

UK government must commit to key Welsh infrastructure projects and future investment – Mark Drakeford

In a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford set out Wales' priorities ahead of the Autumn Budget on 22 November 2017.

The Finance Secretary is urging the UK government to make a series of commitments to Wales, including:

- acting on the recommendations of the Hendry review and giving the green light to the Swansea tidal lagoon
- address the significant under-investment in Wales' rail infrastructure
- reversing its decision to cancel the electrification of the mainline between Cardiff and Swansea
- deliver important connectivity projects in North Wales
- provide a fair and equitable funding settlement alongside the devolution of the Wales and Border franchise
- recognise expert reports and reverse the decision not to devolve Air Passenger Duty to Wales.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“It is time for the UK government to change tack and listen to the expert views of the OECD and the IMF and increase investment in infrastructure. This would bring a much-needed boost to the economy across the UK.

“In Wales, there are a number of specific projects which are ready for UK investment. I have written to the Treasury urging them to finally commit to these key infrastructure projects and provide much needed clarity on future investments.

“It is now months since the Hendry review gave the green light to the Swansea tidal lagoon – we now need to see a clear commitment from the UK government to progress with this project.

“The UK government's decision to cancel the electrification of the mainline between Cardiff and Swansea has been widely condemned. They should now use the Autumn Budget as an opportunity to reverse this decision and commit to full electrification, which businesses and passengers across the region had been promised.

“Wales must receive its fair share of new infrastructure investment, including important connectivity projects in North Wales.

“I urge the UK government to make it a priority to set aside funding in the Budget to address the very significant under-investment in Wales’ rail infrastructure. Equally, with the devolution of the Wales and Borders franchise in 2018, it is only right that we receive a fair and equitable funding settlement.

“I am also calling on the UK government to reverse its decision not to devolve Air Passenger Duty to Wales. Not only are they ignoring the recommendations of the Holtham and Silk Commissions but also the independent report published this week. There is absolutely no reason why this tax should be devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland and not to Wales.”

The Finance Secretary also urged the UK government to ensure Wales receives the same level of funding from current EU programmes after Brexit – without any claw back to Whitehall.

The Finance Secretary added:

“EU funding is vital for agriculture, businesses, higher education and the regeneration of communities across Wales.

“We must have the same level of funding as we benefit from currently and this funding must not be subject to any new UK government constraints or top-slicing. Any attempt to claw back this money to Whitehall and run it as a UK government programme would fundamentally disrespect devolution.”

[Cadw to remain in Government as it builds on record year](#)

As a government division, Cadw has put a greater focus on diversifying its appeal over recent years, becoming more economically sustainable and improving its ‘big 10’ attractions – something which has paid dividends, with record attendance numbers in 2017, up 8.4% on the previous summer.

Earlier this year a steering group report ([Historic Wales – A roadmap towards Success, Resilience and Sustainability for the Heritage of Wales](#)) included a specific recommendation relating to the future governance of Cadw. A robust business case was then taken forward to identify the best option.

The business case considered the steering group’s recommendations that Cadw should become ‘a charitable body or an executive agency outside of Welsh Government’. This was measured against the status quo, undertaking an in

depth analysis of the functions of Cadw and the drivers for change.

The case was taken to Cabinet colleagues in October, with Dafydd Elis-Thomas happy to implement the decision to accept its core recommendation that the successes of Cadw are best built on and developed from within Government.

The Culture Minister said:

“I have long admired the good work done by Cadw in showcasing some of the magnificent heritage we have here in Wales, opening it up for all to enjoy.

“This has been done largely from within Government, and whilst it was appropriate at this juncture to explore all avenues as to how we can build on this success, I’m pleased to implement Cabinet’s decision to accept the business case’s clear recommendation that Cadw should remain part of Welsh Government.

“But it is also imperative that Cadw looks to evolve and progress, keeping up with best practices and having the flexibility and courage to make the best decisions for all its stakeholders and for the thousands of historic sites that comprise our unique historic environment.

“On this basis, I’m equally pleased to accept recommendations relating to increased autonomy for Cadw in certain aspects. These include establishing a formal system of delegation and internal freedoms, making best use of strategic partnerships between national organisations and establishing an internal operating board.

“These recommendations will maximise the contribution that Cadw can make to an accessible and well-protected historic environment for Wales. In particular they will help ensure that the public continues to have the best possible quality monuments, attractions and events to enjoy.”

Cadw is the Welsh Government’s Historic Environment Service, working for an accessible and well-protected historic environment for Wales. It looks after and opens to the public 129 monuments across Wales. Of these, 29 are staffed sites and the remainder are free open-access sites.

[Welsh Government supports White Ribbon](#)

Day

On 25 November the world marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. It is also White Ribbon Day which provides an opportunity to reflect on how, in Wales, we can make violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence a thing of the past. The Welsh Government does not believe that violence against women is inevitable and we are committed to preventing it.

Leader of the House and Chief Whip, Julie James, who now has responsibility for this important work, will speak and light a candle at a multi-faith remembrance service in Llandaff Cathedral on Monday 27 November in support of those victims of domestic abuse who may be suffering in silence. The service is organised by BAWSO in partnership with Llamau, New Pathways, Safer Wales and Cardiff Women's Aid.

On 25 November, a joint initiative between the Welsh Government and Cadw will see images of the White Ribbon projected onto The Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay and Caerphilly, Caernarfon and Conwy Castles from 5-8pm in order to raise awareness of the day.

