

Greece is the word for Circular Economy nations

The [Circular Economy for Small and Medium sized Enterprises \(CESME\)](#) is a European funded project that will enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities. The circular economy is a key concept of the Green Economy, where high-quality materials derived from waste products can be supplied back to Welsh manufacturers and productively used again and again.

In a world where resource prices are rising fast, the circular economy model has the potential to provide significant cost benefits for Welsh businesses. Studies have found the adoption of a Circular Economy could save the Welsh economy up to £2bn and has the potential to create up to 30,000 jobs.

The meeting in Thessaloniki included workshops and study visits to three SMEs in the Region of Central Macedonia in Greece, all of which implement good practices promoting circular economy. The Thessaloniki meeting follows previous CESME get-togethers here in Wales last May, Aalborg, Denmark and Bologna, Italy.

Earlier this year the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs announced a £6.5m fund to help Wales move towards a circular economy. Lesley Griffiths said:

“Wales is fully signed up to the benefits of the circular economy. Sharing valuable expertise with our European partners helps us break down barriers for SMEs and will bring our vision of a leaner, greener Wales into reality.”

“The £6.5m fund I announced earlier this year will help businesses save money by becoming more resource efficient and resilient, an approach that will deliver numerous environmental benefits including less waste and reduced CO2 emissions”.

The Circular Economy for Small and Medium sized Enterprises (CESME) project is supported by €1.73million of Interreg Europe funding and its foreseen duration is four years. Wales is one of 10 partners from six European countries.

The latest CESME event took place in Thessaloniki, Greece on 10 and 11 May 2017. Further information on CESME can be found on the [Interreg Europe website](#) (external link)

Inward investment in Wales continues at record levels

Statistics published by the UK Department of International Trade show that despite the Brexit referendum result, Wales still attracted 85 new projects creating, supporting and safeguarding over 11,500 jobs. This is the third highest number of projects recorded for Wales since records began more than 30 years ago.

Welcoming the news, Ken Skates said:

“Wales is still punching above its weight in attracting inward investment. These latest results show that Wales has had another excellent year when it comes to attracting inward investment from companies based overseas with us securing investment from 85 companies and creating supporting and safeguarding a total of 11,546 jobs.

“Impressively we also secured almost 11% of all jobs created and safeguarded in the UK last year, which is an increase of almost 5% on our 2015/16 performance.

“There is no doubt that inward investment remains a key driver of economic development in Wales and it is vital that we work with both foreign companies and those based in the UK to bring further investment and jobs into Wales.

“I was also really pleased to see levels of investment into Wales from companies headquartered in other parts of the UK reaching a record high last year. This is proof of Wales’ growing reputation as a great place to do business and evidence that our business friendly approach is paying dividends.”

US-owned Electroimpact, one of the largest integrator of aircraft assembly lines in the world, is one of the companies that has made the decision to invest in Wales. This will give them increased capacity to take on more

complex jobs and will lead to the creation of more highly skilled jobs in the future at its new site in Deeside following £280,000 from the Welsh Government.

AMPLIFYFI is another company with US roots. The start-up, which specialises in machine learning and web harvesting software, is set to create 40 new jobs in Cardiff following £400,000 of Welsh Government support.

Free Weekend bus travel across Wales

The pilot, which will apply to all buses on the extensive TrawsCymru network, will begin on Saturday 8 July and run every weekend until at least May 2018. It's hoped the scheme will act as a catalyst for bus travel in Wales, boosting not only the number of passengers but also wider use of the TrawsCymru routes.

In launching the scheme, Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

“From Bangor to Cardiff, Fishguard to Wrexham I hope to see this scheme provide the perfect excuse for people from across Wales and beyond to jump on the bus and spend their weekends enjoying the diverse beauty of Wales.

“The TrawsCymru network covers large areas of Wales, some of which would otherwise be inaccessible by public transport and, with the summer tourist season around the corner, I'm excited about the impact increased passengers could have on tourism in these areas in particular.

“The free service is subject to availability, but we have also provided additional funding to local authorities to ensure operators are able to deploy more buses to meet increased demand if necessary. Provisions have also been made to reimburse operators of other local bus services should they experience any reduction of passengers as a result of this pilot, although we are optimistic it will have the opposite effect.

“I'm delighted to launch this ground breaking scheme and look forward to seeing as many people as possible making the most of this fantastic offer to travel across Wales by bus for free.”

