

Aston Martin contracts worth over £60m on offer to Welsh firms on Welsh Government's Sell2Wales

It is the first time that private sector contracts have been advertised on Sell2Wales and will ensure Welsh SMEs have easy access to the raft of contracts being awarded by Aston Martin for work linked to the preparation and commencement of production at its new St Athan site.

Aston Martin contracts worth several million pounds have already been advertised on Sell2Wales for Phase I of work on the former MoD site, with Ammanford-based construction firm, TRJ being one of the main beneficiaries after securing the contract for phase 1 of Aston Martin's initial work at St Athan.

The First Minister made the announcement ahead of the official ceremony to mark the commencement of Phase II of works on the St Athan site. He said:

"I am delighted to announce that we have now opened up our Sell2Wales procurement channel to Aston Martin. This is exciting news for Welsh business as it is the first time the channel has been used to award private sector contracts.

"The move means that Welsh SMEs will now have easy access to the range of contracts being advertised by Aston Martin for work on the St Athan site and when combined with for example active supplier development from Business Wales could potentially mean over £60m of contracts coming to Wales.

"Aston Martin is already having a positive influence on the economy of Wales with more than 40 Welsh workers already employed at the Gaydon site and we know that many more job opportunities will follow before 2020.

"The company's move to St Athan is a major success story for Wales and I look forward to continuing to build on our working partnership with the company in order to bring maximum benefits to our economy and enhance our worldwide reputation."

Dr. Andy Palmer, President and CEO of Aston Martin said:

"We are delighted to have made another significant step forward on our St Athan journey, as we develop the former MOD site to our new manufacturing facility. Being able to use the Sell2Wales procurement channel has enabled us to promote the various contracts we have to a wider audience within Wales and beyond."

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“I would like to congratulate Ammanford-based construction firm, TRJ on being the first Welsh company to win a contract linked to Aston Martin’s expansion into Wales.

“The company’s success demonstrates that the economic benefits of Aston Martin’s decision to come to Wales will be felt right across Wales and not just in the Vale of Glamorgan.”

Owain Jones, Director of TRJ said:

“We are delighted to be the first Welsh company to be appointed by Aston Martin for work on their St Athan site.

“It is really great news that Aston Martin is actively looking to engage with Welsh SMEs and I am sure we will be the first of many Welsh companies to benefit from their move to St Athan.”

Last year Aston Martin announced it had selected St Athan from 20 potential global locations it had been considering for its second manufacturing facility as part of a £200M investment in new products and facilities.

The St Athan site is expected to employ 750 workers before 2020, with many more jobs in the local supply chain. It is estimated the move will bring economic benefits worth half a billion pounds to Wales.

[Review of government funded research and innovation in Wales begins](#)

A review of government-funded research and innovation in Wales has begun its work today (Wednesday 5th April).

Wednesday 05 April 2017

The highly respected Professor Graeme Reid from University College London has been asked by the Welsh Government to lead the review that will look at the strengths, gaps and future potential to sustain and grow strong research and innovation activity in Wales.

The review will:

- Look to identify patterns and themes in the development of business and

public services in Wales which draw on research and innovation strengths in Wales and further afield and will report back next winter

- Collate the results of recent analyses of research and innovation activity in Wales.
- Consider how firms, public services and research groups in universities connect locally and globally to support the needs of Welsh communities, business and the economy. It will also consider how the connections and interactions between these groups can be improved to enable Wales to become a more entrepreneurial state.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

“I am delighted Professor Reid is leading this exciting review of research and innovation investment made by Welsh Government. Our aim is to make sure that every penny we invest in this area delivers the maximum benefit to the people and economy of Wales. I am looking forward to the education sector, business, learners and other getting involved.”

Julie James said:

“The aim of this review is to look at all the investment the Welsh Government makes into research and innovation and how it is making a difference and what we can do to change things for the future as this area is vital to Wales’ prosperity.”

