

Wales broadens its horizons attracting €66m to drive innovation

Speaking at a conference to celebrate Welsh successes in the EU-funded programme, he revealed that Welsh activity in Horizon 2020 had doubled in the last year.

A day after Article 50 was triggered, the Finance Secretary called for continued participation in the programme after the UK leaves the EU – as outlined in the Welsh Government's White Paper Securing Wales's Future.

The Welsh Government's 2016 annual report about Horizon 2020 highlights Wales' performance in the programme including:

- International collaborations doubled to more than 1,000;
- Around a third of Welsh participations in Horizon 2020 projects are as lead co-ordinators;
- Welsh businesses won more than €10m through the programme;
- A higher proportion of private sector participations than the equivalent in the UK;
- Welsh universities performing well, accounting for 63% of total Welsh participations.

This positive trend has continued into 2017, as the latest figures show Welsh organisations have secured €66m of Horizon 2020 funds and the number of Welsh participations has topped 140.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Horizon 2020 provides a real opportunity for businesses and organisations to be at the forefront of research and innovation. The Welsh Government is committed to supporting Welsh participation in this EU programme.

“Our White Paper, Securing Wales' Future, highlights the economic importance of retaining UK access to European research and innovation programmes, and their successors, beyond 2020 to help drive world-class science and innovation and sustainable jobs and growth in Wales.”

At the event, the Finance Secretary met businesses including Wrexham-based Ecodek Ltd and Newport-based SPTS Technologies, learning about their ground-breaking work on Horizon 2020 projects, such as recycling of building materials and filtered waste of water treatment plants to develop new, innovative products and the development of semiconductor technologies in innovative new medical devices.

Professor Drakeford added:

“Today is a celebration of Welsh success in Horizon 2020 and the contribution EU funds are making to driving our knowledge economy. It is vital that we continue to maximise the opportunities that this programme presents and attract further investments which will bring significant benefits to our region.”

Horizon 2020 is open for business – successful applications made while the UK remains part of the EU will be protected by the UK Government’s lifetime expenditure guarantee.

The Welsh Government’s SCoRE Cymru fund provides financial support to help Welsh organisations with travel costs to forge partnerships and to develop Horizon 2020 proposals.

Improved arrangements to support those affected by contaminated blood announced

The new arrangements will provide broader assistance over and above financial support by offering a support service for every affected individual. This will help individuals with difficulties accessing healthcare services, home or travel insurance, other financial benefits or suitable public services. Arrangements will also address concerns about discretionary funding. All regular payments will be increased to include an amount towards additional expenses such as increased winter fuels, treatment (travel/overnight accommodation) and insurance (personal/travel).

More will also be done to support those who have been bereaved, especially important during the early years when distress and financial difficulty may be greatest.

The one-off payment will be retained and, in addition, spouses, civil partners or partners will receive 75% of the regular payments for three years after bereavement. For the newly bereaved, payments will reflect the regular payment rate at the time of death. For those bereaved in earlier years, the 2016-17 rate will be applied and one payment made in full.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Today’s announcement brings an end to the uncertainty about support in future and will introduce a new scheme that is supportive, transparent and as equitable as possible.

“We’ve taken account of the views expressed by those affected which have helped shape the new arrangements, giving us a deeper understanding of the impact of the tragedy on their lives and those of their families in many cases.”

The new scheme will be administered by Velindre NHS Trust through the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership.

Wales’ beneficiaries will transfer to the new scheme that will operate from October 2017. Enhanced regular payments (annual, quarterly or monthly) will be backdated to April 2017.

Welsh Government officials will work with HM Revenue and Customs and the Department of Works and Pensions to ensure that future payments continue to be exempt from taxation liability or state benefits entitlement calculations.

They will continue to work also with the Department of Health and the current scheme administrators to ensure the transition to the new scheme is as smooth as possible.

[Economy Secretary welcomes report on heritage services in Wales](#)

The Cabinet Secretary is responding to a report entitled “Historic Wales – A roadmap towards Success, Resilience and Sustainability for the Heritage of Wales” which he commissioned last year.

The report was produced by a steering group established to consider the future of heritage services in Wales which is chaired by Justin Albert, Director of the National Trust Wales, and made up of representatives from Wales’ national heritage institutions and trade unions.

It was submitted to the Economy Secretary in February for his consideration.

Ken Skates said:

“I was delighted to receive this report on the future of heritage services in Wales and have considered its content with great interest.

“I would like to record my thanks to the Chair of the group and the representatives of our heritage institutions and trade unions involved and commend them on producing such a measured and well

considered report that has secured the agreement and consensus of all organisations involved.

“I am genuinely excited by the opportunities the report’s recommendations will create for the sector as a whole. Cadw in particular is performing exceptionally well at the moment and I believe these proposals will enable us to sustain and build on those successes, and cascade them across the wider sector.

“As I have said previously I am determined we will work together to strengthen the success and resilience of our heritage services. That means our national institutions fulfilling their commercial potential through greater collaboration and partnership working which the proposal for a strategic partnership absolutely supports.

“I have written to Justin Albert today to welcome the steering group recommendations subject to a number of caveats which I have set out in my letter.

“I remain absolutely committed to enabling our heritage institutions to maximise the economic benefits that they bring to the people of Wales, and look forward to working with our heritage services to achieve this.”

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A new Board and a new era for HCC

Appointed to the HCC Board with effect from 1 April 2017 are:

Barrie Jones
Catherine Smith
Claire Louise Williams
Gareth Wynn Davies
Helen Howells
Huw Davies
Illtud Dunsford
John T Davies
Ogwen Williams
Rachael Madeley Davies

The recruitment exercise for the new Board sought to attract a more diverse field of candidates with broad experience and a good knowledge of the agriculture sector in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I was seeking to deliver a Board able to support and challenge the executive around the key areas of strategic planning, corporate governance and marketing. Reflecting on Kevin Roberts’ recommendations from his recent review of HCC, I wanted individual Board members able to communicate and engage directly and effectively with levy payers.

“I am particularly pleased the process has delivered a gender-balanced Board reflecting the diverse talent within agriculture in Wales. I want to see more women in important leadership roles.”

While ten candidates were recommended for Board appointment, the Selection Panel did not feel able to recommend any of the applicants for appointment to the vacant Chair role.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“The role of HCC in a post Brexit world will be even more important. We need a Chair able to lead the organisation into this new uncertain era and I will shortly launch a new recruitment exercise to find the person able to take on that important role. In the meantime, I have asked Kevin Roberts, who undertook the recent review of HCC, is the current independent Chair of Amaeth Cymru, and who has considerable experience of the industry and levy bodies, to take on the role of Chair on an interim only basis. I am grateful Kevin has agreed to serve for the short period needed while the new recruitment exercise runs its course.”