

The Welsh Government invests a noteworthy £3m in musical education

The Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, confirmed £3m for improving music services in schools across Wales over the next two years.

Wednesday 19 December 2018

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The fund aims to increase access and opportunities for children and young people in Wales to learn new instruments and study music. It builds on initiatives such as [Anthem](#) and will offer opportunities to ensure the provision of high quality, universal access to musical education for all learners.

£1.5million will be spent in 2018/19, with a further £1.5 million allocated for music services next year. This includes £1million per annum as agreed as part of the two-year budget agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, and £0.5m as announced in yesterday's final budget allocation.

Local Authorities have received £1.4million via the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) which may be used to support a variety of services including:

- Purchasing new and endangered instruments
- Ensuring all pupils have access to lessons, exams and courses
- Covering costs of attendance at orchestras, choirs and bands
- Initiating a 'rock and pop' ensemble
- Supporting music co-operative arrangements

National Youth Arts Wales has received £100,000 to continue their music services, including youth ensembles.

Kirsty Williams, said:

"Music is at the heart of our nation's rich heritage and I am absolutely committed to ensuring all our young people, whatever

their background, have the same opportunities to develop their musical talent and reach their full potential.

“Schools will already be delivering musical education as part of our progressive new curriculum, and this additional funding will help break down barriers, such as costs for exams and access to instruments.”

Bethan Sayed AM, Committee Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, said:

“I’m pleased by this announcement and that more money has been committed to this than initially proposed in the Welsh Government, Plaid Cymru budget agreement.

“People across the sector, throughout Wales, have been calling for extra, targeted support and I hope that the funding announced will start to reverse the decline we’ve witnessed in music in schools.

“The Education Secretary has worked with me and others in good faith and this is a testament to what can be achieved when there is consensus on an issue.”

[Wales secures strong deal to safeguard fish stocks](#)

As part of the UK Ministerial negotiating team, the Welsh Government helped secure the deal at the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Brussels which concluded in the early hours of this morning.

The Welsh Government secured deals to:

- avoid needless discards of sea bass and protect the interests of commercial and recreational fishers whilst keeping the stock on track to recovery
- increase or maintain quotas for skates/rays, plaice, haddock and megrim in the Celtic Sea and for cod, haddock, plaice and sole in the Irish Sea while still meeting sustainability targets
- facilitate interim solutions to the challenges posed by zero-catch

advice for a number of species under the implementation of the Discard Ban in accordance with the Common Fisheries Policy.

The Minister said:

“I would like to thank the members of the Welsh Marine Fisheries Advisory Group who have helped identify the key issues around sea bass and other important stocks in Wales. As a result, we were able to present a strong Welsh case to the Presidency and Commission, along with colleagues from the UK Government and other Devolved Administrations.

“In line with our commitments to ensure our natural resources are sustainably managed, my priority was to safeguard fish stocks whilst securing a positive outcome for those coastal communities whose economies depend so much on the sea. This year’s negotiations were more important than ever with the uncertainty Brexit presents.

“There is a need to fish at sustainable levels based on the best available scientific advice. Finding the right balance in the negotiations was a challenge but we were successful in securing a deal which matches Wales’ priorities.

“I believe a strong and fair balance was struck between protecting the economic interests of small-scale fishers and recreational anglers with the need to move stocks toward the position where they can be fished sustainably into the future.”

Balfour Beatty and Jones Bros to build Caernarfon and Bontnewydd Bypass

Detailed designs, preparations and ground investigations are currently taking place with the setting up of site compound and offices to begin shortly. Construction will then begin during this winter.

The 9.8km bypass connecting Caernarfon and Bontnewydd will be vital in improving journey times and reliability, as well as reducing traffic congestion on local routes which will provide improved active travel opportunities.

The scheme between Balfour Beatty and Jones Bros includes trainee, apprentice and graduate placements to work on the project.

Transport Minister Ken Skates said:

"I'm pleased to announce Balfour Beatty and Jones Bros will be working together to construct this significant development in North West Wales.

"I have made clear this scheme will deliver for the area and provide a boost for the region's economy. Balfour Beatty Jones Bros will be putting this into action by offering local employment opportunities as well as placements for trainees, apprentices and graduates. There will also be a prime focus on local spend on materials and sub-contracts where possible and meet the buyer events will be held in due course to encourage local people and companies to apply for work on the project.

