

A celebration of our Epic Shores – Year of the Sea 2018 gets underway

Next year will be the opportunity for Wales to make its mark as the UK's top 21st century coastal destination.

- building on Wales' strengths as a leading 21st Century coastal destination
- Olympian Hannah Mills announced as Ambassador for Year of the Sea

Following the success of Year of Adventure 2016 and Year of Legends 2017, Year of the Sea is a continuation of Visit Wales' work to reinforce positive perceptions and challenge any outdated perceptions of Wales by promoting our world-class products, activities, events and experiences.

The themed years were developed to build on stand-out strengths of Wales' tourism offer and to capitalise on major events opportunities happening that year.

The Tourism Minister, said:

“Following a focus on adventure and legends, we now have an opportunity to celebrate Wales' coastline and build on Wales' strengths as a coastal destination. As we launch this new initiative it's fantastic news that the Rough Guides have named Wales as one of the top 5 places in the world to visit – testimony that we're making a name for ourselves in this global market place.

“The themed year gives us a chance to celebrate our unique 870-mile Wales Coast Path, our 230 beaches and 50 islands and the fact that we have more Blue Flag beaches per mile than anywhere else in Britain.

“Year of the Sea will be about more than our coastline. We'll be using the year as an opportunity to focus on Wales' shores, and this will include not only our seas, but everything from our lakes, to our rivers, and journeys to the sea and will be a celebration of our coastal communities and culture. We'll be using the Wales Way, an ambitious new family of three national scenic touring routes that cross the country's most epic landscapes as a way of showcasing Wales' fascinating history, coastlines and attractions.”

“This year, leading up to 2018 has been a time for planning and developing and establishing new partnerships. Sustainability and

Marine Environment are high on the agenda as is safety on the sea and ensuring that everyone enjoys the beaches, but in a responsible manner.”

The Welsh Government has recently launched a consultation on the Welsh National Marine Plan with a commitment to secure a joined up and sustainable approach to the planning and management of our coast and sea and to help achieve our vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas.

The guiding objectives in developing the Welsh National Marine Plan are we will achieve more by working together with stakeholders to preserve our coastal communities, awe inspiring coast, seas and wildlife whilst developing our maritime economy.

Hannah Mills, MBE, double Olympic medalist and Cardiff-born sailor will today be announced as Ambassador for Year of the Sea 2018, Hannah said:

“I am so excited to be involved in Year of the Sea. Growing up in Cardiff and exploring the coasts and seas around Wales from Anglesey to Mumbles, the Welsh coastline has had a huge impact on shaping my earlier career. Those memories and beautiful experiences sailing in such a stunning place remain very firmly in my mind. My family are still based in Cardiff, and for me it will always be home. When I won gold in Rio, the warmth and support I got from back home was phenomenal.”

The themed years also make a difference to Wales’ economy. The first of Wales’ themed years in 2016 generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – an 18% increase on 2015. This shows visitors were definitely influenced by Visit Wales marketing before taking a trip to Wales.

During 2017 – the Year of Legends – figures from the Tourism Barometer survey are looking positive with 42% of respondents reporting more visitors than last year. There were also record breaking visitor numbers to Cadw and National Museum Wales sites over the Summer.

The Welsh Government is investing significantly in projects which will help promote Year of the Sea in Wales. More than £2 million had been shared by for a total of 38 projects across Wales under the Tourism Product Innovation Fund and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund which enables the private and public sectors to develop innovative projects and support the themed years.

To coincide with the Launch of the Year of the Sea, St Davids based TYF Adventure will launch a new product for 2018 –SUPKids programme which is designed to teach children (5-12 years old) Stand Up Paddle boarding, water safety & environmental education and was funded through Visit Wales.

Significant investment will also be made in Coastal locations through Welsh Government EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination scheme.

Colwyn Bay Waterfront project will open in 2018 an investment of £3.9million; work on the £5.5 million Porthcawl Maritime Centre is also underway, and £6.6million investment for a new terminus building for the Welsh Highland Railway in Caernarfon and extension to cultural facilities at Galeri as part of the wider programme to regenerate Caernarfon's Waterfront.

The Welsh Government's Tourism Investment Support Scheme continues to drive a higher quality offer, recently supporting a number of accommodation projects on Wales' coast as well as investing in improving coastal food offer, examples include Dylan's in north Wales, Bryn Williams in Colwyn Bay; Coast in Saundersfoot; The Griffin Inn, Dale; Twr y Felin St Davids.

