

EU funding boost an Epic start to Easter

The additional funding will be used for marketing and partnership work in support of the themed years – as well as boosting the funding available to the private sector under the [Tourism Investment Support Scheme](#) (TISS).

Funding will also be made available to the public sector under TISS to improve visitor facilities and amenities.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“This package of investment by the Rural Development Programme will make a major contribution to how we develop the products that we have here in Wales as well as how we market Wales to the world. It will enable us to make sure that the correct amenities are in place at the local level; to encourage innovative and top quality product development; and it will help us take these products to the world through Visit Wales marketing. With the existing EU tourism funded projects currently in development with partners in Wales, we are looking at more than a £100 million investment in the sector up until 2020 which will have a big impact on Wales’ competitiveness in the global marketplace.

“I’m delighted to be making this announcement at the beginning of what will hopefully be a busy season for the tourism industry in Wales. We’ve experienced two record breaking years for tourism, with figures for the first 9 months of 2016 showing a substantial increase of 12% in the number of overseas visitors coming to Wales and a 9% increase in the amount they spend during their visit. We’ve also seen a significant increase in the number of day visitors coming to Wales – there was 31% increase in day visit expenditure last year. Our aim for 2017 is to sustain these record breaking figures with continued investment and innovation in marketing and product development.

“The recently launched Year of Legends campaign, which includes an advert starring Luke Evans has been hailed as a game changer by industry leaders, there was a sharp spike in visitors to the [visitwales.com](#) website on 1 March as the advert launched and Facebook posts published on St David’s day were seen by more than 1 million people. Campaign work now continues to convert early interest into bookings for the summer.

“This week, the popular EPIC installation is back with a new legendary new look for Easter and its first appearance of the year will be at Margam Park. I’d like to wish the industry a successful start to the season.”

Further information on application process for the RDP funding will be available to the industry following the Easter holidays.

Visit Wales' innovative travelling art installation, a focal part of the summer campaign last year, has undergone a makeover over the winter to reflect the Year of Legends theme for 2017. The sign has been refreshed and recovered with illustrations of our most popular and well known legends. Visitors will be able to read all about the stories behind the legends as these are printed on the base of the sign which measures 4 meters high and 11 meters wide. This year's campaign film with Luke Evans is also a feature of the sign; with a QR code to view the film printed on the sign. The sign will be at Margam Park from Tuesday 11 April until the May Bank Holiday before moving to another legendary location in Wales.

The letters will again act as a focal point for visitors' selfies and is designed to encourage image and content sharing on social media using the campaign hashtag #FindYourEpic. The tour is supported by an integrated campaign consisting PR and other media activity including digital advertising, e-mail marketing and social media activity targeting families and visitors in our core regions in North West England, The Midlands, Yorkshire, London and the South East.

[Michael Sheen supports Welsh Government campaign to promote children's rights](#)

The campaign includes a number of children's rights and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) resources and the [Children's Rights Wales website](#). Both provide information and advice for children and young people, and those who work with them, about their rights.

Wales leads the way in championing children's rights and the Welsh Government formally adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 2004.

Communities and Children Cabinet Secretary Carl Sargeant said:

"I'm delighted that Michael Sheen is supporting our campaign to make children and young people aware of their rights."

"It is important they know they have the right to get involved and have their voices heard when decisions are made which affect their lives."

“By participating in decision making, children and young people may be able to access and better understand their rights, and play a fuller role in their own lives and in the communities where they live.”

Michael Sheen said:

“The Welsh Government continues to be ground-breaking in its commitment to children’s rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a father I appreciate the importance of children having access to a great education and healthcare, but equally that they should be safe and happy. It is important that children and young people are aware of their rights so that they can have their say about issues that may affect them.”

Wales hits target for maximising £1.8bn EU Funds

And Wales has invested £1.33bn – 65% – of the £2bn EU structural funds allocation as part of the 2014-20 programmes.

The Welsh Government has submitted its final claim to the European Commission of £95m, in relation to the 2007-13 programmes, bringing the total amount drawn down to the maximum £1.8bn allocated during that funding round, driving a total investment of £3.4 billion.

This makes Wales one of the best performing EU regions.

Projects supported by the 2007-13 EU programmes in Wales helped 72,700 people into work; 234,300 people to gain qualifications and created 11,925 businesses and 36,970 jobs.

The programmes exceeded key targets, including more than doubling those for helping people into work, gaining qualifications and creating new businesses.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Between 2007 and 2013, EU funding supported a wide range of projects, benefiting people, businesses and communities across Wales.

“The programmes were delivered in particularly challenging times,

during which Wales was hit by a global financial and economic crisis.

“To deliver these results is a fantastic achievement and I would like to thank our partners in making a success of these programmes.

“EU funding has also helped to narrow the gap between Wales and the UK in areas such as employment, economic activity, skills and investment in research and innovation.”

Some of the flagship initiatives supported during the 2007-13 EU funding round include:

- £40m for Swansea University’s Innovation Campus where 5,000 students are currently studying. It is expected to attract thousands more in the coming years;
- £85m for more than 79,600 apprenticeships and more than 12,400 traineeships across Wales at employers including Airbus, Admiral and GE Aviation;
- £3m for the restoration of the Lido Ponty, which has so far attracted almost 100,000 visitors;
- £13.5m for the collaborative research and innovation ‘SEACAMS’ project to support Wales’ marine science sector;
- £4.3m for Plas Heli Wales’ National Sailing Academy and Events Centre in Pwllheli;
- More than £130m for the development of major roads, including the Heads of the Valleys A465 and Harbour Way in Port Talbot as well as improvements to train stations across Wales.

