

Projects which Get Creative with Cymraeg announced

£425,000 has been awarded to 26 innovative projects that promote Welsh in the community and Welsh language technology, the Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong learning, Eluned Morgan has announced.

The Cymraeg 2050 Grant is a key element of the Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. It will provide small grants of up to £20,000 each to fund innovative, short-term projects which aim to increase people's daily use of the language and to promote technology which supports the use of Welsh.

Projects include a website that enables Welsh speaking volunteers to create audio Welsh language content for those with sight loss and a scheme to develop technology to enable Welsh speakers at risk of losing their ability to speak to build personal synthetic voices so they can continue to communicate in their native language.

£300,000 was originally allocated to the scheme, however, due to the exceptional quality of the bids received the fund has been increased.

The Minister said:

“We want the use of Welsh to be a routine part of everyday life so that speakers at all levels feel confident in using it in formal and informal situations. The projects announced today will make it easier for people to use the language, whether face to face in the community and in the workplace or through digital platforms.

It is very heartening that we have had to increase the fund to accommodate the excellent projects put forward to us. We're under no illusion about the challenge of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and I'm delighted there are so many organisations and people who are willing to join us in this task”

The grants have been awarded to the following projects:

Increase in alcohol-related deaths in

Wales – new report shows

The 2017 annual report for the Welsh Government's 10 year substance misuse strategy, Working Together to Reduce Harm, shows that while there has been an increase in both alcohol-related and drug-related deaths, good progress has been made on providing quicker treatment.

An increasing number of people referred for treatment are receiving support within the 20 day waiting time target. Treatment outcomes are also improving, with 77% of people reported a reduction in their substance misuses following treatment in 2016/17, compared to 69.2% in 2012/13.

The report shows nearly half of people assessed with a substance misuse problem in Wales were suffering from problematic alcohol use. The report also highlights that in 2016, 20% of adults (or 1 in 5) reported drinking more than the UK Chief Medical Officers' recommended 14 units a week limit for alcohol consumption.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said the new figures show there is an urgent need to address the affordability of alcohol, as part of wider efforts to tackle alcohol-related harm.

The Welsh Government recently unveiled a new Bill to introduce a minimum price for the sale of alcohol, as part of efforts to tackle the availability of strong, cheap alcohol.

There has also been an increase in drug use and drug-related deaths. Estimates of problematic use of opioids, cocaine and crack, amphetamine and new psychoactive substances indicate that there are around 49,370 individuals in Wales, aged 15-64 years who are using these types of drugs, including those in contact with health and criminal justice services.

In 2016, there were 271 drug poisoning deaths (involving both legal and illegal drugs) in Wales. Of these, 192 were drug misuse deaths (involving illegal drugs).

The Welsh Government is stepping up efforts to tackle avoidable drug-related deaths by initiating new awareness campaigns and by working closely with local harm reduction groups to shape further action to reduce drug deaths in Wales.

Alongside a range of other interventions, the Welsh Government is continuing to work with partners on developing the Take Home Naloxone programme – a drug which temporarily reverses the effects of opiate overdose. Since 2009, a total of over 15,000 kits have been distributed throughout Wales with 1,654 reported uses. Naloxone is available in every Community Drug Treatment Service and in all prisons in Wales.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Substance misuse is a major health issue that affects the well-being of individuals, families and communities across the length and breadth of Wales.

“The Welsh Government invests almost £50m a year in tackling the harms associated within substance misuse. But while we invest and work hard in reducing harm, we need to take additional action to prevent that harm happening in the first place.

“Preventing future substance misuse is as important as treating the established problem. We know that the harm associated with alcohol misuse in particular is a pressing concern and that’s why there is now an urgent need to tackle the affordability of cheap, strong alcohol, through introducing a minimum unit price for the sale of alcohol.

“This report shows, however, that when people need help with their substance misuse problem they can access it. I’m pleased there has been a significant improvement in the number of people with a substance misuse problem being seen within the 20 day target time, while more people are telling us they’re successfully reducing their dependence on alcohol or drugs following treatment.

“But we’re not complacent. Our aim is to ensure that people in Wales are aware of the dangers and the impact of substance misuse to enable them to make informed choices and to know where they can seek out help and support – because each death caused by alcohol or drug misuse is one that can be and should be avoided.”

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Launching National Safeguarding Week, the Minister said people who have suffered abuse and neglect are encouraged to come forward and share their experiences with the appropriate authorities, so that society learn and recognise the signs to prevent abuse happening in the future.

Last year, a new law was introduced in Wales – the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act – which strengthens existing safeguarding arrangements for children by placing on relevant partners, such as the NHS, Police, Probation and youth offending teams, a duty to report where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is at risk.

The Act introduces parallel provisions for relevant partners to report to the local authority someone suspected to be an adult at risk of abuse or neglect.

This is supplemented by a new duty for the local authority to make enquires to determine whether any action is required to safeguard adults at risk.

Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults is not acceptable, and its prevention is a major priority for the Welsh Government. That’s why we’ve introduced a new law that that strengthens the arraignments for safeguarding children and adults in Wales.