Other events include a lunchtime cross party event in the Oriel at the Senedd on 21 November, where a debate will be held on engaging men and boys in challenging all forms of violence against women. During the evening a multi-party vigil will take place at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay.

On 23 November, both the Leader of the House and Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, will take part in a walk through Carmarthen, organised by the Women's Institute. On 24 November, Joyce Watson, AM, has organised a walk through Harlech concluding at Harlech Castle.

The UN describes violence against women as a global pandemic. It is an incredibly serious problem; for the world and for Wales. It includes (but is not limited to) domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, sexual exploitation, honour based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The Leader of the House and Chief Whip said:

"I am honoured to have become responsible for this important work following the tragic death of my colleague and friend, Carl Sargeant. This agenda was of huge importance to him and I am determined to continue to build on that work, with equal passion and commitment."

"The Welsh Government has been accredited as a White Ribbon organisation since 2014 and over the past few years, we have led a national response to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. We broke new ground with the introduction of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and

Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Act in 2015. This landmark legislation was created to end violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales; to protect those at risk and to prevent abuse happening in the first place.”

“We are proud of progress to date, but there is more to do”.

“We must continue working together to change attitudes, so that it is understood that abusive behaviours are not acceptable and will not be tolerated in Wales”.

“By raising awareness of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and their impact, we can continue to build a society which does not tolerate these abhorrent acts”.

“We must continue working towards a Wales where every body can live fear free”.

“Physical punishment has no place in a modern and progressive Wales” – Huw Irranca-Davies

To mark Universal Children’s Day, the Minister has re-affirmed the Welsh Government’s plans to introduce legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment. If passed by the National Assembly for Wales, it means that children in Wales will be protected under the law from physical punishment.

The Minister outlined his commitment to engage with the public and interested stakeholders on the proposed law through a formal consultation in the New Year.

The Welsh Government has been engaging with parents through its #TalkParenting campaign, with nearly 1,000 responses so far to an online survey on parenting.

Speaking ahead of an event in Swansea to mark Universal Children’s Day, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The Welsh Government is rightly proud of its record of promoting children’s rights and working to ensure all children in Wales have the best start in life.

“As Minister for Children, I’ll work to ensure the rights of every

child and young person in Wales are respected so they can grow up to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens.

“When the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 was passed, it broke new ground. We were brave enough to be the first in the UK, and amongst only a few in Europe and the World, to put such arrangements in place. I’m determined to continue to deliver on this commitment.

“Our understanding of what is needed to protect and support children and their families has changed considerably over the years, and societal norms have changed as a result. It can no longer be acceptable in a modern and progressive society for children to be physically punished. It is right that as a Government, we take action to protect children and support parents to use positive and effective alternatives to physical punishment.”

[New Routes to Showcase the Best of Wales](#)

The launch of ‘The Wales Way’ – a family of three national scenic touring routes that cross the country’s most epic landscapes, showcasing its fascinating history, coastlines and attractions – is the first phase of a ten year programme.

The Wales Way is the umbrella name for three initial routes, celebrating key tourism products and experiences along the North Wales Way, the Coastal Way and the Cambrian Way.

Welsh Government, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates, said:

“The idea for The Wales Way was founded on the basis of a manifesto commitment to develop a Cultural Corridor along the A55 in North Wales.

“We now have three routes celebrating Wales’ culture, countryside and coast, and mirroring our tourism themed years including Year of Adventure 2016, Year of Legends 2017 and Year of the Sea 2018. The Wales Way is also about encouraging visitors to immerse themselves in their own journeys of discovery, and this will be reinforced through our Year of Discovery 2019.

“Our aim is to attract more international visitors to Wales – last year, we saw record breaking spend from overseas visitors and crossed the million visitors for the first time in 8 years which was excellent news. However, in this tough, global market place we need to do more to grow our market share of visitors to Wales.

“We know that the concept of national routes – which is used worldwide can really inspire visitors and give them the confidence to explore more of a country – and stay longer.

“The routes will encourage visitors to stop and visit different places, areas, attractions and products which will enable our visitors to get a deeper understanding of Wales and will benefit the local tourism industry too.”

The Campaign was unveiled to influential travel trade and media contacts at the World Travel Market in London’s ExCEL, with the help of Aston Martin. Visit Wales have teamed up with Aston Martin to offer prize draw to win an amazing Aston Martin driving experience and a mini break in two of Wales’ finest luxury hotels, which will be promoted at the World Travel Market.

Aston Martin, which is in the process of opening its second UK plant in St Athan Nr Cardiff, has partnered with Visit Wales on the launch of The Wales Way. Dr Andy Palmer CMG, President and CEO of Aston Martin, said:

“We’re incredibly impressed by everything Wales has to offer and my team has had a fantastic time exploring and filming on its roads. We’re very proud to be able to help launch these routes and look forward to welcoming visitors from the world over to experience them for themselves.”

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

“The Wales Way is an excellent initiative which draws together all that Wales has to offer – encouraging people to explore more of Wales. The Wales Way has the potential to be considered one of the top tourist routes in the world, and I look forward to working with the industry as the project evolves.”

The family of three routes meander – and has been based on the idea of going igam-ogam – through the very best of Wales’ landscapes and attractions, allowing visitors to unearth the country’s gems and unique experiences.

Unlike other world-famous routes, the Wales Way isn’t confined to driving; they offer rail connections, walking paths, cycling routes and horse riding trails.