

Five star hotel for north Wales

During a recent grading visit, the 5 star hotel – one of three in Wales – achieved an overall score of 98%. In addition, they have also been awarded the Gold Award – which rewards extremely high standards of accommodation.

Owned by Alan and Angela Harper, who lovingly restored the historic building to its former glory, Palé Hall opened in September 2016. One of the UK's most talented and well-known chefs Michael Caines, lends his invaluable guidance for the food and beverage at the hotel which is overseen by Head Chef Gareth Stevenson. Dishes focus on local ingredients surrounding the hotel, including meat sourced from within Gwynedd and Denbighshire and Llandderfel honey.

Economy Secretary, said:

“I was delighted to visit Palé Hall and to be able to present them with their Gold Award – and congratulate them on their efforts and achievements since opening last year. Palé Hall is a reputation changing hotel which will attract to people to Wales. Achieving a 5 star status and Gold Award is no mean feat, the aim of the Gold Award is to reward outstanding quality, exceptional comfort and hospitality in the serviced sector in Wales. The gold award businesses exceed customer expectation and are first class products in all respects. Businesses such as Pale Hall are making an exceptional contribution to the quality of the Welsh tourism product, I wish the owners every success for the future.

“Tourism in Wales is in a strong position as we head into the main summer holiday season. In a recent survey, 87% of respondents said they were feeling confident about the season ahead, with 33% of businesses saying that profitability is up so far this year, compared with 2016. 18% of businesses who have welcomed more visitors say that one of the reasons for the lift is that more British people are staying in the UK.”

The overall volume of visits to Wales in 2016 increased by 15% compared with 2015 –building on growth on the last two years.

Speaking about the rating General Manager Pim Wolfs said:

“We are extremely proud to have received this five star rating from Visit Wales. As a hotel we are focused on providing the best experience for our guests while championing welsh produce, local employment and all that the welsh countryside has to offer. The five star rating is a huge achievement and is wonderful that Visit Wales has given us this recognition.”

Partnership working' key to business and careers support says Cabinet Secretary

In a speech in Wrexham on Friday the Economy Secretary said partnership working between the two organisations could improve the advice and support given to both businesses and individuals seeking careers and training advice.

At present the Welsh Government provides support and guidance for businesses and entrepreneurs through business Wales and funds the provision of independent careers advice and guidance for people of all ages through Careers Wales. The Economy Secretary said there is growing recognition that the challenges that businesses and individuals face are interlinked.

Speaking following a business breakfast event in Wrexham, Ken Skates said:

“Talking to businesses and individuals over the last few months it is clear that Business Wales and Careers Wales do an important job in supporting Welsh firms and those looking for training.

“I’m keen that we look to build on that work and explore where stronger collaboration between the two organisations could strengthen services delivered by Business Wales and Careers Wales.

“We know that businesses need the right staff and the right skills to maintain and grow their operations. We also know that individuals need up to date information on what future skills are needed in their local economy or advice to help them set up their own business. These issues are very closely linked and very often overlap.

“With the business and career support both funded by Welsh Government, it is important we explore the potential for closer alignment between those bodies with a view to better connecting the delivery of business support and employer-engagement with the economy and skills systems.

“I believe closer alignment and integration could deliver a more streamlined and effective approach for businesses and individuals and ultimately improve the level of service we provide. This would also have a tangible and positive impact on our economy and our communities too.”

Minister for Skills and Science Julie James said:

“The Welsh Government will now look at options for greater alignment between Business Wales and Careers Wales and consider what benefits could be gained out of greater collaboration.

“I want this to be very much an open process and in doing so meaningfully engage with both organisations, their staff and all the key stakeholders that work with them. We want to encourage every good idea to come forward and be heard.”

An initial review of the options for taking this initiative forward is expected to be completed by the Autumn.

[Health Secretary kicks off construction of Gwent's new £350m critical care hospital](#)

The Health Secretary announced that the new hospital, which has been known as the Specialist and Critical Care Centre, would be known as The Grange University Hospital.

Welsh Government funding for the new 470 bed hospital was confirmed in October 2016. Aneurin Bevan University Health Board expect the hospital will open to patients in the Spring of 2021.

The Grange University Hospital forms a key part of the ambitious Clinical Futures strategy, launched in 2004, to modernise health services in Gwent. When built, the facility will treat patients who need complex and acute emergency care in the Gwent region and will include a 24 hour specialist assessment facility, intensive care, comprehensive diagnostics, inpatient beds for major emergencies and complex surgery, and theatres.

While the hospital will play an integral part of the delivery of services in Gwent, the Welsh Government expects it to have a strong regional role in south Wales, becoming part of the major acute hospitals network providing safe and sustainable specialised services which deliver the best possible outcomes for patients.

