

New Refugee and Asylum Seeker plan for Wales launched

The 'Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan' is the latest step towards the government's ambition of making Wales a nation of sanctuary for all who choose to make it their home.

It renews the Welsh Government's commitment of working with the UK Government, local authorities, the Welsh Refugee Coalition and people seeking sanctuary themselves to achieve equality of opportunities, including access to resources and mainstream services. It also recognises the valuable skills and experiences which refugees and asylum seekers can bring with them to enhance Welsh communities.

Welsh communities have already welcomed close to 1,000 Syrian refugees as part of the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, and the Community Support scheme, along with many more asylum seekers from across the world. The plan highlights a range of targeted and culturally-appropriate support, recognising the importance of designing and delivering services tailored for often unique needs. These include:

- Mental health services which address the difficult past experiences of those seeking sanctuary
- Interventions to mitigate the risk of refugees and asylum seekers becoming destitute
- Actions to prevent vulnerable individuals from being exploited
- Safeguarding, particularly for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

One key programme is the 'ReStart: Refugee Integration' project which aims to improve access to language tuition, employability support and local cultural knowledge to aid integration. Over 500 refugees will have their needs assessed and given targeted support to help them integrate into society.

A website will be launched to provide accessible, relevant information for refugees and asylum seekers. It will ensure those seeking sanctuary can develop their own knowledge of life in Wales and find advice around health, education and employment, as well as language and general information on the culture and history of Wales.

The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt, launched the plan today in the Senedd.

She said:

"Refugees and asylum seekers often arrive in Wales following traumatic experiences in their home countries and on their journeys to the UK. Wales has a long, proud history of welcoming refugees and this Nation of Sanctuary plan will ensure this happens.

“We want to support refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives and make a full contribution to Welsh society – to support the taking-up of opportunities and adding to the diversity of our communities.

“Over the next few years, we intend to build upon this Plan to ensure Wales is truly a nation of sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers, for the improvement of everybody in society. We want to move beyond just welcoming them; we want to harness their skills and enrich our country by doing so.”

The plan has been endorsed by the United Nation’s High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN’s Refugee Agency dedicated to protecting the rights of people seeking sanctuary.

Wales’ radical new curriculum reaches legal milestone

Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, will later unveil a White Paper that lays the legal foundations of a curriculum that is currently being designed by Wales’ teachers.

Breaking down traditional subject boundaries and empowering teachers to be more innovative, we will be introducing Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) that cover the Humanities; Health and Wellbeing; Science and Technology; Languages, Literacy and Communications; Expressive Arts; and Maths.

English and Welsh will remain statutory, as will Religious Studies and Relationships and Sexuality Education. Alongside this, the Cross-Curriculum Responsibilities of literacy, numeracy and digital competence will be statutory up to 16 years old.

Key stages will be removed. Instead, there will be Progression Steps relating to expectations for learners ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16. These will allow teachers to understand each learner’s development – taking into account their individual abilities, experiences and rates of learning and understanding.

The changes will ensure that schools can move away from the days of a narrow curriculum and instead give teachers the flexibility to be creative in their teaching. By using this approach practitioners will be able to use their professionalism and expert knowledge to create and design lessons that stretch learners’ abilities and horizons.

Kirsty Williams commented:

“Wales started on this journey of reform because of a drive to improve standards – we want our young people to develop higher standards of literacy and numeracy, become more digitally and bilingually competent, and grow to be enterprising, creative and critical thinkers.

“I am absolutely clear that to raise standards and extend opportunities, we need to empower schools and teachers by moving away from a narrow, inflexible and crowded curriculum.

“This is an exciting time for education in Wales. Not only are we developing a curriculum that ensures our learners are equipped to meet the needs of the future, but we are developing a curriculum through genuine collaboration with our schools and key stakeholders.

“I am asking people across Wales to contribute to this debate over the coming weeks and months. The White Paper is ambitious and far-reaching. But we will only reach those high standards through a genuine national mission and conversation.”

Environmental projects set to benefit from £1m funding through new landfill community scheme

The scheme is a new funding programme managed by Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

A total of 27 projects across Wales will receive Grant Awards in the first round of funding raised by the scheme.

The Welsh Government established the scheme to support local community and environmental projects in areas affected by disposals to landfill. It is funded by the new Welsh Landfill Disposals Tax (LDT) which replaced UK Landfill Tax in April 2018.

