

# Finance Secretary urges Treasury to abandon austerity and boost investment for vital public services and the economy

In a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford set out Wales' priorities ahead of the Spring Budget on 8 March.

The Cabinet Secretary outlined his concerns about the UK Government's intention to press ahead with £3.5bn of cuts to public spending in 2019-20 – cuts which could result in a further £175m reduction to the Welsh budget.

And he called on the UK Government to use the Spring Budget to announce extra funding for health and social care services.

Professor Drakeford said:

“I remain very concerned about the impact of further cuts to public spending and the UK Government's intention to press ahead with £3.5bn of cuts in 2019-20.

“Our budget is already substantially lower in real terms than it was in 2010 as a result of the UK Government's years of austerity – additional cuts on top of those we are already facing could mean a further £175m reduction to our budget.

“These cuts are unnecessary and counter-productive – now is the time for the UK Government to end its damaging policy of austerity and provide a much-needed fiscal stimulus to boost economic confidence and support vital public services.

“Over the winter, we have seen significant pressures in health and social care services across the UK. It was disappointing that the UK Government did not take the opportunity to provide extra funding for these services in the Autumn Statement.

“I urge the UK Government to take action in this Budget to increase funding for health and social care in recognition of the very real pressures these services are facing.”

In his letter to the Chief Secretary for the Treasury, the Cabinet Secretary reiterated the Welsh Government's commitment to the Swansea Bay City Deal proposal and called on the UK Government to act to ensure the wider ambitions for the Swansea region are realised, including:

- Using the Spring Budget as an opportunity to sign the Swansea Bay City Deal;
- Taking forward the Hendry Report on Tidal Energy and calling for detailed discussions between the Welsh and UK governments to maximise the opportunities for the Welsh and UK economies;
- Confirming the electrification of the Great Western mainline to Swansea will be delivered immediately after electrification to Cardiff is completed in 2018.

Professor Drakeford added:

“Good progress has been made with the Swansea Bay City Deal proposal and it has been my – and the Welsh Government’s view that the deal is ready to be signed.

“The Budget is an ideal opportunity for the UK Government to bring this deal to a conclusion and I welcome the positive comments by the Chancellor in the House of Commons recently, which provided a strong signal this is achievable.”

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## [Welsh Government and GPC Wales agree changes to the GP contract for 2017/18](#)

As a result of the agreed changes to the contract investment in general medical service will increase by approximately £27m.

This investment includes an uplift of 2.7% for GP pay and expenses for 2017/18 which covers:

- a pay increase of 1%;
- a general expenses uplift of 1.4% to cover practice costs;
- a contribution towards the rising costs of professional indemnity;
- a contribution towards the increased costs of the pensions administration ;
- an increase in funding for maternity, parental leave and sickness absence;
- a contribution towards the business improvement levy.

The investment also includes provision for new enhanced services covering care homes; warfarin management , diabetes and the delivery of secondary care initiated phlebotomy test. GP practices will provide;

- an enhanced service to all 22,700 nursing and residential care home residents in Wales, aimed at reducing variations in care;
- a new Diabetes Local Enhanced Service will be offered by all GP practices providing a more comprehensive package of care to patients across Wales;
- all GPs in Wales will offer a new Warfarin management service., meeting NICE guidelines ensuring the service is carried out in the practice where other health issues and prescribing changes are discussed;
- resources to recognise the workload associated with undertaking phlebotomy requests generated from outside the practice.

GPC Wales, Welsh Government and NHS Wales have also agreed to work in close collaboration in 2017/18 to modernise the contract to better meet the needs of the public and GPs. This includes:

- improving access to services;
- reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and improving ways in which the quality of care is monitored;
- addressing the rising costs of GP professional indemnity.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“In Wales, our collaborative approach to the challenge of providing high-quality healthcare sets us apart.

“We have worked closely with our GP colleagues to create solutions that deliver the best care for patients. I’m confident that this approach of working in partnership is the right one, as we continue to transform primary care in Wales. It provides a strong platform for GPs to continue to provide high quality, sustainable, healthcare”

Chair of GPC Wales, Dr Charlotte Jones said:

“GPC Wales welcomes the collaborative approach taken by Welsh Government to help address the challenges facing GPs in Wales. I am certain that this approach will deliver the best outcomes for GPs and patients alike.

“The contract changes announced today will be part of a longer piece of work to review the entire contract and make it fit for the future.

“GPC Wales is looking forward to engaging in ongoing collaborative discussions over the months ahead.

“Additionally, we welcome the ongoing investment into clusters, the recently announced £40m for premises development, and the £95m for training healthcare professionals that will support primary care. These funds go hand in hand with today’s announcement, with the

ultimate aim of strengthening primary care.”

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## Welsh teachers return from CERN to teach what matters

Last month 24 physics teachers from all over Wales visited the site of the large hadron collider in Geneva to learn more about the latest discoveries in particle physics, as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The CERN teacher placement scheme, organised by Welsh Government, supported by the National STEM Learning Centre in York and funded by Project ENTHUSE and Dr Lyn Evans, provides teachers the opportunity to attend lectures and learn about CERN’s facilities, functions and operation from the scientists and engineers who work there. Dr Evans from Aberdare, is the former Director of the Large Hadron Collider project, and acts as course co-ordinator for the four-day visit.

