

New marine litter project launched

Keep Wales Tidy will lead the project, together with the Marine Conservation Society and environmental consultants Eunomia.

The project will deliver actions from the Clean Seas Partnership Marine Litter Action Plan. The action plan is designed to help tackle marine litter and maintain or achieve Good Environmental Status in our sea waters by 2020 under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The project will seek to build a coordinated approach to tackling marine litter, by working with marine litter action groups, local authorities and higher education institutions. It will also encourage further research into marine litter.

The project has received funding of £50,000 through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which is funded by the European Union and the Welsh Government.

Environment Minister, Hannah Blythyn, said:

“The need to tackle marine litter, especially plastic, has become part of our collective consciousness through documentaries such as BBC’s Blue Planet.

“I’m happy to support this project, which will help co-ordinate our efforts in Wales and contribute towards finding solutions to the growing threat litter poses to aquatic life.”

Jemma Bere, Policy and Research Manager for Keep Wales Tidy, added:

“We are delighted to be working in partnership with the Marine Conservation Society and Eunomia Consulting on this important research project. With the support of Welsh Government and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, we hope to gain a better understanding of the sources and types of litter in our environment, as well as the key challenges to tackling this global crisis at a local level.

“We are looking forward to connecting with a range of organisations and marine litter action groups across the UK and beyond to identify the most effective solutions.”

Porthcawl – developing an iconic waterfront destination

EU funding of £1.5 million is being invested in the development through the Welsh Government's Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to create 13 must see destinations across Wales.

The development will include a multi-purpose watersports and café-restaurant facility at Rest Bay with a centre for watersports for use by clubs, associations and private sector operators. The funding will also go towards refurbishment of an existing facility at Porthcawl Harbour to provide improved facilities for boat users and an extension of an existing kiosk/refreshment space. There will also be development of a 4km cycle route that will connect the bays in Porthcawl and provide a shared use scheme for cyclists and pedestrians; connecting up the key developments within the destination.

Minister for Tourism, Culture 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. In order to be a leading coastal destination we need to ensure that we have exemplary facilities and services for residents and visitors. This development will give people compelling reasons to visit the area and will benefit both visitors and locals with improved connections between these exciting developments around Porthcawl.”

Councillor Charles Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development and chair of the Bridgend Coastal Partnership, said:

“We are delighted to be part of the Tourism Attractor Destination programme and are looking forward to the creation of an all-new iconic visitor attraction in Porthcawl.

Our coastline and beaches have a long history of attracting residents and visitors, and the new centre at Rest Bay will tap into the growing popularity of sea-based sport and leisure activities to create a uniquely-placed watersport destination.

Together with the refurbishment of the marina building and other regeneration projects that are taking place throughout the town, the Tourism Attractor Destination programme is supporting the council's overall efforts to transform Porthcawl into a thriving 21st century coastal resort.”

In total, the Tourism Attractor Destination programme has been approved with £27.7m ERDF towards a total project cost of £61.8m that will see thirteen strategic infrastructure projects realised up to 2021.

[£5.3 million EU funding to up-skill Wales' advanced manufacturing sector](#)

The EU funding will support more than 800 people through the Up-skilling for Industry 4.0 project and International Innovation Masters scheme led by the University of Wales Trinity St David.

The £3.7 million Up-skilling for Industry 4.0 project, which is supported by £2.3 million of EU funding, will provide accredited qualifications to around 430 employees in Welsh industry, particularly within the advanced manufacturing sector.

It will support participants to understand and engage with rapid technological change and help drive business growth.

The £4.3 million International Innovation Masters scheme, which is backed by £3m of EU funding, will provide post-graduate training to around 390 employees from across Wales's manufacturing sector. The training will help professionals understand the importance of innovation in a dynamic international context.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“Innovation has become increasingly vital for business competitiveness and Wales must continue to respond to technological change and adapt its processes to compete successfully on a global scale.

