

Kirsty Williams responds to report into Universities' civic contribution

The WCPP's report comes as part of their review of how Welsh Universities embrace their civic mission by contributing to their local communities.

Speaking at the launch event at the Welsh Millennium Centre, the Education Secretary said:

"The report offers constructive challenge to me and government, but also to the sector and university leadership in Wales.

"Our university sector is strong in its public good values and excellence, with high levels of student satisfaction and outstanding research impact, where Wales outperforms all other UK nations.

"Working together on maximising civic contribution is a Welsh national endeavour, where we can be an international leader.

"I hope that today's policy paper helps provide yet more momentum for debate and policy development in Wales on civic contribution, and that Universities, individually and collectively, will now come forward with their own thoughts and ideas."

Children's Minister announces £15m to expand services to support families and help reduce the need for children to enter care

As at March 2017, there were 5,954 children in care in Wales, and increase of 5% on the previous year. This increasing trend is being seen across the UK.

The funding to expand preventative and early intervention services announced today will be used to build on the support the Welsh Government and its partners are providing to families and children early on, so they are supported to stay together and ultimately reduce the need for children to enter care.

The funding is part of an additional £30m which has been allocated to

Regional Partnership Boards to help strengthen integrated working, announced in the Draft Budget 2019-20 by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford.

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

“As part of our programme for government, Taking Wales Forward, we set out a clear commitment to examine ways of ensuring looked after children enjoy the same life chances as other children and if necessary reform the way they are looked after. Our national strategy, Prosperity for All also describes our priorities around supporting children and families at the edge of care and young people in care, particularly as they transition towards adulthood.

“So I’m delighted to confirm we will invest £15m next year to progress our shared ambition that by intervening with support early we reduce the need for children to enter care and supporting children in care. I expect local authorities, third sector organisations and health boards to work in partnership to use this fund flexibly and creatively across their regions. It is essential for successful delivery and want to thank them for their co-operation and contribution so far.”

As part of the Welsh Government’s Improving Outcomes for Children programme, Ministers are taking an ambitious cross-Government and cross-sector approach to help achieve their priorities and fulfil their commitment to improve the lives of children in care. The programme is increasing its focus on addressing the factors which can lead to children requiring local authority care.

Last year, the Welsh Government invested £9m to support care experienced children.

This has resulted in:

- A £5m investment in local authority edge of care services meant that local authorities helped over 3,600 children to remain within the family unit by working with more than 2,000 families
- Over 1,900 care-experienced children across Wales have received funds via the Welsh Government’s £1m St David’s Day Fund, to support their transition to adulthood and independence
- The establishment of Regional Reflect services. During the past year, these services supported 150 young parents whose children have been placed in the care system. They have helped with issues such as contraception, housing, substance misuse, mental health and practical parenting skills
- £1m has been provided to extend the provision Personal Advisers so that all care leavers up to the age of 25 are offered a PA, regardless of circumstances. As a result an additional 20 Personal Advisers have been recruited and the extended offer taken up by more than 500 care leavers

- Care leavers have been helped to access opportunities in education, employment or training – 70 young people are now participating in a local authority work placement or traineeship scheme.

In May this year, research was published on placement outcomes for children after a final care order. This important research showed that over three quarters of the children in the study experienced a high level of placement stability as well as identifying other positive experiences of care.

The Minister added:

“We have made significant progress in improving outcomes for children in Wales. The work being done across Wales is leading to real, tangible outcomes which are having a direct and positive impact on the lives of children and young people.”

Lights, camera, action for the next big thing in Wales

The Welsh Government in partnership with Diverse Cymru are holding an event on November 20 to show underrepresented groups how to get into the fast growing Film and TV industry in Wales.

The event, run in conjunction with a number of partners including the BBC, S4C and BAFTA Cymru, will showcase the variety of roles available in the industry and help people to get that first foot on the ladder.

Speaking ahead of the event, Lord Elis-Thomas said:

“This event is an exciting opportunity to show individuals who hadn’t previously considered a career in Film, television or both that anything is indeed possible. Increasing diversity within the industry is something I am passionate about and last month I was pleased to support Hijinx’s call for an actor with a learning disability to win a BAFTA Cymru award by 2025.

I wholeheartedly support their aims of truly representing society on our screens. I’m heartened by the backing they have received from the screen industry and confident that with the support of learning disabled-led organisations, Wales can be pioneers in changing the face of who is represented on the small and big screen.

I encourage those interested in learning more about this exciting

career path to come along to the event”.

The event is free to attend and is targeting groups underrepresented within the Film and TV industry: Women, BME, disabled, LGBT+ or from a low socio economic group. No previous experience within the industry is needed and those with transferable skills are also encouraged to attend – hairdressers, makeup artists, dressmakers or tailors, carpenters or joiners, electricians and accountants to name a few.

Zoë King, Funding and Projects Manager at Diverse Cymru said:

“The number of creative jobs in the film and tv industries in Wales is rising, however Diverse Cymru’s research on behalf of the Welsh Government has shown evidence of the underrepresentation of the groups of people we are targeting to attend this event.