Investments to date in the current 2014-20 funding round include:

- £64m for major upgrades to the A40 in Pembrokeshire and the A55 in North Wales;
- £4.6m to support the development of Cardiff University’s new world-leading Brain Research Imaging Centre, CUBRIC;
- £76m for the Wales Business Fund which is helping Welsh SMEs to grow by providing loans and equity investments;
- £1.7m for the STEM Cymru 2 project to promote careers in STEM industries to young people in Wales;
- £27.7m for the Attractor Destinations scheme, led by Visit Wales, to create 11 must-see destinations across Wales, including Porthcawl Maritime Centre and the Caernarfon Town and Waterfront Regeneration initiative.

Professor Drakeford added:

“I am confident we will be equally successful in investing the EU funds allocated to Wales for 2014–20 before the UK leaves the EU.

“It is vital Wales receives replacement funding from UK sources after 2020 at the same level we currently receive from the EU so we

can continue to address long-term challenges and support our economy to grow.”

Bill Nighy joins guests for ‘red carpet’ Welsh premiere of Their Finest hosted by the Welsh Government and BAFTA Cymru

Economy Secretary Ken Skates will welcome guests to the event, which will be attended by actor Bill Nighy who will join the film’s producer Amanda Posey, screenwriter Gaby Chiappe and Lissa Evans, author of the original book ‘Their Finest Hour and a Half’, in conversation with Owen Sheers following the screening.

The film was funded by the Welsh Government’s Media Investment Budget alongside BBC Films and Pinewood Group, with Pinewood Pictures a sponsor of the Welsh Premiere. Wales Screen, part of the Welsh Government’s creative industries team, played a key role in finding the perfect locations and hosted numerous recces before filming began.

The locations in south west Wales feature Swansea’s Guildhall – which doubles as the Ministry of Information and Whitehall – alongside a number of locations in Pembrokeshire including Trecwn Valley, Freshwater West, Porthgain Harbour, Haverfordwest’s Palace Cinema and the Cresselly Arms in Cresswell Quay.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Their Finest is a great example of the widespread benefits that TV and film production can bring to Wales – providing work and experience for crews, sustaining a range of specialist support businesses, boosting the hospitality sector and highlighting the expertise we have within Wales.

“Film and TV production is one of our priority sectors and I am particularly pleased that the extensive use of locations around Wales is playing a key role in supporting regional economies and jobs while also providing an invaluable promotion for our tourism industry.”

Their Finest opens in cinemas across the UK on 21 April and sees director Lone Scherfig reunite with producer Amanda Posey (An

Education) and collaborate for the first time with award-winning producer Stephen Woolley.

The film follows the misadventures of a British film crew struggling to make a patriotic film to boost morale during the London Blitz in World War II. Alongside lead Gemma Arterton, the cast members include Sam Claflin as her fellow fellow screenwriter and Bill Nighy as a fading matinee idol who reluctantly joins their production in a supporting role. Richard E Grant, Rachael Stirling, Jeremy Irons and Helen McCrory round out the cast.

Hannah Raybould, Director of BAFTA Cymru said:

“We are thrilled to host this event to celebrate a film which was shot extensively in Wales with Welsh crew and showcases our stunning Welsh locations alongside such a star-studded cast. The event promises to be a special highlight in our events programme and we’re delighted to offer our members the chance to be among the first to see the film.”

The evening includes a networking reception for guests that will include members of the Creative Industry Advisory Panel, broadcasters, production companies from Wales and London, facility companies, BAFTA members and Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama MA students.

[£144m investment in community pharmacy protected confirms Vaughan Gething](#)

Funding announced today will improve access to services provided by community pharmacies – such as the common ailment service and pharmacy influenza vaccinations, it will also support the implementation of a pharmacy quality programme and support collaborative working between pharmacies and other primary care providers.

Vaughan Gething said:

“Last year, I reaffirmed the Welsh Government’s commitment to the community pharmacy sector as a fundamental part of a strong primary care service in Wales.

“At a time when thousands of community pharmacies in England face closure as a result of funding cuts of over 7 per cent, I said there were no proposals to reduce investment in community pharmacy here in Wales. Today’s announcement shows we’ve been true to our

promise.”

In addition to the funding announced today, the Health Secretary also announced the Welsh Government will provide funding in 2018-19 and 2019-20 to make the Choose Pharmacy IT application available to all pharmacies in Wales.

The Health Secretary added:

“Choose Pharmacy will support pharmacists to deliver an increasing range of patient focussed clinical services. Our common ailment scheme allows people with minor ailments to see highly-skilled pharmacists for advice and treatment, freeing up GPs’ time to focus on those people with more complex cases and reduce patient waiting times.

“Choose Pharmacy will also give pharmacists access to patients’ summary medical records which will significantly reduce the number of people who need to be referred to GP, out-of-hours services and A&E departments and will deliver considerable improvements in patient safety, I’m delighted we’ve been able to make the Choose Pharmacy IT application available to all pharmacies in Wales.

“This agreement is a further example of how our collaborative approach is can make a real difference for people in Wales.”

Phil Parry, a pharmacist who chairs the board of Community Pharmacy Wales, welcomed the funding announcement by Welsh Government and said:

“We are delighted that the Welsh Government is continuing to work collaboratively with us as a profession to maximise the opportunities to modernise and utilise the pharmacy network in Wales at the same time as funding is being cut in England. The commitment to make the Choose Pharmacy platform available to every community pharmacy is a particularly welcome step and is an affirmation of our central role as part of the health care family in Wales.

“We are pleased with an outcome that sees funding secured to increase access to pharmacy services throughout Wales and the Board of Community Pharmacy Wales is committed to getting high levels of engagement and delivery from our contractors to make sure that community pharmacists play an ever expanding role in the delivery of health care in Wales.”