

# £50m fund to help prepare Wales for Brexit

The EU Transition Fund – supported by an initial £50m – will be developed in partnership with Welsh businesses, public services and other key organisations, to provide tailored support as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

The fund will provide a combination of financial support and loan funding, and will support the provision of technical, commercial, export-related and sectoral-specific advice for businesses.

In addition, the EU Transition Fund will be designed to help employers retain and continue to attract EU nationals, who make a crucial contribution to Wales. The fund will underline Wales' welcome to people from other countries who have made Wales their home.

The fund will also provide dedicated development support for Wales' agricultural industry as it prepares for transition and the future once the UK has left the EU.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Brexit poses different challenges and opportunities for each and every aspect of Welsh life – from our local businesses and major employers, to our farmers, hospitals and universities.

“The EU Transition Fund will help meet the challenges that lie ahead. Developed in partnership with our businesses and public services, it will provide targeted and innovative support, which will help them survive and, indeed, thrive outside the EU.

“I am making an early announcement about this fund, so we have the greatest opportunity to design this fund with those organisations and businesses it is intended to help.

“My priority is to ensure Wales is in the best possible position to deal with the challenges and opportunities ahead. As a government, we are committed to providing solutions which work for Wales and we will continue to work with partners to make the most of every opportunity.”

The £50m EU Transition Fund is supported by an initial £10m down payment in the 2018-19 final budget. It builds on £5m allocated for Brexit preparedness over 2018-19 and 2019-20 as part of the 2 year Budget agreement with Plaid Cymru.

The EU Transition Fund will provide support in devolved areas.

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# New Year signals a new direction for Fairyhill

The project has had investment from Visit Wales' Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS) and support from the Development Bank of Wales.

The new owners have decided to concentrate solely on transforming the stunning grade 2 listed house into a dedicated special event venue that will open for its first event on 1st March 2018. The property was acquired by award winning wedding specialists, Oldwalls, last November. The business has secured funding of £200,000 of TISS with a £350,000 loan from the Development Bank of Wales.

Part of the refurbishment project includes a modern extension to the west wing of the old house which will create a stunning function space especially designed to host events. The room will be available for all types of functions, and will support the current push to attract more business events to Wales.

The Minister said:

"It's great to see the progress which has been made at Fairyhill and I'm delighted that we've been able to support this venture in an area where tourism is such a crucial part of the economy. When complete in the spring, Fairyhill will of course be a first class Wedding venue, but will also be a welcome addition to what Wales has to offer the conference and business market."

Manager Director, Andrew Hole said:

"We believe that the secret to Oldwalls' success is dedicating ourselves to special events and weddings and we plan to inject this award-winning formula into Fairyhill. We are heavily investing in the 24 acre listed grounds, interiors and new extension to ensure the much-loved property is enjoyed for centuries to come. The changes will inject vital funds into the local economy too as we are committed to using Welsh suppliers for the million-pound refurbishment project. We can't wait to offer wedding and event visitors the opportunity to revel and enjoy the magic of Fairyhill."

Raymond Walters, Portfolio Executive at the Development Bank of Wales said:

“Oldwalls is already established as one of Wales’ leading wedding venues. We’re pleased to be able to support this growing local business as it transforms Fairyhill into an exciting business and wedding destination.”

Fairyhill welcomed a record number of visitors through its doors last weekend for its wedding showcase event and will therefore be hosting a second open day on 13th – 14th January from 12PM – 5PM. The sister venue, Oldwalls Gower, will also be open. Wedding and exclusive event bookings are now being taken with key dates for 2018 available.

Fairyhill is renowned as one of the most iconic country house hotels in the UK. Its illustrious history includes playing host to Hollywood legend, Paul Newman’s son’s wedding. Fairyhill visitors have included a former British prime minister, Joan Collins and Katherine Jenkins.

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## [Additional £10 million to help relieve winter pressures in the NHS announced](#)

The funding will be used to support health boards, the ambulance service and social care services across Wales treat and care for the increase in people using services at this time of year.

It will help relieve pressure across the whole system from primary care through to hospital care and social services in Wales, for example enabling older people to leave hospital more quickly through the use of support packages where appropriate.

The Health Secretary expects health boards to work with their partners to determine the best use of the investment based on local pressures, priorities and capacity.

The Health Secretary has also taken action to relieve pressure on GPs by relaxing the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) element of the GP contract until the end of March 2018. The decision recognises the impact of winter pressures not only on the NHS, but on GPs and the wider Primary Care team across Wales. The action being taken will enable GPs and practice nurses to manage their most vulnerable and chronically sick patients during the winter period.

Vaughan Gething said:

“NHS organisations have been planning for this period since the end of last winter, supported by £50 million of funding from us to help

them balance urgent and planned care activity.

“Despite this significant investment, what we have seen in the recent days is a system that is under extreme pressure. During this challenging period, I want to provide the NHS in Wales with an extra £10 million of new investment to help front line staff care for our patients through this winter.

“We know both Primary Care and Accident and Emergency (A&E) services across Wales are currently extremely busy. The ambulance service has reported increases of up to 50% in life threatening incidents when compared to last year at times over Christmas. Our 111 service received twice as many calls as predicted on New Year’s Day and the Out of Hours service continues to face huge demands. This additional funding will go some way in helping relieve the pressure on the system.

“I would like to thank all of our NHS staff who are showing, day in day out, great resilience in responding with compassion for patients. Their commitment to their patients and the care they are giving should be highly commended. The system only works because of staff working within our NHS. They have my gratitude.”

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## [Global professional services firm to create 185 jobs in Cardiff](#)

The company will make Cardiff the base for its UK Affinity business. Affinity includes Aon’s consumer business and also specialises in developing, marketing and administering customised insurance programs and specialty market solutions for organisations and their members or affiliates.

The Cardiff Capital Region is already host to household names such as Admiral, Go Compare and Deloitte.

A large part of the success of the sector in Wales is down to the availability of talented staff. Access to training and employability projects such as the successful Welsh Financial Services Graduate Programme is enabling the sector in Wales to retain the best of Welsh graduate talent.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“At the heart of our recently-launched national strategy Prosperity for All: economic action plan is a commitment to develop a new and dynamic relationship between Government and business based on the

principle of public investment with a social purpose.

“The quality of life enjoyed by people living and working in Cardiff has long been recognised by employers; excellent road, rail and air connections coupled with genuinely affordable housing and top quality education and cultural facilities render Cardiff one of the most sought after locations in Europe for the financial and professional services sector.

“I am delighted to welcome Aon to join the growing list of prestigious financial and professional services companies who have enjoyed growth and prosperity here. I look forward to working alongside them as we build a fairer Wales and seek to deliver our ambition of prosperity for all.”

Martyn Denney, Aon Affinity MD, said:

“Cardiff has a strong and vibrant insurance and financial services sector with excellent customer service capability, which were key factors in the decision to open an office in the city. We’re delighted to be able to bring our business to Wales.”

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## [First Minister’s New Year message](#)

“As the year draws to a close, it is a good time to reflect on the events of the last 12 months and look ahead to the year to come.

“2018 offers us new opportunities and a chance to build on the progress we have made this year, and over the past 2 decades of devolution.

“There are certainly challenges and uncertainty ahead, but many reasons for optimism too. I look forward to my ministerial team and I driving forward our ambitious plans for Wales – focusing on growing the economy, creating jobs, supporting our public services and improving the day-to-day lives of the people of Wales.

“I want 2018 to be a year that unites us – a year in which we celebrate all we have in common and work together to build the fair, open, prosperous nation that we all want Wales to become.

“I wish you and your families a very happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.”