LDT is a tax on the disposal of waste to landfill and is charged by weight.

It is the first time that money raised from the Landfill Disposals Tax has been used to support a bespoke Welsh funding scheme.

Successful projects focusing on the environment, wildlife, reuse,

biodiversity and waste management will receive funding of up to £50,000 each.

Projects that will benefit include:

- Pembrokeshire Remakery will see £49,900 support a community project aiming to re-educate the community in repair and mend and contributing to reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill.
- Betws Family Centre in Carmarthenshire will see more than £8,000 go towards a project to enhance an outdoor space so parents and children can gain skills in gardening, growing their own food and be more physically active.
- Ysgol Y Lawnt in Caerphilly will receive £10,600 to support a project to transform the school grounds from overgrown and unused scrubby woodland to a space used for education and outdoor activities to improve the well-being of the pupils and biodiversity.
- Menter Mon in Anglesey will see £49,900 to support a project that seeks to respond to the threat the American Mink poses to biodiversity on Anglesey. Without intervention, this non-native predator could lead to the extinction of water voles and wading birds on the island.
- The Vincent Wildlife Trust in North Wales will see £49,900 go towards a project to engage with local communities and train new volunteers to ensure the recovering population of native pine martens survives in the long-term.

Applications for a second round of funding have recently closed. However, two rounds of funding will take place in each year the scheme operates. The second round of funding included a call for a nationally significant project costing between £50,000-£250,000.

Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, praised the funding and said it would have a number of wider environmental benefits:

“I’m delighted the establishment of Landfill Disposals Tax has led to 27 projects benefitting from more than £1million through our new Landfill Disposals Tax Community Scheme.

“These projects will have far reaching benefits to communities, the environment and wildlife that will continue for generations to come.”

Minister for Finance and Trefnydd, Rebecca Evans, said:

“With the challenges of Brexit it is more important than ever that we utilise every opportunity we have to award funding to viable projects that will benefit the wider population.

“I’d like to wish the best of luck to everyone applying for the next round.”

Ruth Marks, WCVA’s Chief Executive, said:

“The successful grant applicants represent a really exciting range of projects from across Wales. From taking action to improve local community facilities, enhancing the natural environment and promoting waste minimisation, these projects will have a great impact in Wales.

“The first round generated a great deal of interest and WCVA is pleased to be working with Welsh Government and our County Voluntary Council partners to deliver this scheme.”

Reel big year for film and TV production in Wales

Sex Education, which premiered on Netflix last week, is one of many projects made in Wales in 2018 that has hit the screen this year.

The 8 part, coming of age comedy drama follows awkward teenager Otis Milburn (Asa Butterfield) as he navigates the road into adulthood. It stars Hollywood A- lister Gillian Anderson as his cringeworthy honest, sex therapist mum. Sex Education is one of a string of productions wholly or partly filmed in Wales as a result of the Welsh Government funding to the Screen Industry.

Funding is complemented by our Wales Screen service which helps production companies by sourcing crew, locations and providing facilities support.

Other Welsh Government supported productions set for release this year include:

- **Watchmen** (HBO) which filmed key sequences in Penrhyn Castle in North Wales. Starring Jeremy Irons, the American drama television series is based on the comic book limited series of the same name created by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons.
- **The Crown** series 3 (Left Bank Pictures) which includes an entire episode focussed on the Aberfan disaster. The producers used various locations in the South Wales Valleys and Cadw also closed Caernarfon castle in north Wales for the re-enactment of the investiture of Prince Charles.
- **Keeping Faith** series 2 (Vox Pictures) is currently being shot in West Wales following the success of the first series in 2018. Starring Eve

Myles in the title role, series 1 set records for viewing figures and was the highest viewed drama by BBC Wales in over 20 years. iPlayer views topped 15 million which led to BBC Network buying it and screening UK wide.