It's hoped the initiative will not only benefit passengers, but will also provide a boost to destinations and tourist attractions both directly on the

route and beyond. One tourist attraction hoping for such benefits is the Brecon Beacons National Park.

John Cook, CEO Brecon Beacons National Park Authority said:

“The TrawsCymru free weekend travel initiative will give more people across Wales access to the Brecon Beacons National Park. Along the T6 and T4 routes there are many towns and attractions including the wide open space of the Central Beacons, the market town of Brecon and Craig y nos Country Park. We encourage everyone to get out and use the free T6 and T4 bus services to explore the Brecon Beacons further this summer.”

The Welsh Government will use the pilot to help build a better understanding of how reductions of this nature affect the wider demand for public transport before deciding on its future beyond May 2018.

Website: [TrawsCymru](#) (external link).

Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030

Although the public sector only accounts for a small amount of Wales' emissions it is uniquely placed to influence emissions far more widely in areas such as transport, energy and land use.

As well as tackling the issues of air pollution, this approach can have a positive impact on the local economy by reducing energy costs and by creating investment opportunities for the low carbon economy.

The Cabinet Secretary is now seeking evidence of the opportunities and challenges around the carbon neutral ambition, including whether interim targets should be introduced and how progress should be monitored and tracked.

The Welsh Government is already investing over £2m a year to identify and support renewable energy projects and energy efficiency projects within the public sector. By the end of this Government term almost £70m is expected to be invested in public sector energy projects.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Wales is already at the forefront of global action on climate change, leading the way in the UK in recycling and introducing

ground-breaking legislation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

“I believe the public sector should lead by example in reducing emission, which is why I would like to see the sector be carbon neutral by 2030. I am keen to hear views on how best to address particular challenges and how we realise the significant opportunities and benefits associated with this agenda. This evidence will then inform how we proceed with work in this important area.”

Natural Resources Wales’ (NRW) is already making progress through its Welsh Government financed Carbon Positive Project. Through calculating the organisation’s net carbon impact, it found that over 80% of their emissions were indirect, with 55% from the procurement of goods and services alone. Results indicate that the organisation is net carbon positive; storing more carbon annually than it is releasing through its operations.

As part of the Project, NRW has identified feasible options to reduce emissions and protect and enhance carbon stocks. For example, it found it could achieve up to 27% emissions saving from its vehicle fleet through adopting low emission transport options.

NRW are pressing forward with action , including installing charging points, procuring electric vehicles and looking to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings, recognising the economic business case as well as the environmental reasons for taking action.

The lessons learnt from the project will be shared with the Welsh public sector with the aim of encouraging others to follow NRW’s lead.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“It’s pleasing to hear the excellent work Natural Resources Wales are doing through their Carbon Positive Project and I would like to see others follow their lead, including the Welsh Government. I have asked officials to look at a similar project across our offices.”

Jennifer Kelly, leading the Carbon Positive Project for Natural Resources Wales, said:

“As a public sector body, and as the environment body for Wales, we have an important role to play in addressing climate change. Our Carbon Positive Project has taken an ambitious approach to understand our carbon impact and to identify opportunities to address it.

“One opportunity we’ve identified is that, by using current low

emission technologies in our fleet, we could cut emissions by up to 27%, and reduce costs by 5%. We've also been delivering some exciting demonstration projects to take action on our carbon impact now, including introducing electric vehicles, installing renewable energy and restoring peatland habitats.

"We're looking forward to sharing our experiences with others later in the year and hope this will encourage wider decarbonisation in Wales."

[Anglesey to Cardiff flights set to continue](#)

The Intra Wales Service is the quickest way of travelling between north and south Wales, allowing business travellers and tourists to travel across the country and return in a day without the need for an overnight stop.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

"Following a thorough review in 2016, I'm pleased to announce the Intra Wales Air Service between Cardiff and Anglesey will continue.

"The review found that, while the service has faced difficulties in the past – not least in terms of former operators – it provides a quick and convenient way to travel between north and south Wales, which is vital for our economy.

"The review recommended not only retaining the air link, but also helping it to grow. We are now looking at how the scope of the route can be expanded over the next 4 years and beyond, to help boost the Welsh economy.

"The competitive procurement of a long-term operator will begin in the next few months. In the meantime, the current operator, Eastern Airways, will continue to deliver the service, ensuring there is no disruption for passengers."