a meeting in Cardiff today the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss, and Welsh Government Finance Secretary, Professor Mark Drakeford, agreed that, following an assessment of the Joint Exchequer Committee (Officials) on 10 January, the Welsh Government, Welsh Revenue Authority and HMRC are ready for the transition to the new devolved taxes.

Professor Drakeford said:

“The devolution of these taxes represents a significant milestone for Wales, helping us to make Wales a fairer nation and to grow the Welsh economy.

“Today’s meeting was also an opportunity to reflect on the good and constructive relationships which have developed in taking fiscal devolution forward over this period. I look forward to this continuing.”

Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss, said:

“We are committed to giving the National Assembly for Wales more responsibility to raise its own funding and that is why further income tax powers will follow next year. This will give the Welsh Government greater powers to shape their economy.

“The UK government is also committed to delivering for Wales, as demonstrated by the £1.2bn boost to the Welsh Government’s funding at Budget. I look forward to continuing our constructive working partnership.”

[Support announced for Ystalyfera landslip](#)

Following a series of landslides in Pantteg, the local authority approached the Welsh Government for financial assistance to help them deal with managing the effects.

The council has been working hard to protect lives and property, and to manage and mitigate the ongoing risk. The Welsh Government recognises the associated costs are substantial and above what the authority could have reasonably planned for and has agreed to provide some additional financial support.

The grant offered this week will support the range of costs incurred including making the area safe, supporting the affected community, analysing and mitigating the potential for further landslips.

Alun Davies said:

“It’s clear that the challenges the council face in dealing with the incident are unique, and the costs incurred are higher than any budgets could reasonably anticipate.

“This grant will help the local authority continue to protect lives and property as well as support it to address the longer term resilience and sustainability of the area.”

[A warm welcome home to Team Wales](#)

The ‘Welcome Home’ event was held at the Norwegian Church in Cardiff to celebrate the triumphant return of the four Welsh competitors who represented the UK at WorldSkills; the world’s largest skills competition, hosted in Abu Dhabi.

Having excelled on a national level at Skills Competition Wales and the WorldSkills UK finals, these young competitors represented the nation as part of Team UK, competing against the most highly skilled young people from 77 different countries across the globe.

The event recognised the incredible talent of the four competitors: Joseph Massey, 23, from Coleg Cambria, who competed in the Aeronautical Engineering category, Alfie Hopkin, 18, Llanelli, who competed in the Web Design category, Elizabeth Forkuoh, 20, from Llanelli, who competed in the Restaurant Service competition, and Ethan Davies, 21, from Mynydd Isa who competed in the CNC Milling competition.

Recognition was also given to their families, colleges and employers for supporting the competitors at every stage throughout their journeys to success.

Eluned Morgan, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, said: "I'm proud to welcome home these talented Welsh youngsters and celebrate their achievements as representatives of the nation. Elizabeth, Alfie, Joseph and Ethan are a credit both to Wales and their industries.

"The return of these young people to Wales highlights the importance of nurturing and supporting skilled people in Wales, for the benefit of the Welsh economy. Events like these showcase the talent that Wales and Welsh industries have to offer.

"These world-class individuals serve as an inspiration to Wales and demonstrate how we are a nation of high industry standards with a highly skilled workforce. We hope these success stories will serve as inspiration to other individuals to follow their examples and become experts in their fields."

Backed by the Welsh Government through the European Social Fund, these competitions promote the importance of developing a highly skilled workforce and world-class individuals.

For more information visit www.worldskillswales.org