

New “robust, fair and transparent” regime of marine licensing fees

In consultation with industry and other partners, a Marine Licensing Fees Review has been undertaken for the first time since 2010 with the intention of developing an updated, suitable system for marine licensing fees and charges in Wales.

The new fees model introduces, for the first time, a tiered approach, with a mix of fixed fees and hourly charges, a change from the previous model of universal fixed fees. The new approach enables cost recovery to be achieved more accurately and fairly.

Application fees are set proportionately against the services being provided. Fixed fee bands of £600 (Band 1) and £1,920 (Band 2) will apply for what are considered small scale and routine activities, respectively. There will also be an hourly rate charge of £120 per hour (Band 3) for the most complex work packages. In these cases customers will be quoted costs upfront and kept regularly informed on costs.

The new fees have been set by the Welsh Government and will be charged by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the marine licensing authority in Wales.

A wider provision of pre-application services will be provided by NRW, including dedicated and bespoke pre-application discussion and support, as well as the review of draft environmental statements. This is designed to achieve a better service to customers and realise efficiencies in the process.

NRW will implement a programme of continuous improvement for marine licensing and the fees will be reviewed regularly. The existing Marine Licensing Stakeholder Group will also hold regular meetings share information and get feedback from industry representatives.

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

“I am pleased to confirm we are launching what we consider to be a robust, fair and transparent regime of marine licensing fees and associated charges.

“The marine industry is vitally important to Wales. We worked closely with them when reviewing the fees regime and I am sure they will join us and Natural Resources Wales in welcoming this new system.”

Wales leading in UK on neurological care measures

Launching the Annual Statement of Progress on Neurological Conditions, Vaughan Gething said:

“No other UK nation has attempted to measure patient experience and outcomes across both stroke and neurological conditions before.

“The aim is to have a Patient Recorded Experience Measure and a Patient Recorded Outcome Measure which can be administered, collected and collated on a national level.

“We will continue to develop and evaluate these high-quality measures over the next year and use this data to identify where services need to be improved, evaluate changes to our services and measure improvements over time.”

The Patient Recorded Outcome Measure aims to determine patients’ feelings on their symptoms, their ability to function and how their health affects their quality of life.

The Patient Recorded Experience Measure will determine patients’ feelings about their care, being treated with dignity and respect, the personal impact of any delays to treatment and measure these against their expectations.

The progress statement also outlines:

- a gradual reduction in the average length of time neurological patients spend in hospital, falling from 6.4 days in 2010-11 to 4.2 days in 2015-16
- a 65% increase in spending on neurological conditions between 2010-11 and 2014-15 to £283.7million
- £1.2m that has been invested in improving neuro-rehabilitation services across Wales

Vaughan Gething said:

“Increasing numbers of people need to use neurological services, and health boards are improving the services they offer. I’m determined that we will continue to work to improve care for neurological patients and these measures will form a key part of this work.”

Year to go: First Welsh Taxes in 800 years to be introduced

The devolution of tax powers to Wales marks a significant milestone in devolution as Wales will become responsible for raising a proportion of its own revenue to spend on public services.

From 1 April 2018, Wales will have two new taxes – land transaction tax will replace stamp duty land tax and landfill disposals tax will replace landfill tax.

Together they are estimated to generate more than £1bn in the first four years.

Two Bills to establish these new taxes are currently being scrutinised by the National Assembly for Wales – Land Transaction Tax and Anti-avoidance of Devolved Taxes (Wales) Bill passed stage three in the National Assembly earlier this week.

The Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) will be responsible for collecting these two Welsh taxes. Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford has announced that Kathryn Bishop will be the first chair of the WRA; the non-executive board members will be appointed in the summer.

From April 2018, Wales will also be able to use new borrowing powers of £1bn to invest in capital projects in areas of devolved responsibility.

Professor Drakeford said:

“In just over a year, stamp duty land tax and landfill tax will be devolved and Wales will introduce the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years.

