

Funding green light for Wales International Coastal Centre

- Final sign off of funding for improvements to 11 'must-visit' destinations across Wales.
- Investment of £62 million in the tourism industry up until 2021.

This is the final project to receive the go ahead under a programme of tourism destination improvements across Wales.

The EU funding is being invested through the Welsh Government's Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to develop 11 must see destinations.

The new centre in Saundersfoot builds on previous EU funding for investment in Saundersfoot as part of an ambitious development programme.

The project is a transformational development for both Pembrokeshire and South Wales offering a high quality activity and events programme, with all-weather attractions and establishing Saundersfoot as a must see tourism destination for the region. It will establish new water activity venues and family activity facilities that complement and strengthen the Port's current leisure and commercial maritime operation.

The Wales International Coastal Centre will comprise of four linked developments: Marine Centre of Excellence and Coastal Storm Centre; National Events Deck; Ocean Square Heritage & Arts Centre; Coastal Schooner – historic tall ship recreation. Some of these developments are subject to planning.

The Wales International Coastal Centre is the final of 11 destinations to get the green light for funding. The Tourism Attractor Destination project will see £62 million investment in the tourism sector over the next three years, including £ 27.7 million of European funding.

Developments are well underway in all 11 destinations with the aim of all projects completing by February 2021. The other 10 destinations benefiting from this funding include Caernarfon; Holyhead; Pendine; Porthcawl; Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal; Llys y Fran; Vale of Rheidol; Colwyn Bay; Venue Cymru, Llandudno; and the Summit Centre, Merthyr Tydfil.

Minister for Culture Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“Our aim through the Tourism Attractor Destination programme is to focus efforts and investment on key projects in each region so we have a real impact on Wales' profile in this globally competitive market, this represents a huge funding boost for the sector, which will make a real difference to the products and experiences that Wales has to offer.

“The aim is for these destinations to develop as attractors and give compelling reasons for people to visit Wales or stay in Wales for a holiday. By attracting visitors to these key sites, the surrounding area will also benefit from further business investment and deliver key outcomes in terms of employment and regeneration.

“Tourism is one of our key sectors and generates £8.7 billion for the Welsh economy and employs 15% of the workforce. Our mission is to remain competitive in a very rapidly changing global market-place. Projects such as these will ensure that we can continue to compete on the world stage.”

The project will provide a significant boost to tourism in Pembrokeshire and the aim is to create a must see destination in Saundersfoot that will provide wet weather attractions and a high quality programme of events and activities throughout the year.

Bradley Davies, Commercial Manager of Saundersfoot Harbour, said:

“We’ve seen a big increase in footfall to the area since the completion of the earlier developments, and we look forward to bringing something completely new and different to visitors and locals alike.”

[New code to support rural schools comes into force](#)

The School Organisation Code has been revised to include a more detailed set of procedures and requirements that local authorities and other proposers must follow when putting together proposals to close a rural school.

For this purpose, the Code includes a designation of a rural school, based on The National Statistics Urban Rural Classification.

A list of schools in Wales that come under this designation is included in the Code.

In future, local authorities and other proposers will need to check whether a school is on the list and the further procedures and requirements apply. However, the presumption against closure is not retrospective, and doesn’t apply to proposals that are already in progress including those where the consultation has been published.

A presumption against closure does not mean that rural schools will never

close, however, it does mean that the case for closure must be strong and not taken until all viable alternatives to closure have been explored, including linking up with other schools under one governing body – otherwise known as federation.

The strengthened School Organisation Code forms part of a wider Rural Education Plan which also includes a Small and Rural Schools Grant that has already benefited over 370 schools in all local authority areas across Wales.

The Grant, which totals £2.5m a year for the lifetime of this Assembly aims to encourage innovation including the use of digital technology to combat the issue of professional isolation, and provides additional administrative support in schools where the headteacher has a significant teaching commitment.

The Grant also supports collaboration and federation with other schools – and where opportunities exist and there is local demand, the use of school facilities for community purposes.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Rural schools are at the heart of community life and key to our National Mission for Education. I want to make sure that we’re supporting pupils and teachers in rural areas and that all our young people, no matter where they live, receive the very best education.

“That’s why we have acted to strengthen the School Organisation Code, ensuring that councils and other proposers do everything they can to keep a rural school open before deciding to consult on closure.

“This doesn’t mean a rural school will never close but it does mean that all options and suggestions are on the table before a decision is made. This might include federation with other schools or increasing the community use of school buildings to make the school more viable.

“This is of course just one part of our Rural Education Action Plan which is already making a big difference through the Small and Rural School grant and the E-sgol project which aims to bring all schools in Wales into the digital age by introducing innovative teaching techniques.”

Minister announces Accreditation for Museum of Welsh Cricket during 30th Anniversary of the Scheme

The Museum has been awarded Full Museum Accreditation – making it the first fully accredited cricket museum in the U.K.

Opened in 2012, the Museum celebrates the long and proud history of cricket throughout Wales using a series of information panels, display cases and interactive media. Indeed, the latter saw the Museum win the Kieran Hegarty Award for Innovation at the 2014 Celtic Film and Media Festival for its use of archive images in a series of digital and film presentations.