The Volvo Ocean Race also takes place next year – the world's toughest and most prestigious sailing event which will come to Cardiff in May and June 2018. Andrew Pindar; Volvo Ocean Race Ambassador will attend the launch to give a flavour of what Cardiff can expect next year.

Sam cooks up a success

Sam Everton won a bronze medal at the UK Skills Show in November 2016 when he was a level two student competing against level three students. The skills he demonstrated led to him being invited to return to the Skills Show in November to compete for a place in the UK squad for the EuroSkills competition in 2018 and the WorldSkills competition in 2019. The judges loved his food and he is now in training as part of Squad UK, hoping to gain a place on the team competing in Russia in 2019.

The Skills Show is the UK's largest skills and careers event. In 2017, 99 Welsh competitors were invited to The Skills Show, a record number for Wales. Of these, 48 returned home with medals, 31 were selected for Squad UK and Wales was the most successful region in the medal table.

The Minister said:

"Afternoon tea was absolutely delicious, I can see why Sam has done so well at the Skills Show over the last two years. I congratulate him on his success and wish him well for the selection process for WorldSkills 2019.

"Sam's success is an excellent example of the highly skilled and committed young people we have in Wales and the excellent work that goes into helping them achieve their potential. Supporting skills growth, in particular higher level skills, is a key priority for

the Welsh Government. It helps Welsh businesses to grow, helps people find decent employment to help support themselves and their families and makes a vital contribution to the Welsh economy.”

Sam said:

“Competing at the Skills Show last year was the start of an amazing journey for me that will hopefully end with the opportunity to represent the UK at WorldSkills. I am looking forward to the training with Squad UK which will be taking me all across the UK, to refining my existing skills and learning new ones including bread making, knife skills and butchery. I’m also looking forward to my placement at Restaurant James Sommerin soon.”

[Environment Minister opens new section of Wales Coast Path](#)

Hannah Blythyn was in Mostyn to open a new 300 metre long footpath near Warwick Chemicals. The project, a diversion of the Wales Coast Path, was created to remove a railway footbridge from the route which was limiting accessibility in the area.

The diversion will allow further development and improvements to accessibility along this section of the Wales Coast Path. The new path takes in scenic woodland, providing glimpses of the coast, bringing walkers closer to the River Dee and also removes the necessity to walk along a section of road.

Hannah Blythyn said:

“It gives me great pleasure to officially open this new section of the Wales Coast Path. Wales quite literally blazed a trail in 2012 when we became the first country anywhere in the world to build a footpath around our coast.

“This project has continued the practice of partnership working, which has been critical in the development of this now iconic route.

“The Wales Coast Path has been a great success and now walkers will be able to enjoy even more of our stunning coastline and woodland”.

Tim Jones, Natural Resources Wales Director of Operations in North Wales said:

“It’s great to see new improvements to the Wales Coast Path which contributes so much to life in Wales.

“The Path boosts our tourism economy, improves health and wellbeing by getting people out walking, and connects people with nature to be explored along our coastline.

“Walkers on the Welsh coast spent more than £84 million in 2014, supporting 1,000 jobs. And 43 million day visits to the Welsh coast included walking as their activity. The evidence speaks for itself about the value of this national asset.”

Flintshire County Council’s Cabinet Member for Countryside, Councillor Carolyn Thomas, said:

“Flintshire’s Countryside team put the idea of a footpath to Warwick Chemicals who were fully supportive of the plans which allowed us to go ahead and secure funding from Natural Resources Wales. The project has been developed and completed by our coastal ranger, Tim Johnson.

“It was hard work to get started but the results are fantastic. Warwick Chemicals have been amazing, they have supported the idea and project right from the start. Once the work started on the ground it came together really well, this was really helped by the skill and vision of the contractor Arwyn Parry.”

£12m boost for health professionals training and education in Wales

Despite the difficult financial climate this represents an increase of £12m over last year’s package.

The funding will allow more than 3,500 new students to join healthcare education programmes across Wales. Nurse training places will rise by 161 to 1,911, with increases in all four nursing fields, building on the increases delivered in the past three years.

The investment package also includes:

- A 10% increase in physiotherapy and occupational therapy training places
- Additional health visitor training places
- Maintenance of all other levels of training places commissioned in 2017 including the 40% increase in midwifery training places.
- A further cohort of physician associate training places available from September 2018, on the same basis as 2017.