“It’s vitally important that we encourage people who have suffered abuse and neglect to come forward and share their experiences with the appropriate authorities, so that everyone can learn and recognise the signs if someone is being abused, and to prevent it happening in the future.

“Each and every one of us in Wales has a responsibility for keeping people safe from harm and neglect.”

Safeguarding Boards in Wales have designated the week commencing 13 November as Safeguarding Week.

The Minister added:

“I welcome Safeguarding Week as an opportunity to recognise the work of frontline staff and to raise awareness of the role everybody has to play in safeguarding both children and adults.”

Quicker access to specialist NHS care for Armed forces’ veterans in Wales

£100,000 additional funding will go to Veterans NHS Wales, the UK’s only dedicated national service to support the emotional and mental health needs of armed forces veteran by providing dedicated veteran’s therapists in each health board area.

The Welsh Government already invests £585,000 a year to support the service.

The additional funding will allow the service to increase Consultant Psychiatrist sessions by 50% and offer more veterans’ quicker access to a specialist doctor for medication options, reviews and second opinions. It will also provide more dedicated support to veteran therapists enabling them to concentrate on providing interventions to our veterans who need support.

Latest figures show more than 2,879 veterans have received care from Veterans NHS Wales since it was set up in April 2010.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“As we approach Remembrance Sunday, the entire country will pause to reflect and remember the sacrifice of our armed forces personnel in conflicts and wars across the world. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to both current and former armed forces personnel.

“I’m determined to ensure our veterans receive the very best healthcare. The new investment I’m announcing today will ensure veterans receive faster access to assessment and treatment services, ensuring they receive the care and support they need.”

Dr Neil Kitchiner, the Director of Veterans’ NHS Wales Director and its Consultant Clinical Lead said:

“I am very grateful to the Welsh Government for their continued support to VNHSW. This increase funding of £100,000 announced today will allow us to increase our Consultant Psychiatrist sessions by 50% and offer more veterans’ quicker access to a specialist doctor for medication options, reviews and second opinions.

“We will also increase our part-time administrator’s hours which will allow them to be more accessible to telephone and email queries from veterans and referrers. It will also speed up referral to assessment times. The inclusion of a fulltime psychology graduate for the first time will enhance training and support to our Peer Mentors in delivering guided self help interventions and improve our data collection, analysis and reporting to our key stakeholders.”

[Ken Skates extends no daytime lane closure pledge for A55](#)

Significant Welsh Government investment over recent years means no planned daytime lane closures will be required before the end of next summer. This extends the pledge which has seen no works on that section of the route during the day since early April.

Emergency work will continue to take place whenever and wherever necessary to ensure road users are safe.

The news comes as the Welsh Government publishes the recommendations from its report into further A55 resilience improvements, with all construction work as a result of the study completed overnight until at least next September – a priority for Mr Skates.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I know only too well how important a fully functioning A55 is to communities across North Wales and my commitment to delivering improvements to this vital economic artery is unwavering.

“This year has seen the culmination of four years of imperative work to bring the A55’s tunnels up to modern standards, alongside recent road surface improvements, flood alleviation work, urgent maintenance work and more. With the proposed Deeside Corridor, Third Menai Crossing, Caernarfon to Bontnewydd bypass, A55 roundabouts at J15 (Llanfairfechan) and J16 (Penmaenmawr) and A55 J13 (Abergwyngregyn) to J12 (Tal y Bont) schemes all at various stages of planning or delivery, this Government term will likely see the biggest investment in roads in North Wales for decades, maybe ever. That’s something I’m extremely proud of.

“Whilst the nature of projects both past and future means daytime work is unavoidable as times, I’ve been very clear of my wish to minimise daytime work where ever possible. I’m delighted, therefore, to confirm that improvement works planned until next September will see no daytime lane closures at all on this stretch. All such planned work will be completed overnight or under narrow dual lanes. This has all been made possible due to the Welsh Government’s commitment and investment in the A55.

“The decision brings with it obvious costs and challenges, and I’d like to put on record my thanks to the many contractors, shift workers and agents who will continue to work long, unsociable hours in all conditions so that disruptions to road users can be kept to a minimum.”

In April, the Cabinet Secretary commissioned a study to identify possible improvements to further enhance the resilience of the A55.

The report’s recommendations, in outline, include interventions that aim to reduce the levels of congestion at critical times, improve communications with the public and better incident responses.

Ken Skates added:

“The study has considered all aspects of the road from Holyhead to Post House, associated routes such as the A494 corridor from the Ewloe Interchange to Drome Corner and diversion routes.

“As a result, we will be implementing a number of interventions we can put in place quickly to improve the travel experience whilst considering other potential improvements for the future. These ‘quick win’ measures will complement existing plans along this key strategic route and help minimise the frequency and impact of incidents and breakdowns.

“I hope today’s announcements will mean communities and businesses in North Wales and beyond can look forward with confidence to continued improvements and limited disruption, with the prospect of major improvements to come.”

A55 / A494 network resilience study WelTAG stage 1 report –
<https://beta.gov.wales/a55-a494>