Professor Reid said:

“Thriving research and innovation are key to the future economy and society of Wales

“Brexit, the Industrial Strategy and UK legislation on Higher Education & Research will bring significant changes to the environment for government-funded research and innovation in Wales. This review will explore how the Government, universities and business in Wales can influence and respond to these changes, both creating opportunities and mitigating threats.

“The review will aim to report early in 2018, before UKRI is created formally and while Brexit negotiations are still underway.”

Professor Reid will be supported by a distinguished panel of advisors who will meet for the first time today in Cardiff.

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[Home energy efficiency improvements are having a positive impact on health](#)

Findings published today in the [Fuel Poverty Health Data Linking report](#) show lower health service use among people who had benefited from the Welsh Government Warm Homes Nest scheme.

The study used NHS data to compare the health service use of people who had benefited from Nest home energy improvements and a control group who were eligible for improvements, but were still waiting for these to be completed.

The research found GP events for respiratory illness fell by almost 4% for those who had benefited from Nest improvements, while these rose by almost 10% in the control group over the same period.

A similar pattern was found in relation to asthma events, with a 6.5% decrease in the recipient group and a 12.5% increase in the control group for the same period.

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

“These findings show not only is our successful Warm Homes Nest scheme helping to reduce energy bills while reducing emissions, but is also having a positive impact on the health and well-being of some of Wales’ most vulnerable households.

“This is why I am pleased we are continuing to invest in home energy efficiency improvements for low income houses and have committed £104million over the next four years to improve up to 25,000 more homes through the Welsh Government Warm Homes Programme.”

Minister for Public Health and Social Services, Rebecca Evans added:

“The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies to

work together to improve well-being, and to create a healthier Wales. This research is encouraging as we work to collaborate with communities to improve health and well-being and think differently about the way we deliver services. Preventing ill-health is much better for the individual than treating it.”

Professor Ronan Lyons, Associate Director of the Administrative Data Research Centre Wales (ADRC-W), based at Swansea University Medical School, said:

“We are delighted that ADRC-W has again been able to assist the Welsh Government in its analysis of how the Warm Homes Nest scheme has affected Welsh homes and the health of the people living in them.”

The emerging research findings have been used in the development of the new Warm Homes Nest scheme and as a result eligibility for a package of free home energy efficiency measures has been extended to low income homes with members suffering from respiratory and circulatory conditions.

ESRC Chief Executive, Professor Jane Elliott, added:

“The project findings demonstrate the power of linked administrative data for research and policy evaluation and provide robust evidence to inform more cost-effective program delivery and services to improve people’s health and quality of life in Wales. The ESRC-funded Administrative Data Research Network is supporting many other important research projects across the UK that provide evidence on a range of social and policy issues that can only be answered by linking government administrative data.”

Barefoot boost for computing science in Welsh primary schools

A new national project to help boost the computing skills of Welsh primary school children has been launched today (Weds 5 Apr) by Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams.

The Barefoot Computing project in Wales aims to help primary school teachers get to grips with computing so that they can inspire and excite pupils aged from five about the world of IT.

The initiative is funded and led by BT, which has worked closely with the

Welsh Government to ensure resources for the project in Wales are closely aligned to the Digital Competence Framework and are available bilingually via the Hwb digital learning platform.

Kirsty Williams visited Cadoxton Primary School in Barry to see a Barefoot workshop in action and unveiled the new online resources for teachers, which have been tailored to the Welsh curriculum in both English and Welsh.

The free, bilingual, downloadable resources and lesson plans are targeted to help primary school teachers across Wales, some of whom may not have specialist computing knowledge.

The resources focus on concepts such as algorithms, abstraction, programming and data structures and provide ideas on how they can be used in the classroom.

Kirsty Williams said,

“Since becoming Education Secretary, one of my key priorities has been to raise the aspirations for all our children and young people, broadening horizons and developing ambition so that all can achieve. The DCF is an important milestone in achieving this goal as it provides the fundamental skills our children need in the modern world. I am therefore delighted to launch these free-to-use, creative resources which perfectly illustrate how digital skills can be integrated into the Welsh curriculum.”

