

Funding support for non-UK EU citizens ahead of Brexit

The Welsh Government's Supporting EU Citizens Grant Scheme will provide short-term funding for projects in Swansea, Merthyr, Newport and North Wales.

Third sector organisations currently supporting EU citizens in their local communities will benefit, meaning they can safeguard key services and prepare for new systems which are expected as part of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

It is estimated the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on 29th March will affect 80,000 EU citizens living in Wales.

The organisations receiving funding are:

- Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council – support for staff who specifically deal with issues facing non-UK EU citizens and workshops/advice surgeries to allow non-UK EU citizens to gain practical advice
- Merthyr Valleys Homes (in partnership with Polish Community of the Valleys Association) – information
- blitz including sharing information online and running drop-in advice days. Training sessions for the public and organisations about the rights of EU nationals in relation to settlement status
- Newport Mind – produce a formal report based on outcomes from focus groups and events summarising the main issues identified in both promoting the Settlement Scheme and the barriers encountered in engaging with the Scheme.
- North Wales Regional Equality Network (in partnership with BAWSO) – support for a specialised advice worker to provide advice and guidance to non-UK EU citizens in North Wales.

Announcing the funding at the Equality and Human Rights Commission's event in Conwy yesterday (Thursday 7th), the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt, said:

“With the continued and growing uncertainty those from European Union countries living in Wales are facing, it is imperative the correct information and support about rights and the Settled Status system are shared.

“We recognise that, in preparation for the EU Withdrawal, communities need additional and tailored support – that's why our excellent third party organisations and services are best placed to assist.

“We have a responsibility to every member of our communities, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. Wales will

continue to need migration from EU countries to sustain our economy and public services. We need to utilise every tool at our disposal to ensure these people are reassured that we value their contributions to our country.”

Additional to the grant scheme, the Welsh Government has already agreed £1.3million funding for an EU Citizens’ Rights Project to provide: additional resources to existing advice service providers, establish specialist exploitation in the workplace advice, deliver training to local authorities about eligibility for services for non-UK nationals, undertake research to identify inequalities and provide a website about the rights and entitlements of migrant communities in Wales. The EU Citizens’ Rights Project will become operational in March.

Transforming eye care services in Wales: Those at highest risk of going blind to receive prioritised treatment in UK first

It is estimated around 111,000 people in Wales are living with sight loss. This is predicted to increase by a third by 2030 and double by 2050.

Evidence suggests around 10% of new patients are at risk of irreversible sight loss compared to about 90% of follow-up patients.

Following concerns raised by consultant ophthalmologists and RNIB, the Welsh Government commissioned an NHS-led group to review the issues facing patients on waiting lists, particularly those who require ongoing treatment.

The £3.3m investment will allow health boards in Wales to start the necessary changes to transform their services.

Actions include:

- expanding services already established to move care closer to home, to ensure patients are seen in the most appropriate setting
- redesigning pathways to those nationally agreed
- introducing and further development of virtual clinics
- expanding the skill mix of staff, to include nurse injectors and optometrists to safely share care between community and hospital eye care professionals.

From April 2019, new guidelines will require hospital eye services to have procedures in place ensuring patients receive their assessment or treatment

by the most suitable person within a clinically appropriate time. This means that those high risk patients who need to be seen quickly due to their condition, should experience fewer delays.

The measures are based on priority and urgency of care required by each patient. Priority is the risk of harm associated with the patient's eye condition if the target appointment date is missed. Urgency is how soon that patient should be seen given the current state and/or risk of progression of the condition.

Wales is the first UK nation to introduce a measure of this kind for eye care patients.

Health Minister, Vaughan Gething said:

"Ensuring good eye care is absolutely vital, so we do not want people to risk their sight by having to wait a long time for a follow up appointment after having initial assessment.

"The £3.3m investment I'm announcing today will allow health boards across Wales to make the necessary investments to start to transform eye care services. This and the new measure we are putting in place will go a long way to improving services for people in Wales."