Dr Evans said,

“Our teachers are our greatest asset and deserve all the support we can give them. At CERN they experience a vibrant atmosphere and interact with front-line scientists. I hope that they can take their enthusiasm back to the classroom and inspire more budding young scientists, engineers and technicians, which are needed for Wales to compete in the 21st century high-tech world.”

Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams said,

“Opportunities like this are vital if our teaching workforce is to better understand and communicate the application of real world science and technology. I want to ensure that our teaching workforce is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to guide our young people’s learning in STEM subjects.

“Last month I announced the creation of a National Network for Excellence in Science and Technology (NNEST). The Science Network will be critical to supporting teachers of science and technology for those aged 3 to 18 through ready access to global developments in teaching and learning. I expect the network to consider closely the type of professional development offered by CERN, how that can be best communicated to teachers and expand such opportunities in the fields of chemistry, biology and engineering in the future.”

Chris Allton, professor of Theoretical Physics at Swansea University, said,

“To witness cutting-edge science first hand and to be able to bring this experience to life back in the classroom will prove inspirational for our pupils. We are proud that we can showcase antimatter research done by Swansea physicists to the visiting teachers while they are in CERN. The feedback we have received from the group is that the knowledge and experience gained from this trip should make teaching of physics much more enjoyable and meaningful for the students.”

Simon Ealey-Fitzgerald, Curriculum Area Leader for Science at Llanidloes High, who attended this year said,

“The event was inspiring and enthusing (at times confusing!), and the wealth of subject knowledge of the CERN participants, along with the pedagogical knowledge and insight of our teachers is to be celebrated. This really was a chance for Welsh teachers to share ideas and strategies for the ultimate benefit of our pupils.”

The programme has been organised and designed by our own STEM team and CERN Teacher Programme co-ordinator Jeff Weiner to ensure the teachers have the opportunity to appreciate CERN and the work undertaken there; by attending lectures on Particle Physics, the development of particle accelerators, particle detectors, visiting the Large Hadron Collider, the Magnet test facility, the Compact Muon Solenoid detector and finally a visit to the Antimatter Factory.

Later this year, and for the first time, teachers will be able to attend a two week summer placement at CERN; the first time a residential stay has been offered to all school science teachers (not just physics).

Teachers who wish to apply should contact the team at [Dysg@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Dysg@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

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## [Economy Secretary opens new library in Holywell](#)

The new facility, which is located within Holywell Leisure centre, will offer modern and vibrant facilities to local residents.

Ken Skates hopes that the library's location within Holywell leisure centre will draw in new users who might not have visited a stand alone library.

The library is a joint project between the Welsh Government and Flintshire Council and has been supported by a £120,000 from Welsh Government with the remainder of the funding coming from Flintshire Council. The total cost of the project is £235,580.

The Economy Secretary was joined at the visit by pupils from Whitford and St. Winefride Primary Schools. He said:

“I am really pleased to be officially opening this excellent new facility in Holywell. It is the result of a successful partnership between Welsh Government and Flintshire Council and will offer vibrant and modern services to local people.

“The location of the library within the leisure centre will open up a wide variety of learning, culture and leisure opportunities to people who may not have visited their local library before.

“This is something I am committed to as it will not only ensure that more people access the excellent services offered by Holywell Library, but also help to ensure the library’s long term viability.

“Another benefit of co-locating the library with the leisure centre is that some of its services will be available to users even when the library is not staffed – something I hope will attract even more users.”

Leader of Flintshire County Council, Councillor Aaron Shotton, said:

“I am delighted to see the library relocated to its new home in the leisure centre. This modern hub in Holywell is similar to the one which was opened at Deeside Leisure Centre last year.

“Co-location means that customers are able to access a wider range of services in one convenient place. This move supports the Council’s Community Asset Transfer programme.”

At the official opening the Economy Secretary also witnessed the signing of the co-operative agreement for the Holywell Leisure Centre which will see it being handed to the community. The agreement is between Flintshire County Council and the Holywell Leisure Centre Group with Holywell Town Council providing funding support in 2017/18.

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# Respiratory care improving and smoking rates are falling – Vaughan Gething

Smoking rates are falling and GPs across Wales have been offered new equipment to improve diagnosis and support for those with respiratory conditions, according to the first Annual Statement of Progress for Respiratory Conditions published today.

Friday 03 March 2017

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething today welcomed the publication of the statement which shows progress made against the actions set down in the Respiratory Health Delivery Plan.

The main achievements highlighted in the report include:

- Fewer people are smoking than ever before, with rates now below the 2016 target of 20%
- Every GP practice in Wales has been offered a new spirometer, which help diagnose and monitor certain lung conditions;
- Over 400 health professionals have begun training as accredited spirometry practitioners, with the aim of every GP practice having at least one trained member of staff;
- In South Wales, the introduction of a specialist service to support the management of a complex group of lung conditions known as Interstitial Lung Diseases has led to a significant reduction in referral to diagnosis. A similar team is about to start work in North Wales
- Improved support and self-management training for patients to manage their chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma

Vaughan Gething said:

“These changes are improving the quality of life for many of those affected by respiratory conditions, although we know there is more work to do.

“We are seeing real progress in improving respiratory care, and we will continue to work with health boards to support patients.”

[March 2017](#)

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