“I am pleased that EU funds are being invested to help up-skill our advanced manufacturing workforce to meet these technological challenges and opportunities head on.

“This investment will help people to pursue successful, rewarding careers and drive forward business innovation, growth and jobs.”

Professor Medwin Hughes, vice chancellor of University of Wales Trinity St David, added:

“The university has a strong track-record of working with employers in the manufacturing sector to up-skill and train their workforce

for today's rapidly changing global environment.

"We play a key role in securing the sustainability of Wales's manufacturing industry by providing a pipeline of industry-ready graduates and by sharing our expertise in order to challenge concepts and discover new ways of working to our mutual benefit.

"Today's funding announcement will help us to develop our work with the manufacturing sector in Wales so that it is ready to harness the opportunities that such technological advancements as Industry 4.0 can provide for competitive advantage."

"Transparency is key in developing our tax policy" Finance Secretary tells Cardiff Business School breakfast

Speaking at a Cardiff Business School breakfast, he will update the meeting about the process of testing the Wales Act 2014, which enables the Welsh Government to propose new tax ideas in areas of devolved responsibilities.

A vacant land tax was chosen from a shortlist of 4 tax ideas to test the Wales Act, following a public debate about new tax ideas last year.

A vacant land tax could be used to discourage land banking and encourage the more timely development of vacant sites to meet increasing housing demands in Wales.

Addressing an audience of policymakers, business practitioners, and other stakeholders, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford will say:

"We are currently working on the process of transferring powers from the UK government to Wales. We hope to begin negotiations with HM Treasury in the coming months, with a view to securing the powers in the New Year. After this time, we can begin more formal policy development.

"I am committed to ensuring our tax policy is developed in an open and transparent matter and that's why we've had – and are continuing to have – constructive discussions with stakeholders.

"Only through this cooperation can we ensure we achieve our objectives without placing any unnecessary burden on responsible developers and land owners."

A vacant land tax is not a new idea. Property taxes have been used to encourage development and regeneration across the world. The Republic of Ireland's vacant sites levy provides a useful reference point for how a vacant land tax might work in Wales.

However, a vacant land tax in Wales would be developed specifically for Wales' unique requirements.

[Coastal location inspiration for Sea Shanty](#)

The Sea Shanty opened its doors in July 2016 following a coordinated effort from its creator Philip Brown, Anglesey County Council and funding from Visit Wales. Located behind the main beach of Trearddur Bay, this brand new build sits behind the sand dunes and has 160 covers inside with a further 55 outside.

The interior draws on the coastal location and maritime heritage of the area to bring a strong sense of place to the village. Wooden sailing boats and vintage outboard motors can be seen on the ceiling while curiosities brought to life by local craftsmen are exhibited everywhere. Each piece of work bears a plaque acknowledging the local artisan responsible. The café-restaurant celebrates the sea shore in a most unusual way – bottles of sand from beaches all over the world are displayed along one entire wall with shells, shipwreck copper, driftwood, and other beach finds adorning the walls.

The Minister met with owner Phil Brown who reported that the business had initially expected to create thirty two jobs, but now employs over sixty local people and provides ancillary business to dozens of other local trades. Phil Brown, said:

“Sea Shanty is a classic example of how public and private sector can work together for the benefit of both. Personally, the creative side has been huge fun and given all of us involved the opportunity to express our views in areas such as re-cycling, litter clearance and architectural environmental enhancement.

Food from local growers, fishermen and producers is used whenever possible and I'm proud to say that we have a large number of Welsh speaking staff greeting and serving customers”.

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“As we celebrate our Year of the Sea this year it was an excellent opportunity to see how the Sea Shanty is making the most of our magnificent coastline and ensuring that that sense of place permeates every aspect of the business from décor to menus.

The Sea Shanty is part of a growing family of high quality coastal restaurants in Wales which are giving people an excellent experience of Welsh food and hospitality. I’m delighted that we’ve been able to support this development and wish the team every success for the future. ”