“This is an historic milestone in Wales’ devolution journey as we become responsible for raising our own money to spend on public services. The next step will be Welsh rates of income tax, which we are committed to introducing in April 2019.

“These taxes bring additional responsibility for the Welsh Government and the National Assembly – to those who pay taxes and those who depend on the public services which are funded by them.

“These new tax powers provide us with the opportunity to reshape and make changes to improve existing taxes to better meet Wales’ needs and priorities. We will use them to help improve fairness and support jobs and economic growth in Wales.

“A huge amount of work is already underway to prepare for these tax powers. We have consulted widely and listened to a range of stakeholders to help us develop these taxes and will continue to do so as they make their way through National Assembly scrutiny.”

[The Great Repeal Bill: Welsh economy needs certainty, clarity and reassurance – Carwyn Jones](#)

The final bill will set out one of the largest and most complex legislative projects in British history. However, the First Minister is demanding that the UK government must not lose sight of the needs of businesses, workers and potential investors in order to protect the Welsh economy.

The First Minister said:

“We stand ready to work with the UK government to help make the Great Repeal Bill succeed and ensure it provides the clarity and reassurance the Welsh economy urgently needs.

“The process of incorporating thousands of EU rules into UK legislation may sound like a mere bureaucratic process but, in reality, each law will have a direct impact on the people of Wales, our employers and potential investors. It is crucial we get this right.

“Uncertainty restricts economic growth and so it is vital disruption is kept to a minimum to help keep confidence in the economy and protect Welsh jobs.”

The First Minister also expressed disappointment that the Welsh Government was not directly involved in contributing to the white paper, adding:

“While the white paper talks about increasing the decision-making power of devolved administrations, it is not clear that we share a

similar view of where powers currently lie and how we should proceed in the future.

“We have been clear we see benefit in agreeing common UK approaches on some policy areas that are devolved where this is important for the functioning of the UK market, provided that these are agreed by the UK government and all 3 devolved administrations and are subject to independent dispute resolution mechanisms. The starting point for such common approaches and frameworks must be through agreement and consensus.

“In discussions we have had so far, the UK government have assured us they share this view – how the white paper is now taken forward will be the opportunity to demonstrate a real commitment to those warm words.

“The final bill, when it comes forward, must respect and protect devolution. This is what the people of Wales voted for in 1997 and again 2011. We will continue our discussions with the UK government to ensure that the bill does not ride roughshod over the devolution settlement and brings clarity to our future.”

Kathryn Bishop confirmed as first chair of the Welsh Revenue Authority

In just over a year, Wales will raise taxes for the first time in 800 years when stamp duty land tax and landfill tax are devolved. Land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax will replace these two taxes in Wales from 1 April 2018.

The Tax Collection and Management (Wales) Act, which was passed by the National Assembly in April 2016, established devolved tax arrangements in Wales, including the creation of the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) to collect and manage devolved Welsh taxes.

The WRA is the first non-ministerial department of the Welsh Government and will become operational in April 2018. Over the next four years, the WRA will collect more than £1bn of tax revenues.

Confirming Ms Bishop’s appointment, Professor Drakeford said: “In just over a year, Wales will be responsible for collecting and managing our own taxes when land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax are introduced.

“We are making significant progress in our preparations for tax

devolution and the WRA will play an integral part in this.

“It will be responsible for collecting and managing more than £1bn of tax revenues over the next four years – revenue which is crucial for our public services.

“I am pleased to be able to confirm Kathryn Bishop’s appointment as the first chair of the WRA. Kathryn brings a wealth of experience to the role and will provide the WRA with the leadership and vision to ensure a smooth transition as Wales takes on tax powers.”

Ms Bishop said:

“I am delighted to be appointed as chair of the WRA – a new public body with an important function in Wales – and I look forward to working with the implementation team and the stakeholders.”

Ms Bishop’s appointment as chair of the WRA follows a fair and open recruitment exercise regulated by the Commission for Public Appointments. A pre-appointment hearing by the National Assembly’s Finance Committee endorsed her appointment.