During his visit the Minister saw how the Museum highlights key dates and personnel in the history of cricket in Wales, and celebrates the achievements of Glamorgan CCC. A special event is planned in the Museum during November in conjunction with The Royal British Legion to showcase the work which has been undertaken with local schools to commemorate those who fought, and died, during the Great War.

During his visit, the Minister also spoke to pupils from Ysgol Pencae, Cardiff, one of the many school groups welcomed by the Museum every year.

Andrew Hignell, the Museum's Curator and Archivist to Glamorgan CCC, said:

“We are delighted to have secured Full Accreditation status.

“It has been a long journey since we received the first tranche of grant assistance from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Visit Wales, but it has been a very fruitful one.

“To be the first fully accredited cricket museum in the UK bears testament to the efforts of the loyal and dedicated team of volunteers who have tirelessly assisted with the care and conservation of the collection housed at Sophia Gardens and in store at Glamorgan Archives, the labelling and photographing of objects, plus creating a fully interactive catalogue of items which, in the not too distant future, will be accessible to visitors and online.”

The Museum has significantly expanded its public engagement activities over the course of the past few years. Together with staff in the Community Department at Glamorgan Cricket, the Stadium tour guides and others with Cricket Wales, the Museum will have welcomed over 12,500 young people to the Sophia Gardens ground during 2018. There are exciting plans to further raise the number of school visits, as well as projects using cricketing memorabilia to engage with people who have issues relating to well-being and mental

health.

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“I’d like to congratulate the team at CC4 Museum of Welsh Cricket – and it was a pleasure to formally announce this Accreditation which makes this museum a very special place – and unique in the UK. Visitors to the Museum can learn more about the history of the game against the fabulous backdrop of the present day stadium – and also getting to play some cricket during their visit. The museum is a great way to inform and also inspire the future generation of players.”

The Accreditation scheme for Museums, now in its 30th year, is highly valued by museums, has been transformative for the sector and has brought many benefits. Having reached this important milestone, the scheme has been re-launched to be clearer, more streamlined and welcoming.

[£36 million for Prince Charles Hospital Refurbishment](#)

The funding from the Welsh Government will be used to continue to refurbish the ground floor at the hospital, providing a new main kitchen, dining area and pharmacy.

Works should start on the project in January 2019 with completion by spring 2021.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“I’m delighted to be able to announce this significant funding for Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr.

“This refurbishment will not only improve the working environment for staff at the hospital, it will also support the delivery of the kind of modern health care we want to see in Wales.

“I’m sure that as well as boosting staff morale, this work will bring significant benefits to patients attending the hospital and the area as a whole.

“I expect these works to deliver significant economic benefits to the community through the use of local labour and sub-contractors. I also expect the project to create apprenticeship opportunities

and initiatives to engage schools in the local area.”

Ruth Treharne, Director of Planning and Performance at Cwm Taf University Health Board, said:

“We are delighted that Welsh Government has supported the next phase of refurbishment of the ground and first floor of Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr Tydfil.

“Amongst the benefits, the funding will provide for a new main kitchen, dining area and a new pharmacy, which as well as helping to meet our statutory compliance requirements, will also provide an enhanced environment for our staff and patients.”

[High water marks for Wales as annual bathing water statistics released](#)

All 104 designated bathing waters in Wales met the European classifications for bathing water quality this year, with none being classified as ‘poor’. 78 bathing waters achieved the highest classification of ‘excellent’, 21 were classified as ‘good’ and five as ‘sufficient’. Six bathing water classifications have gone up and six have gone down, following the 2018 season.

Bathing waters are sampled regularly during the official bathing season, between 15 May to 30 September, and classified as either excellent, good, sufficient or poor. The classifications go on display at the start of the following year’s bathing season.

Cemaes, in Anglesey, has now achieved sufficient bathing water quality, following two years of poor classification. Natural Resources Wales has undertaken considerable work in the area to ensure compliance with the standards.

Wales has more Blue Flag beaches per mile than anywhere else in Britain and Visit Wales is investing in infrastructure to help beaches attain Blue Flag status. Visit Wales is also supporting projects with organisations like Keep Wales Tidy and Surfers Against Sewage to promote responsible, sustainable tourism and the need to protect coastal assets and abundant wildlife.

The Environment Minister, Hannah Blythyn, said:

“2018 is Wales’ Year of the Sea, so I’m pleased to see all bathing

waters in Wales meeting the water quality standards, with most areas again achieving an 'excellent' rating. This is an achievement worth celebrating.

"While some bathing waters have improved, it's disappointing to see some classifications fall. Natural Resources Wales will be working with Dŵr Cymru, local authorities and other stakeholders to identify and address any problems with water quality locally.

"Wales has a beautiful coastline and I want to see our bathing waters continue to meet the highest standards we've become accustomed to."

Natalie Hall, Water Manager for Natural Resources Wales, said:

"Protecting the environment is our main purpose which is why we work day in and day out to help make Wales as clean and as safe as possible for people and wildlife.

"We're especially pleased with the quality improvement in places like Cemaes Bay and Wisemans Bridge that have been real focus areas for us over the years.

"Our hard work will continue, in partnership with others, so that bathing water standards are maintained and continue to improve where necessary."