

£1.1m grant aid scheme for small and medium size slaughterhouses

The package of support will enable these businesses to invest in improvements to ensure their resilience and their ability to continue to provide slaughtering facilities often in remote areas.

The grant aid will include both capital investment and provide advice on animal welfare, business improvement and technical matters. Welfare friendly infrastructure and facilities will be supported and also the installation and upgrading of CCTV monitoring systems.

The details of the grant scheme will be developed over the coming months, in consultation with the industry to ensure the support meets the needs of the sector. It will be launched before the summer recess.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Safeguarding the health and welfare of farmed animals kept in Wales throughout their lives, up to and including the point of slaughter, is a high priority for me.

“Today, I am pleased to announce I will soon be launching a £1.1million Food Business Investment scheme package of grant aid specifically for small and medium sized slaughterhouses in Wales. This support will enable these businesses to invest in improvements so they become more resilient and are able to continue to provide slaughtering facilities.

“Small slaughterhouses support both short and local supply chains and provide processing facilities for small scale livestock producers and in doing so are good for animal welfare by reducing the distance travelled from farm to slaughterhouse. The slaughterhouse can be the first and last destination for animals leaving the farm and it is important that this transfer is as stress free as possible.

“The grant aid will also help these businesses install and upgrade CCTV monitoring systems. I want to assist businesses to put systems in place while legislating for CCTV in slaughterhouses is taking place in England. I want Wales’ slaughterhouses to be fully prepared as I continue to explore opportunities to legislate in the longer term.

“Work will now get underway with the industry to develop the scheme so that it is bespoke to their needs and I expect it to be launched before summer recess.

“Small slaughterhouses have survived well in Wales despite many

challenges which has seen a steady decline in the numbers elsewhere in Britain. I want to assist their sustainability in Wales and to maintain high standards of animal welfare that will be beyond reproach.”

School business managers playing vital role in reducing headteachers' workload – Kirsty Williams

Speaking at the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL) conference in Cardiff's City Hall, the Education Secretary said:

“Teachers and headteachers need to be able to concentrate on the roles that they are best equipped to perform, roles that they trained for, roles that made them want to become teachers in the first place.

“There are many things that can get in the way of this and teachers frequently tell me about the pressures they face due to workload.

“We have listened and that's why, last year, I announced funding of £642,000 for the School Business Manager project.

“Coupled with match-funding from Local Authorities this means that over £1.2 million is available for pilots in eleven areas.

“The aim of the project is to help headteachers manage their workload and focus on raising standards and school improvement.

“The pilots are currently supporting over 100 schools with dedicated support for headteachers and teachers.”

“We are already seeing encouraging results with business managers freeing up headteachers' time by working on areas such as HR, Finance, Audit, Facilities Management and Procurement issues.”

The Education Secretary added:.”

“Reducing the administrative burden on headteachers is just one of the measures we're taking to strengthen the profession.

“Teachers also tell me about the problems they face teaching large class sizes. Therefore, over this Assembly term, we will be making £36m available to reduce infant class sizes.

“New professional teacher and leadership standards have also been developed with the profession, for the profession and a National Academy for Educational Leadership is being set up to support all leaders in education at all stages of their careers.

“These measures, coupled with our efforts to reduce workload, form a key part of our national mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.”

Environment Minister announces £600,000 for new Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre

The Minister made the announcement at a meeting of the Welsh Assembly’s Climate Change and Rural Affairs Committee.

The Centre will be led by a collaboration between Conwy, Gwynedd and the Vale of Glamorgan Local Authorities. It will be supported by an expert advisory panel including Natural Resources Wales, the Wales Coastal Groups Forum and our universities.

Local Authorities currently carry out monitoring of their coastlines in isolation. The new Centre will provide co-ordinated planning along the whole coastline, improving data and supporting robust evidence-based decision making.

Targeted and sustained coastal monitoring will improve understanding of how complex coastal systems are evolving in response to changes in the environment. It is also used to measure the success of techniques such as natural flood management, including beach nourishment or salt marsh restoration.

The new Centre will collect monitoring data along the length of the Welsh coast, to improve the understanding of the impact of climate change on our coastline and ensure investment in sea defences is targeted at the areas most at risk.

“I’m pleased to announce today an investment of £600,000 towards a new Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre. The centre will help inform future investment decisions on a national basis, helping reduce the risk to our coast and coastal communities.

