

Appointment of chair of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee

Martin has a background in planning, transport and regeneration, as well as flood risk management. He brings many years of experience managing multidisciplinary teams and has worked on and chaired a number of Boards and committees.

The Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee was established under the provision of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The purpose of the Committee is to advise Welsh Ministers on all flood and coastal erosion risk management matters in Wales, including raising awareness, preparation and community resilience to flooding.

Hannah Blythyn said:

“I am very pleased Martin Buckle has agreed to chair the Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee. His experience, knowledge and expertise will help us deliver our immediate and longer term national priorities set out in the forthcoming National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Risk.”

The chair of the Committee is paid £225 per day with a time commitment of up to 36 days per annum, with an initial tenure of three years. Martin Buckle does not hold any other Ministerial appointment.

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for the political activity of appointees (if any declared) to be published. Martin Buckle has not carried out any political activities in the last five years.

NHS staff to benefit from new pay deal

Trade unions have unanimously agreed to the deal, offered by the Welsh Government, which includes a range of pay and non-pay proposals that will benefit staff and patients. It matches, and in some areas goes beyond the pay deal for England.

As part of the deal pay bands will be restructured to include higher starting pay, removal of overlapping pay points and shorter pay scales.

It guarantees fair basic pay awards for the next three years to staff who are

at the top of their bands – in cumulative 6.5% in three years.

The Health Secretary said:

“Our NHS staff do a fantastic job delivering world-class care under immense pressure and scrutiny. They work incredibly hard, always putting patients first and keeping them safe, while delivering the best care possible.

“I’m pleased that today we are able to reward this dedication with a new pay deal that gives parity with their counterparts in England, and goes beyond it in some areas that will benefit the Welsh NHS.

“After 8 years of austerity, imposed by the UK Government, we have committed extra funding beyond the consequential funding that we received following the pay rise in England, to offer a deal which is not only fair to staff and taxpayers but will also lead to a better NHS for Wales.”

The agreement includes a continuing commitment to look at the annual Living Wage Foundation recommendations so that NHS pay scales remain fair in the future.

It also provides better payments during sickness absence than in England, as part of a commitment to improve the health, wellbeing and attendance of NHS staff in Wales. Trade unions and employers will also work together to support individuals if they face a diagnosis of a terminal illness, including support for the TUC “Dying to Work” campaign.

The Health Secretary has said work will begin to make sure staff see the benefits in their pay packets before Christmas.

A range of supporting resources on the deal, such as FAQs and a Pay Journey Calculator are available on the NHS Wales Employers website:

<http://www.nhsconfed.org/regions-and-eu/welsh-nhs-confederation/nhs-wales-employers/our-work/terms-and-conditions/pay-deal-2018>

Town centres central to Valleys vision

Alun Davies is Chair of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys, which was established to deliver lasting change for people living and working in the valleys.

On the visit yesterday, the Cabinet Secretary met with members of the

community to discuss the work of the Taskforce and the role it can play in ensuring our high streets continue to thrive.

The Cabinet Secretary said,

“Town centres and high streets play a central role in creating a sense of community and providing us with a place to shop, do business, socialise and live. Our high streets should be the heart of our towns, offering a vibrant local economy and bustling community and we all have a role to play in ensuring they remain sustainable.

“Since I set up the Taskforce, many people have pointed out one of the main challenges facing Valleys communities is the decline of the traditional high street. This is not just as a threat to independent retailers, but changing shopping habits, in particular increasing online and out-of-town purchases, combined with falling disposable incomes, can cause difficulties too.

“People tell me they want to shop on their high street, and support local business, but when it’s cheaper, and more convenient to do so online, or even out-of-town, it’s a difficult choice to make.

“While we know that our town centres are resilient and are used to adapting to market forces, the Valleys Taskforce has been working with our community partners to find solutions to some of these issues so that our high streets are not only able to survive, but to thrive.

“Recently, the Welsh Government announced an extra £5 million to extend our High Street Rates Relief scheme for one further year into 2018-19. The scheme is unique to Wales and will support around 13,000 small and medium-sized businesses across the country this year.

“We’ve also been looking at more innovative public transport solutions and have worked with local authorities to explore the impact of piloting more free town centre parking initiatives.”

Actions to boost employability in Wales highlighted in progress report

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan today announced the publication of the first [progress report](#) on the delivery of the

plan, which was published in March this year. The report showcases key achievements so far, highlights ongoing work and sets out developments planned for the future.

The publication follows the Minister's visit to the Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend to launch Project Search. The project is an excellent example of the individualised approach to overcoming barriers to employment advocated by the Employability Plan.

Run by Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, Bridgend College and *Elite Supported Employment Agency*, the project helps young people with additional learning needs or disabilities into work by providing them with supported internships with the aim of them securing paid employment, either with the employer or on the open jobs market, at the end of the placement.

The Minister met Olivia and Bradley, two of the ten interns taking part in the project, as they started work across various departments in the hospital and the mentors who will be supporting them.

Following the visit the Minister said:

"Our Employability Plan recognises that different people experience different barriers which prevent them entering work. For people with additional learning needs or disabilities, schemes like Project Search which give them the opportunity to show what they can do, maybe with some support to begin with, are vital.

"It was great to meet Bradley and Olivia as they start on their employment journeys and to hear about their hopes for their future careers. I am proud that our Employability Plan is ensuring the right support is in place for them, and others, to overcome the barriers to employment they face."

Announcing the publication of the report, she said:

"I am pleased to announce today the publication of our first progress report on the delivery of our Employability Plan. The report sets out highlights over the past six months, showcasing our key achievements so far, as well as giving a flavour of work ongoing and future developments to come.

"We are just six months into a ten year plan but we have made a promising start – working to better understand existing barriers and the actions needed to deliver real change and setting in motion a far-reaching new approach to improving employability across Wales."

€4.3 million of EU funding support for Ireland-Wales marine observation scheme

The STREAM (Sensor Technologies for Remote Environmental Aquatic Monitoring) project will bring together partners on both sides of the Irish Sea to better understand the impact of climate change; lower the cost of marine observation and accelerate the process of data provision.

The £5.4 million project is supported through the EU's Ireland-Wales Co-operation Programme and led by the Waterford Institute of Technology, with project partners Swansea University and Cork Institute of Technology.

STREAM will develop sensors capable of providing real-time environmental data through web portals, mobile applications and mass-produced sensors for organisations responsible for protecting and improving Welsh and Irish waters. Data collected will be shared locally to keep coastal communities informed about the local impacts of climate change.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Preserving our marine environment in Wales and Ireland for economic prosperity and enjoyment is vitally important. This is an excellent example of how EU funds are enabling partners on both sides of the Irish Sea to support communities to mitigate the impacts of climate change.”

Paschal Donohoe TD, the Irish Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, said:

“I am delighted to see the launch of another EU-funded project supported by the Ireland-Wales Programme. The continuing co-operation between our 2 nations in areas such as scientific research yields benefits on all sides.

“Climate change is a shared challenge, which serves to highlight the importance of cross-border co-operation through projects like STREAM. By furthering our understanding of the impact of climate change in this way we will be better placed to combat it in the future, improving the quality of our seas for the years to come.”

Dr Joe O'Mahony, principal investigator at the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), added:

“WIT welcomes the significant investment made by the EU in further developing the marine sensing and communications knowledge base in our cross-border region.

“This investment builds on the unique blend of expertise offered across all partner organisations and will ensure the cross-border region continues to be an exemplar for clean and productive seas.

“We are very much looking forward to working with our partners in Wales and Ireland on this very exciting and important operation.”