Every primary school head teacher in Wales will be contacted by the Barefoot team to highlight the new resources, which have already won acclaim from teachers elsewhere in the UK.

More than one million primary school pupils across the UK have already benefited from Barefoot since being launched in 2014. It forms part of BT’s long-term commitment to help build a culture of tech literacy and reach five million young people in the UK by 2020.

Alwen Williams, regional director for BT Cymru Wales, said:

“Computing is a vital skill for the future prosperity of Wales.

“Young people need these skills in order to thrive in our increasingly competitive and digital world while businesses and organisations of all sizes need recruits that are tech literate in order to succeed.

“Our children grow up surrounded by technology, but too many have little idea how it all works – their knowledge is only screen-deep.

“BT’s tech literacy programme is designed to inspire young people to ‘get’ tech concepts and to find them exciting and relevant, but we’re also aware that teachers need to feel confident to support young people.

“That’s where the Barefoot Computing project comes in, and we’re looking forward to seeing it take shape in Wales and having a real impact in our primary schools.”

Bill Mitchell, director of education at BCS, which was responsible for originally creating Barefoot Computing in collaboration with the Department for Education, Raspberry Pi and BT, said:

“It’s essential that all children develop computational thinking skills right from the start of primary school, which is why the Barefoot Computing project is so important as it gives teachers the educational tools they need to develop these skills in their pupils.”

“By backing the Barefoot Computing project the Welsh Government has shown the leadership and vision necessary to ensure all primary schoolchildren in Wales now have the chance to develop those skills and as adults successfully compete in the global digital economy.”

Pupils and practitioners in Wales can access the bilingual materials at hwb.wales.gov.uk Schools will soon be able request a workshop to demonstrate how the resources and lesson plans can be used.

Bill to introduce first new Welsh tax in 800 years is passed

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said the passage of the Land Transaction Tax and Anti-avoidance of Devolved Taxes (Wales) Bill marked a significant step in Wales’ devolution journey.

Land transaction tax, which will replace stamp duty land tax, will come into effect on April 1, 2018. The revenue raised will help to fund public services in Wales.

The tax will be payable on the purchase or lease of a building or land in Wales over a certain price and includes a higher rate on additional residential properties – the higher rate has been payable in Wales through stamp duty land tax since April 2016.

In 2015-16, £153m was raised from stamp duty land tax in Wales, with just under 59,000 transactions taking place. This is expected to rise to £263m by 2018-19.

The Finance Secretary will announce the rates and bands for land transaction tax by October 1 and the regulations will be laid after the UK Autumn Budget.

Welcoming the passing of the Bill by the National Assembly, Professor Drakeford said:

“This is a significant milestone in devolution – for the first time in almost 800 years Wales will have its own taxes.

“This is a tax which affects so many of us. Once law, the Bill will enable us to introduce a land transaction tax to replace stamp duty land tax, ensuring public services in Wales will continue to benefit from the revenues raised by this important tax.

“We consulted widely in developing the tax and were able to learn from the devolution of the tax to Scotland. While the new tax provides consistency and stability for businesses and provides a smooth transaction for home buyers, we have been able to make a number of improvements to the tax reflecting Welsh needs and priorities.”

Land transaction tax is one of two taxes to be devolved to Wales in April 2018 – landfill tax will be replaced with a landfill disposals tax. The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill is currently being considered by the National Assembly.

Professor Drakeford added:

“The devolution of tax powers in a year’s time will change the nature of devolution in Wales. It brings with it additional responsibility for the Welsh Government and National Assembly and a chance to make a real difference to public services in Wales.”

The Land Transaction Tax and Anti-avoidance of Devolved Taxes (Wales) Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent (when the Bill becomes an Act) in May 2017.