Bringing together representatives from broadcasters, independent production companies, colleges and trade organisations, this event is a great opportunity for anyone who has wondered if this is an industry for them, if their skills are relevant or what careers or training may be available.

We want to encourage everyone to come along and find out for themselves.”

This event is part of a wider piece of work to increase diversity within the film and TV industry in Wales. It follows on from a report commissioned in 2016 that looked at barriers to working in the industry and possible solutions.

Find out more about this free event here: <https://gov.wales/diversityinfilm>

[Have your say on new A494 River Dee Bridge preferred option](#)

A 12-week consultation begins today until 4 February 2019 on the preferred option to upgrade the River Dee Bridge which was identified in the Welsh Government’s ‘Moving North Wales Forward’ to address existing traffic issues in the area and ensure it is fit for the future.

The current crossing was built in 1960 and presently carries more than 61,000 vehicles per day which is far higher than it was designed for.

Due to the age of the bridge, there is evidence of deterioration to key

structural features which would require substantial repair. Addressing the deterioration would result in closing the bridge for long periods causing significant and unacceptable delays and disruption to the trunk and local road network in the area.

The proposal would see a new crossing for westbound traffic with a replacement of the current structure for eastbound traffic. Both bridges would have three lanes and a hard shoulder. A shared path for pedestrians and cyclists would also be included, connecting the new River Dee Bridge to Station Road.

The proposal would bring this part of the route up to modern day standards, ensure smooth flow of traffic and strengthen the road's resilience.

During the construction of the proposed scheme, two lanes in each direction would remain open on the current bridge to minimise disruption on the A494 and the local road network. It is possible there would be occasions when reductions to one lane would be required but kept to an absolute minimum and only for a short period of time.

Public Consultations events will take place where people can learn more about the preferred option and provide comments on it. These will take place at St Andrews Church Hall in Garden City on Tuesday, 20 November between 2pm and 8pm and Deeside Leisure Centre on Saturday 24 November between 10am-4pm. Both are free to attend and everyone is welcome.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

"The A494 is a key economic artery connecting North Wales with North West England and beyond.

"Replacing the ageing A494 River Dee Bridge with two crossings will not only improve safety, but also provide greater resilience and enhance journey time reliability. It will also address air quality issues in the area which will improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.

"The Welsh Government is investing significantly in North East Wales transport infrastructure over the coming years and ensuring this section of the A494 is fit for the future is absolutely essential. This is a key part of our plans for the region and I am pleased we are moving to the next stage of development.

"The Public Consultation events offer a great opportunity for people to see the preferred option, ask questions and leave comments. I encourage everyone with an interest to let us know their thoughts on the proposed scheme before Monday 4 February when the consultation closes. All responses will be carefully considered and will be invaluable in shaping the final design of the proposal."

Wales secures €100m of competitive EU research and innovation funding

Horizon 2020 is the EU's largest ever research and innovation programme, supporting cutting-edge science and technology and international collaboration to deliver solutions to key challenges facing society.

Since the launch of the highly-competitive programme, Welsh businesses and universities have been involved in more than 2,800 international collaborations. These have delivered significant economic benefits for Wales and have helped to put Welsh universities at the forefront of research.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“Today we are celebrating Welsh success in Horizon 2020. The programme provides a real opportunity for Welsh businesses and universities to be at the forefront of world-class research and innovation while also helping to grow our economy.

“This success highlights just how important it is that we continue to have full access to Horizon 2020 and its successor programme in the future after the UK leaves the EU.

“We will continue to press the UK Government to ensure this is part of any new relationship between UK and the EU after Brexit.”

Swansea University is one of the many successful organisations in Wales to win Horizon 2020 funding. With support of nearly €1.5m, its QNets project is researching how the computational power of quantum physics can be harnessed for information processing in areas such as smartphones, machine learning and big data analysis.

Dr Markus Muller, from Swansea University said:

“The Horizon 2020 funding will help us to take a leading role in establishing a new paradigm for quantum information processing.

“It has the potential to significantly strengthen the university's contribution to the fast-growing European research in the field of quantum technologies, providing a new cornerstone of our emerging modern information-based society.”

Denbighshire-based anchor company Qioptiq Ltd and Cardiff University secured €635,000 of Horizon 2020 funding to work alongside a consortium of 20

international partners on the MANUELA project.

The project will develop additive manufacturing production processes in a wide range of areas, including automotive, aerospace, energy and medical.

Lee Eccles, principal engineer from Qioptiq Ltd, said:

“Qioptiq is excited to be a part of the Horizon 2020-funded MANUELA project. Our active involvement in the development of such leading-edge technology will help to ensure that Qioptiq maintains its position as a market-leading innovator, generating growth for the company, the local economy and Wales.”

Dr Samuel Bigot from Cardiff University School of Engineering said:

“Participation in the MANUELA project offers Cardiff University an exciting opportunity to work with leading industrial and academic partners across the EU and be at the forefront of research developments in two major emerging technologies – artificial intelligence and metal additive manufacturing or 3D printing.”