- **Six Minutes to Midnight** (Mad As Birds Ltd.) was written by Celyn Jones and Eddie Izzard and directed by Andy Goddard. The feature film is a historical thriller based on true events that took place in Britain in the lead up to the Second World War, starring Eddie Izzard and Dame Judi Dench.
- **The Secret Garden** (Lennox Productions) filmed key sequences at Bodnant Garden in North Wales for two weeks for the remake of the classic tale starring Colin Firth and Julie Walters.
- **Pitching In** (LA Productions), a new Wales-based family drama, features Gavin and Stacey stars, Larry Lamb (Michael Shipman) and Melanie Walters (Gwen West). Set for BBC One Wales and BBC One Daytime, it tells the story of three generations of the same family, all struggling to make the best of a very unusual – and sometimes very difficult – situation.
- **Warren** (Hat Trick Productions for BBC One). Original comedy series penned by upcoming writers Paul McKenna and Jimmy Donny Cosgrove, centres on the life of Warren Thompson (played by Martin Clunes), a pedantic driving instructor who thinks the world is against him.
- **His Dark Materials** (Bad Wolf) continues to shoot at Wolf Studios and around locations in Wales. The BBC's forthcoming adaptation of Philip Pullman's trilogy of books stars James McAvoy, Dafne Keen and Lin-Manuel Miranda. The series will run for 8 parts, written by Jack Thorne with Tom Hooper directing. A second series is expected to shoot in 2019.

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism Lord Elis-Thomas said:

“Hard work and investment has helped us to develop Wales’ reputation as a five-star location for television drama production; a country that is geared up to support the sector and as a strong and affordable alternative to London.

“And there is absolutely no doubt that our proactive, industry friendly approach is paying dividends and bringing a whole host of high calibre productions to Wales.

“Of course our approach is focussed firmly on value for the tax payer and with current analysis showing that for every £1 the Welsh Government invests into TV and Film production, we are seeing an average of £8 being spent within the Welsh Economy, we will keep working to attract more and more productions to Wales.”

Welsh in Business is good for business

Thanks to Welsh in Business, the Welsh Government's free language support service, more than 1000 businesses have interacted with the Welsh language during the first year of the initiative. Almost 200 businesses have received support to develop action plans to increase their use of Welsh, the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language confirmed today.

The initiative's focus is to increase the number of private businesses using Welsh and, in turn, the number of opportunities for people to use the language locally.

The national network of Welsh in Business officers are based in the Mentrau Iaith (Language Initiatives) across Wales and rooted in their communities. Engaging with small to medium-sized private sector businesses, they offer a wide range of support, from improving Welsh language interaction with customers to providing bilingual merchandise and advice on recruiting Welsh speaking staff. A free translation service is also available – and 140 businesses took advantage of this service within the first 12 months.

One business taking advantage of St Dwynwen's day as a commercial opportunity is Shop No1 and High Street Deli in Newtown. Elizabeth Mary Evans, owner said:

"St. Dwynwen's Day is special to us and to our shop because it is special to Welsh people. We are very passionate about our Welsh language products and about the fact that most of them are produced in Wales. And of course, St. Dwynwen's Day brings more business to the shop. This week alone – the week of St. Dwynwen's Day – about 20% of our customers have come in only to ask for cards and gifts for St. Dwynwen's Day. And Welsh in Business are helping us to integrate more of the Welsh language and to promote our business."

With support from the Welsh for Business network, increasingly popular businesses such as 'The Escape Rooms' are following in the footsteps of other successful which have seen the benefits of embracing the Welsh language.

Ellie Daniels, owner of Newport's escape game, The Escape Rooms, said:

"We believe the language is an important part of Welsh culture and we're keen to promote the everyday use of it. We worked closely with Welsh in Business officers, who were incredibly supportive, to offer a Welsh version of our original game, 'Torture Corp'.

"This has generated a lot of additional interest and it's created a 'good-feeling' amongst our Welsh speaking customers. The publicity alone helped us reach much higher than anticipated and caused a knock-on spike in sales across the board, not just for our

Welsh language game.”

Eluned Morgan, Minister International Relations and the Welsh Language is urging businesses to take advantage of Welsh in Business:

“Getting private businesses on board is vital to the success of Cymraeg 2050. There’s still much to do, but the work Cymraeg Byd Busnes has done so far shows that businesses are willing to engage and I’d like to thank the officers who’ve been supporting them to increase their use of the Welsh language and show love to the language around St Dwynwen’s Day.

“We believe that Welsh in Business is good for business! Operating bilingually can increase customer satisfaction. To me it’s a no-brainer. If you’re a business owner who feels daunted by offering bilingual services, I want you to know that Welsh in Business is here to support you.”

For more information or to find out how your business can take advantage of this free Welsh language support, visit:

<http://cymraeg.gov.wales/business/business/swyddogion/?lang=en>

Follow #Cariad for information on businesses supporting St Dwynwen’s Day.