"We were the first government in the world to have an eye care delivery plan, and I'm pleased we are leading the way again by being the first country in the UK to introduce a performance measure of this kind for eye care."

RNIB Cymru's Director Ansley Workman said:

"Cancelled and delayed eye clinic appointments can leave patients at risk of irreversible sight loss. No one should lose their sight because of a treatable condition. That's why it's so important that all health boards meet the March 2019 deadline for implementing the new Measures and prioritise patients based on their risk of coming to harm.

"This investment from Welsh Government is vital and should transform services across Wales, making sure that those at greatest risk of permanent sight loss are treated quickly and effectively.

"We want to thank Welsh Government for their continued commitment to improving eye health in Wales. Now it is up to health boards across the country to make this positive change happen for their patients and lead the way for the rest of the UK."

Llangefni Link Road final section completed

During the visit to Anglesey today, the Minister said the completed scheme would bring great benefits to the local area and Anglesey as whole.

The Llangefni Link Road connects Coleg Menai and Bryn Cefni Business Park, key sites in the Anglesey Enterprise Zone, with the A5114 and A55 and will improve traffic congestion in the town centre. It is also vital in facilitating the delivery of Grwp Llandrillo Menai's Masterplan to develop their Llangefni Campus into an internationally-renowned Energy and Engineering Training Facility and supporting the expansion of Bryn Cefni Business Park.

The Link Road has been delivered in four sections with the Welsh Government investing more than £10 million in the scheme.

Ken Skates officially opened sections one and two of the link road in March 2017, before section four was opened to traffic in December 2017.

The project as a whole has received funding from the Welsh Government, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Ken Skates said:

"A high quality and connected transport system is absolutely vital to achieving economic growth in North Wales and I am delighted to officially open the final section of Llangefni Link Road which is key in enabling people to access jobs and services.

"This is an important project that will bring benefits both to the local area and to the island of Anglesey. It is also a great example of partnership working, with the Welsh Government, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority all contributing to the successful delivery of the scheme.

"I am particularly pleased that the scheme has helped support the construction of new business units on Bryn Cefni Industrial Estate and an extension to the Anglesey Business Centre, helping local businesses to grow and providing welcome job opportunities.

"The link road is also essential to the development of Grwp Llandrillo Menai's Pencraig Campus which will provide high quality education and training.

"The Welsh Government is investing hundreds of millions of pounds in transport infrastructure in North Wales and the Llangefni Link Road is a vital part of our vision of delivering better transport connectivity.

"The completion of this scheme is a clear demonstration of our commitment to Anglesey and the wider area.

"Following the recent news about Wylfa Newydd, we continue to put pressure on the UK Government into assuring us they are doing everything possible to bring this project to Anglesey and move things forward."

Anglesey's portfolio holder for Highways, Waste and Property, Councillor Bob Parry, said:

"The Llangefni Link Road will help secure significant economic benefit opportunities for Llangefni and Anglesey. It will provide a key driver for the expansion of the Grŵp Llandrillo Menai campus and further training opportunities for our young people. The project will also improve access to our Enterprise Zone sites and A55 expressway, and help overcome traffic constraints in Llangefni.

"I'd like to thank the Minister, Ken Skates, and the Welsh Government for their support in bringing this project to fruition. I would also like to thank both contractors, Alun Griffiths and Jones Bros, for their excellent work alongside the project team."

Anglesey Council Leader, Councillor Llinos Medi, added:

"Investment in infrastructure projects like the link road are key in delivering our economic vision for Anglesey. The County Council will work to secure additional support and commitment to finance other projects to drive economic regeneration on the Island. Our initial focus will be on the north of Anglesey given recent announcements in the area; and we will continue to work with partners locally, regionally and nationally to strengthen our economy; support businesses and provide employment."

Dafydd Evans, chief executive of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai said:

"As a College, we are very pleased to see this final section opened as it will allow the campus at Llangefni to develop into a strategically important location for skills development."

