

£7.5m to help business prepare for Brexit

The £7.5m, which is part of the Welsh Government's £50m EU Transition Fund, will be used over the next three years to help companies develop the new expertise and processes they will need in order to thrive, post Brexit.

Part of the funding will be invested in strengthening the Welsh Government's already highly regarded export support services so that more Welsh businesses can develop the skills and confidence needed to begin or increase overseas trading, both inside of and outside of the EU. It will also be used to ensure businesses have access to the high quality exporting intelligence and technical information they need to successfully develop new export opportunities.

Another element of the funding will be directed into a Brexit Resilience Grant which businesses from across Wales will be able to bid for a share of. This will complement the high quality advice and support available through the Welsh Government's Business Wales service to help businesses invest in overcoming immediate challenges related to Brexit, such as additional administrative burdens and complexities.

The £7.5m will also be used to help businesses explore and engage in new collaborations and innovations so they can develop capacity and retain competitiveness, post-Brexit, in order to keep jobs here in Wales, to enhance the Welsh Government's own understanding of trade flows between Wales and the rest of the world, and to market Wales as a great place to invest and do business.

Finally the money will provide businesses with access to web-based information, tools and resources that will empower them to respond to a changing trading environment. This work began last month with the launch of the Business Wales Brexit Portal.

Speaking ahead of an FSB Business Breakfast where he will formally announce the funding, Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"It is now just a matter of months until the UK leaves the EU but unfortunately the UK Government's approach to Brexit means businesses in Wales are still left with many unanswered questions about what the future holds.

"As Economy Secretary my focus remains very much on delivering our Economic Action Plan, which has been designed to help us future proof our economy, and maintaining an honest, direct and ongoing dialogue with the business sector so we can work together to prepare for the challenges ahead.

"Last month, we launched our Business Wales Brexit Portal which

was developed with support from FSB . The portal provides companies in Wales with up-to-date information and advice on a range of crucial issues and helps them to assess their Brexit readiness through a bespoke diagnostic tool. I have been delighted by the incredibly positive feedback from businesses right across Wales on its value.

“Today I am delighted to announce an additional £7.5m to support business in Wales to build the sort of resilience that Brexit will require.

“From beefing up our already strong export support service through to helping business to navigate immediate Brexit burdens and uncertainties and helping them to develop new collaborations and innovations, the money will be spread across six priority areas that I believe really can strengthen the sector.

“I am determined that we will use this funding intelligently and effectively so we can maximise its impact and support the business sector in Wales into the strongest possible position to face the Brexit related challenges ahead.”

More details on how businesses can apply for their share of this funding will be published in the coming weeks.

Next Faster Broadband steps outlined

The Welsh Government’s Superfast Cymru programme has already transformed the digital landscape of Wales with the vast majority of premises, more than nine out of ten, now able to access superfast broadband compared with just over half when the programme began. It has provided almost 733,000 premises in all parts of Wales with access to fast fibre broadband.

As one part of a suite of measures for the remaining premises a grant agreement has now been signed with BT. This will be delivered by Openreach and will initially provide access to fast broadband to almost 16,000 premises by March 2021, utilising just over £13m of Welsh Government and EU funding.

These premises are in North Wales and the South West and the Valleys. Evaluation of tenders for the area covering East Wales is ongoing and a further announcement will be made once that work is complete.

The successor scheme to Superfast Cymru will form one part of a suite of interventions. The other elements are individual support through our ABC and ultrafast connectivity voucher schemes, and support for communities through

our vouchers schemes and community led interventions.

Julie James said:

“The broadband market in Wales has seen a rapid change over the last five years. Superfast Cymru has transformed the digital landscape of Wales with the vast majority of premises across the country able to access superfast broadband.

“But there is more to do to reach the remaining premises. Given the scale of the task in providing fast reliable broadband to those premises currently unable to access it we are going to need a range of interventions in future. There is no one size fits all solution.

“This will include publicly funded roll-outs as announced today, our ABC and ultrafast voucher schemes and support for community projects through our voucher schemes. For many a community based scheme is going to be the best route to fast broadband connectivity. We will work with communities and local authorities to provide advice and funding to bring fast broadband where it’s needed.”

Kim Mears, Openreach’s managing director for strategic infrastructure development , said:

“We’re delighted to be partnering with the Welsh Government once again on the continued roll out of fibre broadband across Wales.

