

Secret Owl Garden for Pembrokeshire

The Secret Owl Garden has been open in Picton Castle since May and has had support through funding from Visit Wales' Tourism Investment Support Scheme.

The new attraction gives visitors a chance to see and meet with over 25 different species of owls in their new aviaries around the woodland garden; watch interactive sessions and go on a treasure trail to identify owls.

The Secret Owl Garden was founded by Alex and Emma Hill, as they saw a gap in the market and could offer something different to what was already on offer in the area. Emma Hill, said:

“We created The Secret Owl Garden because people are always telling us just how much they love owls, so we wanted to give them the opportunity to learn more about them.”

During the school holidays, the team run interactive sessions where children can take part in activities to learn more about the owls. This will include arts and crafts (make your own owl mask), dissecting owl pellets, learning about different bird feathers and silent flight etc.

The team currently run private experiences where visitors are able to have a hands on experience calling owls down from the trees to their gloved hand around the gardens. By booking them privately the experience is fully tailored to the group or family and even includes a set of photos!

In the future there will also be opportunities to take courses in owl care and management. The business will run these course through the year to develop existing falconer's skills and introduce the next generation to the highest standards of care.

Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, said:

“I'd like to congratulate Emma and Alex for seeing that they could offer something different in Pembrokeshire, I'm delighted that we've been able to support the growth of the business and wish them well with their first summer season and for the future.”

£400,000 to support use of Welsh within small businesses

The objective of this funding is to increase visibility of the Welsh language in the community. The project will also increase understanding and maximise opportunities to strengthen bilingual customer services. The money will be allocated to establish a network of local practitioners to provide Welsh language support to businesses.

This is a commitment outlined in our recently published Welsh language strategy– Cymraeg 2050–which aims to increase the number of Welsh speakers to a million, as well as increase the use of Welsh.

The Welsh Language Commissioner currently works with large businesses and national companies to promote and facilitate Welsh language services, including the finance sector and large supermarkets. This new network of practitioners will ensure that support is available to local SMEs and micro businesses to become more bilingual.

Alun Davies said:

“Last year the Welsh Government undertook a project in partnership with the Mentrau Iaith to trial a small scale support service for SMEs.

“The pilot scheme showed promising signs in terms of raising awareness of the benefits of using the Welsh language by providing practical, face to face support and ongoing advice to businesses.

“We are now in a position to expand the pilot work, in partnership with Mentrau Iaith Cymru, and to work with a larger number of SMEs to provide tailored support to support an increase in the Welsh language services.”

Owain Gruffudd, Chair of Mentrau Iaith Cymru said:

“The Mentrau Iaith welcome the opportunity to cooperate with the Welsh Government to promote the Welsh language amongst small and medium businesses. The Mentrau Iaith already work at grass root level across Wales – engaging with businesses will complement our work to promote the use of Welsh in our communities.”

[Twenty eight projects set to benefit from EU property development funds](#)

Seventeen projects from the £7m Property for Business Development Grant Fund (PBDG) and eleven from the £7m Property Infrastructure Fund (PIF) have been provisionally allocated funding. Firm grant offers will be made once second stage applications have been received, further assessed and formally approved.

The selected projects will together provide more than 1million sq ft. of new and refurbished office and industrial floor space, with the capacity to accommodate around 2000 jobs.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“The selected projects represent a geographical spread across North, West and South East Wales and will support business growth and job creation, providing tangible benefits for local economies.

“The grant support available through these EU funded projects will help stimulate the market, create new high quality industrial space and offices to accommodate jobs and, most importantly, meet the needs of local businesses.”

The successful projects were selected in conjunction with regional stakeholders across Wales to provide best value for money and to create the greatest economic impact. The primary focus has been on projects in Enterprise Zones, Local Growth Zones and City Regions.

Both funds are for new build and refurbishments/extensions/adaptions with the PIF scheme aimed specifically at advance build developments and the PBDG fund targeted at supporting businesses with bespoke expansion projects.

The Funds aim to bridge the financial viability gap that exists in parts of Wales between the cost of building, expanding or refurbishing properties and the completed market value of the property.

[More people in Wales to be eligible to donate blood](#)

Current blood donation rules prevent people who engage in some sexual behaviours from giving blood for a 12 month period.

As a result of scientific advances and improved understanding of the tests used, the Welsh Blood Service will be reducing deferral donation periods for specific blood donors in Wales.

The changes to the blood donation rules, which will be introduced by the Welsh Blood Service in early 2018, will see:

- a reduced deferral period of 3 months for men who have sex with men (MSM) (from the current 12 months)
- a deferral period of 3 months for commercial sex workers (from permanent deferral)
- a reduced deferral period of 3 months for those who have sex with a high risk partner (from the current 12 months)
- a reduced deferral period of 3 months for those who have sex with a partner who has been sexually active in areas where HIV is common (from the current 12 months).

The change was recommended following a review by the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SABTO).

Public Health Minister, Rebecca Evans said:

“I want to ensure that as many people as possible are able to donate blood to meet the demand from patients in Wales.

“In Wales and the UK, we’re fortunate to have one of the safest blood supplies in the world. Thanks to advances in medical science, we now have a far better understanding of the way infections are transmitted through blood.

“The changes I’m announcing today will help ensure we keep blood donors and the patients who receive their blood safe, while also ensuring more people have the opportunity to donate blood.”

The Minister has asked the Welsh Blood Service to look at how the changes can be introduced including the use of more personalised risk assessments for individual donors.

Innovantage Systems to double staff numbers as it expands and targets European markets

The Symphony Technology Group owned, Cardiff based business currently employs 13 people and will more than double staff numbers with £100,000 backing from

the Welsh Government.

Innovantage has developed sophisticated software that captures job postings from over 280 job boards and 500,000 employer websites to provide recruiters with a picture of hiring trends across the whole of the jobs market.

Employers use this information to understand which of their competitors are hiring and in what areas, to identify recruitment trends, fill immediate hiring needs and anticipate future demands. Innovantage data also enables recruitment agencies and other intermediaries to generate sales leads.

The funding and new jobs will enable the company to develop its existing platform to build a world class global analytics product to comply with European standards and target new European markets initially including France, Germany and Italy.

The high skilled jobs, the majority of which will be of graduate level, will include a mix of software developers and sales management positions.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I am pleased Welsh Government support is enabling Innovantage to develop and exploit its analytics product to enter new markets and focus on new export opportunities. The company has a strong track record of delivering to UK recruitment intelligence markets and this investment is set to take the business to the next level.

“This expansion also helps secure the operation in Wales as this project could have been undertaken by other companies within the group.”

Richard Turner, CEO Innovantage said

“The support we have received from Welsh Government has been superb. This funding has enabled Innovantage to not only continue its UK business growth with industry leading products, but it will also enable us to accelerate the recruitment of further resources and deliver our International products and business ambitions.”