

Talgarth Bakery expand production

The loan of £195,000 will enable the baked goods specialist to expand their production and invest a total of £700,000 into new production facilities at Heol-Ty-Gwyn Industrial Park, creating ten new permanent jobs and safeguard 20, bringing their total headcount to 90 people employed from the local area.

The new units will provide space for the business to move the cake plant out of the Spelter site so they can increase production, expand and concentrate on the recently acquired Burts Cakes and Biscuits, which is already well established and growing.

The company recently won very significant contracts with Morrisons and Booker, making expansion a necessity to accommodate the very high level of new business which will see the company ramp up production and increase turnover by some 40% by 2018.

Talgarth Bakery was established in 1904 and purchased by its current owner, Howard Hughes, in 1986. The company has grown steadily over that period and now serves more than 200 local customers, both retail and wholesale with some 500 products weekly in its own liveried vans with a remarkable degree of brand loyalty.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Talgarth is an important employer in the South Wales Valleys and is a company with an excellent track record of growth and profitability. I look forward to seeing the company reach its expansion goals.”

Howard Hughes Managing Director of Talgarth Bakery said:

“I want to thank the Welsh Government for its continued support in assisting our business to not just expand, but in safeguarding the jobs of our loyal workforce.”

Our Route to becoming a Circular Economy nation

A circular economy approach encourages keeping resources in circulation

instead of being burned or ending their life in landfill. In a statement to Plenary, the Cabinet Secretary announced the creation of a Plastic Route Map. This will plan Wales' approach to creating a better market for recycled plastic products, made in Wales and reduce our reliance on overseas markets for waste plastic.

Studies have found the adoption of a Circular Economy could save the Welsh economy up to £2bn and has the potential to create up to 30,000 jobs. Earlier this year the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs announced a [£6.5m fund](#) for 2019-20 to help Wales move towards a circular economy.

Lesley Griffiths said:

“Wales is fully signed up to the benefits of the circular economy. The £6.5m fund I announced earlier this year will develop a significant number of small-scale capital projects to assist SMEs in making the transformation towards a ‘Circular Economy’ approach. We need to see more circular economy business models developed in Wales.”

Wales' commitment to the Circular Economy approach is further enhanced by our participation in [Circular Economy for Small and Medium sized Enterprises \(CESME\)](#) project. This European funded initiative will enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities. Last month, Welsh Government was represented at the fifth meeting held in South Ostrobothnia, Finland – where the group visited four different SMEs that apply the circular economy approach in their activities. This included Lapua's Potato who turn waste potatoes into paper. The meeting in South Ostrobothnia follows previous CESME get-togethers here in Wales last May, Denmark, Italy and Greece.

The focus on plastics follows a package of measures the Welsh Government is considering to reduce waste and tackle created by plastic pollution. This includes examining the potential of an Extended Producer responsibility scheme, where producers are responsible for the waste they produce and a possible tax on disposable plastic. The Plastics Route Map will be published by WRAP by Spring 2018.

Further information on CESME can be found on the [Interreg Europe website](#) (external link)

[**£215,000 to improve adoption services**](#)

The funding was announced at the start of National Adoption Week, which aims to raise awareness of adoption and in particular the need to find adopters for sibling groups.

£90,000 from the Children and Communities budget in 2018/19 will fund recruitment campaigns which will focus on finding families for those who find it harder to find adoptive homes such as sibling groups and older children awaiting adoption and continue the development of a national support framework for adoptive families.

Recurring funding of £125,000 from the Social Services budget will be used to recruit, train and provide materials for “life journey champions” to support children through their adoption and to recruit a national implementation champion who will work to ensure that the new adoption support framework is implemented consistently across the country.

Children and Communities Secretary Carl Sargeant said:

“Adoption provides vulnerable children with a loving family and with the stability and security that all children deserve. I am delighted to provide the National Adoption Service with this funding to help strengthen adoption services to improve the life chances of these children.”

Minister for Social Services, Rebecca Evans, said:

“Ensuring adopted children and their families get the support they need to adjust to their new lives is vitally important. This funding, which will support life journey champions and ensure that the new adoption support framework is delivered consistently across Wales, will help to make a positive difference to the lives of adopted children and their families.”

Welcoming today’s announcement, Suzanne Griffiths, director of operations for the National Adoption Service for Wales, said:

“This year’s Adoption Week celebrates brothers and sisters, and this new funding is very timely for that campaign.

“With 62% of children currently waiting for families being part of a sibling group of 2 or more, it has never been more important to recruit adopters able to keep brothers and sisters together.

“Alongside that grant, the recurring funding will enable us to continue to improve adoption support services across Wales and ensure that every child in Wales placed for adoption will have good quality life journey work.

“This new funding will enable us to fundamentally review and strengthen important aspects of the adoption journey.”

Changes to early entry exams announced – Kirsty Williams

An independent review by Qualifications Wales has found:

- The continued widespread use of early and multiple entry at GCSE poses risks to students and to the system, which are not easily justified.
- The practice encourages a “teaching the test” approach at the cost of wider subject knowledge.
- More than £3.3m was spent by schools on early entry in the last academic year.

Qualifications Wales concluded that they are “concerned about the extensive and growing use of early and multiple entry.”

In response the Education Secretary has announced that, from summer 2019, only a pupil’s first entry to a GCSE examination will count in their school’s performance measures. The current policy allows schools to count the best grade from multiple sittings.

Kirsty Williams said:

“The changes I am announcing today, based on Qualification Wales’ findings, will ensure that the interests of pupils are always put first.

“I am concerned that pupils who had the potential to get an A*, A or a B at the end of a two year course end up having to settle for a C. Too often this is because they take their exam early and are not re-entered again. I want every child to reach their full potential in school. Early entry must only be for the minority of pupils who will benefit.

“GCSEs are designed to be sat after two years of teaching, not one. These changes will ensure our young people access a broad and balanced curriculum, and focus in on what’s best for our children and young people.”

JMC crucial opportunity to re-set relationship with Devolved Administrations – Mark Drakeford

The Finance Secretary will look to use the reconvening of the Committee as a chance to engage constructively in the development of the UK negotiating position for leaving the EU.

Ahead of the meeting, the Finance Secretary said:

“Brexit has far-reaching implications for all parts of the UK – that is why we need to build a wide-based consensus. Today’s meeting is an opportunity to re-set the approach and actively involve the devolved administrations in the development of the negotiating position for leaving the EU.

“We have been clear that we are willing to work constructively together so we get the best deal for all parts of the UK. Earlier this summer, I wrote jointly with the Scottish Government to David Davis, setting out a number of ways we can make these committee meetings work better so that the JMC can meet its original remit.

“We have set out our vision for a post Brexit Wales in our White Paper Securing Wales future – we want to use today’s meeting to ensure Wales’ interests are prioritised.

“With a crucial decision due this week by the European Council on the next phase of talks, it is imperative that the UK Government involves and works with us to build a broad consensus on how Britain will look post-Brexit.”