Welsh Government focuses on low carbon transport

This is the first of two “Opportunities in Ultra Low Carbon Emission Transport and Local Mobility” events, and will be held in Wrexham Glyndwr University. The second will be in Cardiff’s Sophia Gardens at the end of February.

Opening the event, Transport Minister Ken Skates said:

“These conferences are important, as they focus on our commitment to reducing our carbon emissions in Wales.

“Our Environment Act sets out a clear pathway to a low carbon Wales, within the context of existing UK and international obligations, with a reduction in emissions of at least 80% by 2050.

“Decarbonisation has a significant place in our new Economic Contract, which is part of our innovative Economic Action Plan.

“Its purpose is to support delivery of Prosperity for All, our national strategy for Wales. The Plan sets out the pathway for transition to a low-carbon economy. It specifically commits us to leading the way in decarbonising our transport networks and improving the air quality of the communities they serve.

“In Wales, as part of our consultation on ‘Achieving a low-carbon pathway to 2030’ we included a range of Transport specific ideas, such as encouraging electric vehicle take-up by developing the charging network and providing in-city incentives.

“We also reinforced our commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of taxis and buses to zero within ten years, included ideas for increasing cycle use and better understanding of the relationship between speed limits and emissions.

“We have committed to providing £2 million to help secure a network of rapid electric vehicle charging points throughout Wales, and we are engaging with a range of stakeholders to identify the priorities for deploying delivery options.

“However, whatever we may seek to do, people are core and fundamental to achieving this. By working together we will find solutions important for Wales and take account of influences and what they will mean for future car ownership and personal mobility forming part of the equation we need to absorb.”

Welsh Government host public events in Mid Wales to tackle obesity as part of new plan

The Welsh Government has launched a new plan to help people in Wales maintain a healthy weight and wants to hear the people of Wales' views on the actions proposed.

Launched by Health Minister Vaughan Gething '[Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales](#)' is an online consultation with a series of engagement events across Wales.

A number of events will take place in Mid Wales in February including a public launch on Monday 11 February at the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells starting at 6:30pm, where people will have an opportunity to hear more about the proposals as well as share their own ideas on how to best tackle obesity in Wales.

Information and representatives will also be on hand in the following locations to capture people's views:

- Wednesday 13 February, between 10:30am-11:30am – Newtown Integrated Family Centre, Park Street, Newtown
- Friday 15 February, between 9am-12pm – Aberystwyth University Students' Union
- Friday 15 February, between 2pm-5pm – Aberystwyth town centre, located on A487 opposite Barclays Bank and Lloyds Pharmacy
- Saturday 16 February, between 9am-3pm – Bear Lanes Shopping Centre, Newtown, located near Broad Street entrance

Being overweight increases the risk of developing major health conditions such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. It is also a risk to people's mental health leading to low self-esteem, depression and anxiety.

Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, said:

"This is an issue we simply cannot ignore, it is the greatest public health challenge facing our generation and I urge people to engage fully with this consultation.

"Tackling the root causes of why people become overweight is complex; it will require intervention at every level. We are under no illusion – there is no quick fix or easy solution to this problem. The proposals outlined are based on the best evidence available of what could work to turn the tide on obesity."

Stuart Bourne, director of public health for Powys Teaching Health Board, said:

“I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales consultation and encourage everyone with an interest in health and wellbeing to get involved. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of developing serious health conditions, including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers.

“With over a quarter of four to five year olds and nearly two thirds of adults being either overweight or obese, it is clear that this is a major priority for population health. A strong strategic approach involving partners and the public – nationally and locally – will be critical if we are to be successful in tackling obesity and its damaging effects on health and wellbeing.”

The proposals set out in the consultation have a strong focus on prevention and are supported by research and international evidence from Public Health Wales into what can help people maintain a healthy weight. Feedback from the public gathered during the consultation will be used to help inform the final Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy, due to be published in October 2019.

The consultation runs until 12 April 2019. To read the consultation document and proposals in full, as well as respond, visit <https://beta.gov.wales/healthy-weight-healthy-wales>.