"The Welsh Government is investing substantially in the Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass which will make a real difference to communities in the area as well as the travelling public.

"Design and development work continues at speed and construction will begin shortly."

Thomas Edgcumbe, Managing Director for Balfour Beatty's Regional North and Midlands business, said:

"Today marks a significant milestone in the delivery of a scheme which on completion will provide significant benefits to the economic landscape.

"Having worked with Jones Bros and the Welsh Government on a number of ongoing and historic projects, we are confident that we will successfully deliver this highly anticipated scheme to schedule and leave behind a lasting legacy for the local community."

Hefin Lloyd-Davies, contracts director at Jones Bros Civil Engineering UK, said:

"The progression of the contract is pleasing and we're looking forward to providing benefits to the region including jobs, training, and skills.

"We have a proud history of not only delivering high profile projects in a joint venture with Balfour Beatty, but caring about the communities in which we operate."

Extra funding to boost skills and tackle child poverty in final Budget

An extra £12 million will fund measures to create apprenticeships across Wales and a further £2 million will be used to help parents meet the costs of sending their children to school and extend the successful school summer holiday Food and Fun programme.

The final Budget will also include the package of additional revenue and capital funding proposals for local government in 2019-20 and £26 million to increase support for high street retailers and other businesses.

The final Budget 2019-20 includes:

- An extra £6.8 million revenue in 2019-20 to support the Welsh Government's flagship commitment to deliver 100,000 all-age apprenticeships this Assembly term
- An extra £4.771 million revenue in 2019-20 to support further education pay
- A further £2 million to help tackle child poverty through:
 - An additional £1.6 million to further extend the PDG Access scheme, which helps parents meet the everyday costs of sending their children to school. This is in addition to the funding announced in the draft Budget to double the scheme.
 - An additional £0.4 million revenue in 2019-20 to extend the school holiday Fun and Food programme, which provides children with a meal and access to learning during the school summer holidays.

Rebecca Evans said:

“Apprenticeships are vital for helping people gain high-quality vocational training and providing opportunities for businesses and the economy to thrive.

“We are also committed to tackling child poverty in Wales. The PDG Access scheme and the Food and Fun programme provide important help to children who most need our support.”

These funding allocations are in addition to the package of additional funding measures for local government – worth £141.5 million over 3 years (2018 to 2021) – announced in November.

The Welsh Government has also announced a £26 million package in 2019-20 to enhance and extend the existing high street rates relief scheme.

The Minister for Finance added:

“The final Budget 2019-20 has been developed against the backdrop of continued austerity and the shadow cast by the ongoing uncertainty associated with Brexit.

“When we published our draft proposals, we committed to local government being a key priority for any additional funding following the UK Autumn Budget.

“I am pleased we have been able to make further allocations and invest in the services people rely on.”

The final Budget sets out the Welsh Government’s spending plans for 2019-20 and capital plans to 2021.

All the final Budget documents are available in English and Welsh on the Welsh Government’s website.

A debate on the final Budget for 2019-20 will take place on 15 January 2019.

First Minister announces new cabinet

The First Minister said:

“It is an enormous privilege for me to be appointed First Minister of Wales. Every leader needs a strong team around them, and I am delighted to introduce my new cabinet which is a strong mix of experience, talent and passion.

“Brexit is our greatest challenge. In the extraordinary and regrettable circumstances created by the UK Government, it is vital that we prepare for all outcomes. I have retained Ministers in posts where their experience of Brexit preparation is key, while creating a new post to reflect the priority I attach to international relationships and trade.

“As a government we will continue to speak up for Wales, to fight our country’s corner and make sure the government in London is never in any doubt at all of what matters to the people of Wales.”

Cabinet and ministers:

Vaughan Gething

Minister for Health and Social Services

Julie Morgan

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

Eluned Morgan

Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language

Dafydd Elis-Thomas

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism

Ken Skates

Minister for Economy and Transport

Lee Waters

Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport

Julie James

Minister for Housing and Local Government

Hannah Blythyn

Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government

Rebecca Evans

Minister for Finance and Trefnydd

Kirsty Williams

Minister for Education

Lesley Griffiths

Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

Jeremy Miles

Counsel General Designate and Brexit Minister

Jane Hutt

Deputy Minister and Chief Whip