“People living in coastal areas of Wales will be well aware of the effect rising sea levels is having on parts of the Welsh coastline. It is important we improve coastal monitoring data, so we can understand better the impact of climate change on Wales’s coast.

“This funding underlines our commitment to minimising the impact of

climate change on our coastline.”

[NHS Wales responds to busiest winter on record](#)

Vaughan Gething said:

“These figures confirm we are experiencing the busiest winter on record. Along with record levels of emergency admissions, we’ve seen the highest levels of flu and proportion of elderly patients admitted for many years.

“Despite this pressure the vast majority of patients have received timely, professional care when they need it. I would like to thank NHS Wales, social services and voluntary staff for their outstanding commitment and professionalism in delivering that care during this relentlessly challenging period.

“The pressures we face each winter are a challenge for the whole health and care system to consider and act upon. We provided an additional £10million to Local Health Boards in January in recognition of the exceptional pressure, and a further £10million in February for social care services to support people to stay at home or return to their community more quickly.

“Despite sustained cuts to our funding by the UK Government, our investment in the Welsh NHS has never been higher; with spend per person increasing faster here in 2016-17 than in the rest of the UK. We also invest record levels in the NHS workforce. We recently announced a £100million fund to transform the way health and social services are delivered in Wales to ensure the NHS is fit for the future.”

Mr Gething added:

“Increasing levels of activity have been compounded by the highest GP consultation rate for ‘flu for seven years; exceptionally cold weather conditions causing a spike in respiratory illness; and a 13% increase in the proportion of patients over 75 at Emergency Departments compared to last February.

“In spite of the pressures, 26 week performance improved, the number of people waiting over eight weeks for diagnostics is 31% lower than this time last year and 14 weeks for therapy services is 68% lower than last year, and we expect to see further material improvements up to the end of March.

“I welcome the achievement of the ambulance response time target and the average response time of just 5 minutes and 40 seconds to patients defined as ‘immediately life-threatening’.

“I was pleased to note that the number of people experiencing a delayed transfer of care showed a marked reduction with 51 less delays than those reported in the January period. The total for February is one of the lowest on record. This has been achieved through the resilience planning put in place by health boards and local authorities.

“However, there have been times this winter when patients have been waiting longer than is acceptable. We have been clear with Chief Executives of Health Boards about our expectations around quality of care and performance, and will work with them to evaluate improvements taken this winter.”

[New law to protect Welsh devolution passed by Assembly](#)

The Continuity – or LDEU – Bill seeks to transfer EU Law in areas already devolved to Wales into Welsh law on the day the UK leaves the EU. This will provide legal continuity and stability, regardless of the disagreements over the UK Government’s EU (Withdrawal) Bill.

The Bill was introduced by the Welsh Government because of serious concerns about the UK Government’s EU Withdrawal Bill, which allows the UK Government to take control of devolved policy areas, such as farming and fishing after Brexit.

Welsh Ministers are still working to reach agreement with the UK Government on amendments to the Withdrawal Bill. However, as so much time has passed without agreement between the governments, the Welsh Government had no choice but to take forward the Continuity Bill as a fall-back option to protect Welsh devolution.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Assembly Members have voted convincingly to back our Bill to protect devolution and make sure powers that are currently devolved, remain devolved.

“The UK Government’s EU Withdrawal Bill, as currently drafted, would allow them to take control of laws and policy areas that are devolved. This is wholly unacceptable and must change.

“Our strong preference remains for satisfactory, UK-wide legislation with an EU Withdrawal Bill which is amended to ensure devolution is respected. However, we have introduced the Continuity Bill because the UK Government has been so slow and reluctant to recognise our legitimate concerns. This lack of progress is a matter of real frustration given that we share the same objectives as the UK Government – to create certainty and ensure there are no barriers within the UK’s own internal single market. But this has to be done through consent, not by imposition.

“It is not too late to reach agreement – although we urgently need to see further progress before we can give our consent to the EU Withdrawal Bill. These changes need to be made quickly as the Parliamentary timetable is against us.”

The Welsh Government will not proceed with the implementation of the Continuity Bill if satisfactory agreement is reached on the UK Government’s EU (Withdrawal) Bill. At that point, Welsh Ministers will recommend the Assembly gives legislative consent to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill and the Continuity Bill can be repealed.