In addition as part of the two year budget deal with Plaid Cymru for 2018/19 and 2019/20, £2m per year will be used to support a Welsh Buurtzorg pilot of neighbourhood nursing care, of which £1.4m for each year will be used to support the education and training programmes for district nurses including supporting the release of nurses to train.

The investment is in addition to the extra £500,000 announced earlier this year to support more medical training posts including clinical radiology, ophthalmology, oral medicine dentistry and paediatric dentistry.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

“The austerity policy pursued by the UK Government has significantly impacted our budget and in those circumstances training is often one of the first casualties. But this is a short-sighted approach. Instead we are actually increasing investment in training, despite the budget cuts, in order to secure the long-term future of the health service.

“I am very proud we are once again increasing training places for nurses, midwives, physiotherapist, occupational health workers and health visitors. This package of support will also maintain investment in training places for other key workers including health care scientists, paramedics, dental hygienists, therapists and radiographers.

Together with our successful Train, Work, Live campaign to bring trainee doctors and other health professionals to Wales, this demonstrates the Welsh Government’s commitment to ensuring the NHS has the workforce it needs to deliver high quality care now and in the future.”

[Powys agency gets creative with superfast broadband](#)

Welsh Government Leader of the House with responsibility for digital infrastructure, Julie James, called into Motif Creative to find out more

about the difference faster broadband has made to the company.

It has already won strategic contracts in the US and Europe after investment in Cloud infrastructure, supported by superfast broadband, has helped it break down geographical barriers and allowed the company to fend off competition from agencies abroad.

The ability to communicate and share large digital files and information remotely, as well as using the latest video conferencing technology, has enabled the firm to not only deliver projects effectively but also reduce the amount of international travel by key executives.

Using its high-speed internet download speed of 73Mbps, Motif Creative now uses Cisco's online conferencing software, WebEx, to host around four to five 'virtual' meetings a week with international clients.

The agency also attended a workshop delivered by Superfast Business Wales, which offered them advice on how to make the most of their high-speed connection.

Stuart Spooner, Motif's managing director, said:

"It is apparent that technology is becoming more of a factor in driving revenues and sustaining growth, and businesses that are not investing will inevitably be left behind. We already generate 40 per cent of our revenue from international customers, which has also contributed to our forecast of 25 per cent growth in total revenues by 2019.

"Having effective IT systems is crucial for our industry and access to a consultant, through Superfast Business Wales, who understood our business, as well as the intricacies of superfast broadband-enabled and file sharing technologies, was invaluable.

"The ability to provide creative solutions for our clients, backed up by a high level of customer service, will always be the main ingredients for success in our sector, but embracing modern technology is becoming more and more important, especially when competing in an increasingly global marketplace.

"Having superfast broadband has made a real difference to us, and in fact the service is better here in Newtown than in our other office in Nottingham."

Julie James said:

"It's great to see how superfast broadband is making a difference to companies across Wales, including here in Newtown. Superfast Cymru is about bringing superfast broadband to areas which would otherwise not receive it. No premises in Powys were due to receive

it through commercial companies, but now almost 50,000 premises in the county are able to access it thanks to our programme.

“Motif Creative have also benefited from consultancy advice from Superfast Business Wales so they can maximise the impact of their faster internet speed. I would urge businesses, who haven’t followed suit, to do so and find out how making the most of online technology can help boost the business.”

Ed Hunt, regional director for Openreach, the business responsible for Britain’s largest phone and broadband network, said:

“Superfast Cymru has played a significant part in making Wales among the European leaders in digital performance and connectivity.

“It’s a fantastic digital leveller that businesses in towns like Newtown can now order the same fibre-based services and speeds at the same cost as those living and working in central London.

“It’s great to see companies like Motif Creative taking advantage of these new speeds.

“While there’s still more to do in terms of roll-out, I would encourage every business which already has access to make the most of this new superfast network that our engineers have built across the country.”

Superfast Cymru is the partnership between the Welsh Government, BT Group, UK Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), bringing faster broadband to areas which would otherwise not receive it.

The Welsh Government also runs the Access Broadband Cymru scheme, which can offer assistance to those not able to access superfast broadband by providing grant aid to help them receive faster broadband through other technologies.

Superfast Business Wales, which is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), can help businesses to improve finances, reach more customers and simplify their work processes with a programme of free support designed to help make the most of online technology and so keep their business growing.