

Over £1.7m EU funding boost for Holyhead tourism sites

The aim of the project is to transform Holy Island into an iconic destination, making the most of its strategic location as a gateway for international visitors to Wales and the UK.

The project will include improving the visitor welcome at Holyhead port and railway station highlighting what Holy Island, Anglesey and North Wales have to offer the visitor.

The plans also feature improvements to key sites on Holy Island including the iconic St Cybi's Church and Roman fort site, and Holyhead Breakwater Park, including improved facilities and interpretation. Signage will also be provided to assist with connections between attractions.

The developments at Holyhead are part of the Welsh Government's wider EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to create 11 must see destinations across Wales. The project is designed to address business investment and employment growth within the tourism sector in the regions, and put Wales on the world map as a holiday destination.

Ahead of a visit to St Cybi's Church and Roman Fort site the First Minister said:

"Holyhead is the gateway to Wales and the UK for thousands of visitors every year. It has a rich history stretching back to roman and medieval times and has a wealth of natural attractions.

"This funding boost will improve and raise the profile of these attractions, encouraging visitors to spend more time in Holyhead. It will allow the town to make the most of its unique strategic location.

"This announcement is part of a wider programme of major investment in tourism to create a number of must-see attractions across Wales and is a vote of confidence in Holyhead and what it has to offer."

Anglesey County Council Leader, Councillor Llinos Medi Huws said:

"We very much welcome this announcement of investment to improve and enhance Holy Island's role as a key visitor gateway into Anglesey and other parts of North Wales. This package will help us to improve the visitor experience at key locations, helping to promote what the area has to offer, making sure that visitors are made aware that they are in Wales and giving them a flavour of

Welsh culture and heritage. In this way we aim to see greater economic benefits from tourism to local businesses and communities.”

First Minister Carwyn Jones to meet Prime Minister for talks on EU Withdrawal Bill

The First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon will also attend the meeting. The Welsh Government have serious concerns about the UK government’s EU Withdrawal Bill, which, as currently drafted, allows the UK government to take control of devolved policy areas, such as farming and fishing, once the UK has left the EU.

The meeting follows the introduction to the National Assembly of the Welsh Government’s Continuity Bill as a fall back option which seeks to transfer EU Law in areas already devolved to Wales into Welsh law on the day the UK leaves the EU.

Carwyn Jones said:

“We are at a crucial stage in these talks. The UK government is moving in the right direction, but its latest offer, which has not been agreed with the devolved administrations, is insufficient, and we could not recommend the Assembly to give its legislative consent to the Withdrawal Bill on the basis of the amendment they have proposed.

“We want to resolve this and are committed to continuing to try to seek agreement before the Bill finishes its passage through Parliament, but time is against us. That is why we will continue to progress our Continuity Bill through the National Assembly, but as we have said repeatedly, this is only a fall-back option

“Just last week at the JMC (EN) we and the Scottish Government put forward a number of ideas about how we could move forward from the UK government’s proposals and I look forward to discussing these with the Prime Minister.”

£4m to boost skills at Tata Steel

This investment will enable Tata Steel to deliver a number of distinct training projects to strengthen the core skills of their employees and help them develop new advanced manufacturing and engineering techniques across the business. These are designed to improve efficiency and increase productivity to help Tata Steel meet the growing demands of the highly competitive global steel industry.

The First Minister said:

“We continue to work very closely with Tata Steel to support their plans to develop its business and become more innovative, productive and efficient.

“Tata Steel has made a substantial commitment to roll out a wide-ranging programme of ring-fenced training projects across all sites in Wales. The investment I am announcing today demonstrates our absolute commitment to the company in supporting this ambitious agenda.”

Tata Steel has identified a number of key business priorities that include aspiring to be the world steel industry benchmark for value creation and corporate citizenship, sustain their skills-base through recruitment, retention and training of their apprentices, trainees and employees and to continue to contribute positively to the Welsh and wider economy.

In response to the announcement, a spokesperson for Tata Steel said:

“We are delighted the Welsh Government has again recognised the importance of supporting the training and continued upskilling of the workforce.

“More than 80% of all our employees in Wales have directly benefitted from training in areas such as health & safety, business and maintenance excellence as well as a host of other areas thanks to Welsh Government funding.

“This allows us to ensure our employees can do more which in turn means they can better support the whole economy of Wales.”

Environment Minister confirms no changes to Designated Landscapes

Speaking to AMs today, the Minister confirmed the designated landscapes review process, which has been ongoing since 2013, will draw to a close with the publication of a policy statement in the coming months.

In May 2017, the Future Landscapes Working Group, chaired by Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, published a review of Wales' National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The Group was established to explore the recommendations of the Marsden Report into the future of Wales' designated landscapes, which provided 69 wide-ranging recommendations.

During a plenary debate last June, the future protection of Wales' designated landscapes under the current Welsh Government was called into question. Today the Minister sought to reassure all concerned parties the Welsh Government will not be changing the purposes of National Parks or AONBs.

In an Oral Statement in the National Assembly, Hannah Blythyn said:

“Designated landscapes have been in a state of review since a draft policy statement was consulted on in 2013.

“Today I want to settle some of the key questions on the Government's position and to give this Assembly the opportunity to get a sense of my priorities before I publish a policy statement in the coming months which will bring the review process to a close.

“I welcome the thorough and thought provoking reviews and reports of Professor Marsden and his panel and Lord Elis-Thomas and the Future Landscapes Working Group.

“The process of review has ingrained a new way of working between Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and stakeholders where they now share a much greater understanding of the national priorities which they can help to address by working together.

“My priority over the coming months will be to work with the Park Authorities and AONB partnerships on our contemporary Welsh approach to ecosystems and landscapes, while recognising the enduring value of their original purpose.

“I am committed to ensuring Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks are valued for their natural beauty by our people, communities and country and our designated landscapes deliver rich ecosystems, vibrant and resilient communities and opportunities for outdoor recreation for all of the people of Wales.”

Valleys road improvements must bring wider benefits

The meeting also discussed the ambitious plans published by the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys, which is chaired by Alun Davies.

He said:

“The A465 – the Heads of the Valleys road – is one of the key east-west strategic links in Wales. Part of the Trans-European Road Network, it is an international gateway for our economy in South Wales.

“When the dualling is complete, there will be a continuous dual carriageway from the M4 along the A465 to the midlands and beyond.

“We are working to make the most of the opportunities from this, building on the Valleys Taskforce’s ambitious plans, including a commitment to close the employment gap between the South Wales Valleys and the rest of Wales.

“This means ensuring projects like this include employment and training opportunities for the local community and that Welsh companies can compete for sub-contracts. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy Ken Skates has also been clear through the new Economic Action Plan that he wants to see more public investment with a social purpose of this kind in the Welsh economy over the next few years.”

Dr Victoria Winckler, director of the Bevan Foundation, added:

“We have fantastic resources in our Valleys communities, which is why we must work together to ensure big infrastructure projects like the Heads of the Valleys dualling make the most of procurement, of our people and our spectacular surroundings to bring benefits to our communities.

“We are delighted to be working with the Welsh Government and the Industrial Communities Alliance to make sure the most is made of the A465. As a route, it is at least as significant to the people living in the Heads of the Valleys sub-region as the South Wales Metro. In dramatically shortening journey times both within the Heads of the Valleys area and the rest of Wales and the UK, it has the potential to transform the region.”

Mr Davies continued,

“This is a part of Wales which is full of opportunities, rich in culture, people and natural resources and in hope and ambition. As we work to bring about lasting social and economic prosperity for all our Valleys communities, it’s vital we make the most of all the opportunities at hand.”