Vaughan Gething said:

“I'm really pleased to be here today to mark the construction process of what will become a state-of-the-art hospital in Gwent. I

am pleased to announce that the hospital will be known as The Grange University Hospital. It will bring together complex and more acute services onto one site and improve the quality of care for the very sickest patients.”

Judith Paget, Chief Executive of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, said:

“The Grange University Hospital is a major part of our Clinical Futures Strategy and everybody associated with the Health Board is extremely excited that work has now started on this state-of-the-art facility. It will help us to create a much improved care environment, timely access to emergency care, and ensure patients get the best outcomes from their care.

“We have received fantastic support from local people living in the Health Board area as they understand the benefits this hospital and a new 21st Century model of healthcare will bring.

“I would like to thank our staff for their hard work in getting us to this point and we will continue to work closely with our staff, our local communities, and with Gleeds and Laing O’Rourke to ensure this new hospital is one we can all be proud of.”

Welsh Government calls for views on regulation of Mobile Animal Exhibits

As well as performing wild animals in circuses, Mobile Animal Exhibits include travelling falconry and hawking displays, exotic pets taken into schools for educational purposes and reindeer at Christmas events.

There is currently no standard licencing regime or requirement for routine inspection of Mobile Animal Exhibits. A licencing or registration scheme could improve the welfare of animals in a travelling environment and support businesses operating Mobile Animal Exhibits in Wales to do so in an effective and appropriate way.

The public are being encouraged to have their say in a Welsh Government consultation on the subject. The move follows concerns the welfare needs of some animals kept in Mobile Animal Exhibits can not be met in a travelling environment.

This is the first time people have been able to have their say on this subject in a way that will inform the Government’s next steps.

The consultation asks for people's views on a range of issues relating to the regulation of Mobile Animal Exhibits in Wales, including whether the use of wild animals in circuses should be banned.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

"I strongly believe animals should be protected from pain, injury, fear and distress. There have been concerns expressed about the use of wild animals in some Mobile Animal Exhibits and as the use of such exhibits increases in popularity it is clear we need to look at whether there should be better regulation and controls as is standard for the majority of other businesses.

"This subject is an emotive one and I know there are some very strong views on how we should proceed. It is important we receive a wide-range of views so we can consider these, along with expert advice, in deciding how Mobile Animal Exhibits should be regulated in future. I would encourage everyone with an interest to take this opportunity to have their say."

The consultation is available on the [Welsh Government website](#).

[Welsh Government announce extra rolling stock to improve rail services](#)

The class 319 flex bi-mode trains have been funded by Welsh Government with £1m of support from Arriva Trains Wales, and will be added to existing rolling stock in 2018.

Their introduction will allow for Persons of Reduced Mobility compliance works to be made to the existing class 150 and 158 stock and will provide options for increasing capacity on busy routes. The extra trains will also provide opportunities for the new franchisee to deliver improvements early in the new Wales and Borders rail services contract.

Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

"I've made no secret of the difficulty in adding good quality rolling stock in Wales and am delighted that, by working with Arriva Trains Wales and others, we've been able to secure these extra trains.

"The agreement to secure these trains is one part of a number of

agreements with rail industry bodies that ensure that the majority of the current Wales and Borders fleet will comply with Persons of Restricted Mobility regulations by 1 January 2020. The extra trains will be available for the new franchisee to use until at least 2021.

“I’ve been absolutely clear that the next franchise, the Welsh Government’s first, must have the passenger at its heart. I’m delighted that we’ve been able to secure these trains and hope to see them play a part in boosting Wales’ rail service for years to come.”

The trains are being leased following an initial £1.9 million investment by Welsh Government and £1 million from Arriva Trains Wales.

Simon Hughes, Fleet Director for Arriva Trains Wales said;

“These additional trains will be a massive boost for our customers who have been calling for extra capacity for a long time. We are delighted to be investing alongside the Welsh Government to secure this additional rolling stock within our current franchise period.

“Customers on our Valleys network are already seeing the benefit of our May 2017 timetable enhancement. Making the most of our limited number of trains, we were able to deliver 600 extra seats on the busiest commuter trains serving Cardiff following major infrastructure investment by our partners in Network Rail.

“We are proud and excited to welcome these trains into our fleet. The fact they will be more accessible, and delivered alongside improvements to some of our current fleet, means we can make the railway in Wales an increasingly viable means of transport for all.”

The announcement is the second piece of positive news for the rail industry in Wales, following last week’s announcement that [Welsh Government has supported over £30m in investment creating 300 jobs in train manufacturing at CAF’s new factory in Newport.](#)