“After the successful delivery of Superfast Cymru to date, to be awarded the first lots of this next phase confirms that Openreach is at the very forefront of building infrastructure that’s fit for the future.

“While the vast majority of the country – both urban and rural – can already access superfast broadband thanks to the work Openreach engineers have already completed in Wales we appreciate that there is still more to do.

“This is the next step in the process of making decent broadband available for all across Wales on an open network with a choice of providers.”

Plan sets out vision for Welsh to be readily available in technology

Developing Welsh Language speech technology that will allow Welsh language versions of digital personal assistants to be created in future; developing artificial intelligence in Welsh so that machines understand the language; and improving computer-assisted translation to ensure more Welsh is available are also aims of the plan.

The plan sets out the Welsh Government's vision for children, young people and adults to have more opportunities to use Welsh language technology, and to use it easily; in schools, in the workplace and at home.

Announcing the publication of the plan, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan said:

“So many people use technology for so many different things in their lives. We want to make it as easy as possible for them to do this in Welsh.

“This is why we want Welsh language functionality to be readily available, without having to be requested, when it comes to technology, whether that is working on your computer, using your phone or tablet. We want people to be able to use Welsh and English easily in their virtual lives at home, in school, in work or on the move.

“Technology also provides many opportunities for us to increase our use of Welsh or to learn Welsh but to do this we need to have the correct infrastructure in place. Technology moves quickly. Welsh needs to move with technology. That is the aim of our Plan.”

A week to go – have your say on post-Brexit farming support in Wales

The UK will leave the common Agricultural Policy next year and the Brexit and our Land consultation, launched in July, proposes a new Land Management Programme in Wales to support farmers post-Brexit.

The new Land Management Programme consists of two large, flexible schemes – the Economic Resilience Scheme and the Public Goods Scheme. Farmers will be

able to participate in both schemes.

The consultation is open until 30 October.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“There is now a week to go until our consultation ‘Brexit and our Land’ closes – one of the most important consultations for the farming sector in generations.

“That is why I launched the consultation ahead of the Royal Welsh Show and made it the longest consultation I’ve held so we could have a genuine debate on our proposals.

“Brexit brings with it unprecedented challenges and means we will have to do things in a different way. We have always been clear maintaining the status quo is not an option and the UK will leave the Common Agricultural Policy next year. So we need to design the best system for farm support in Wales and that is what we are currently consulting on.

“Our proposals aim to keep farmers farming. However, the proposals are just that – proposals. All consultation responses will be carefully considered and we will consult further in the Spring.

“My message to farmers and anyone with an interest in land management is simple – there has never been such an important time to get involved and help us shape the future of farming in Wales. Have your say by 30 October.”

[New measures to build on Wales’ recycling success](#)

The Minister will announce more than £50m capital funding over the next three years will be provided to support service changes and provide new infrastructure in Wales.

A new £500,000 behaviour change and enforcement campaign to raise public awareness of what households should recycle will get underway, working in partnership with Local Authorities and WRAP. Recent studies have shown more than half of waste put into black bins in Wales could be recycled.

The Minister will confirm that local authorities’ recycling grants will not be cut to fund other council services, while an extra £15.5m will be used to improve collections in the Vale of Glamorgan, Pembrokeshire and

Denbighshire.

The Welsh Government also plans to consult on new statutory guidance for local authorities. New regulations are also planned to require businesses to separate their waste in the way households already do.

The Welsh Government and the UK government will consult on a Deposit Return Scheme and Extended Producer Responsibility before Christmas. Welsh Ministers are also in discussions with the UK Government on possible taxation measures to tackle plastic waste, including a potential tax on single-use plastics.

The latest annual figures showed that Wales' municipal recycling rate is now 63%, against a national target of 58%. Wales is also first in the UK, second in Europe and third in the world for household recycling.

Hannah Blythyn said:

“Recycling is a Welsh success story and something we should be proud of. People in Wales have embraced the need to recycle and the Welsh Government and our partners have supported this through innovative policies, financial support and education campaigns.

“But we want to do more. Improving recycling rates again will require further support and more concerted and intensive interventions. That is why I am today announcing new measures to build on our success to date. Over the next three years we are providing more than £50m of capital to provide new infrastructure and ultimately help realise our ambition. We're also working with local government to increase their ability to recycle items like mattresses, nappies, wood and textiles.

“Wales leads the way on recycling in the UK, but we are not complacent. We want to continue working with our partners, and the people of Wales, to go from first in the United Kingdom, to first in the world.”