

Welsh Government invests over £7million to help local authorities become energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions

Monmouthshire Council will receive £4.5million funding through the Welsh Government's [Invest to Save Green Growth Fund](#), allowing it to run its own solar park on council owned land.

The Oak Grove Solar Farm in Monmouthshire has the potential to generate enough electricity to power around 1,400 homes. It will also save more than 2,000 tonnes of CO₂e per year by generating clean, renewable energy.

Flintshire Council will receive £3.13m for an ambitious project to upgrade 11,000 street lights to LED equivalents, saving the Local Authority around £360,000 and 1,387 tCO₂e annually.

The change will also improve lighting levels and reduce the number of faults occurring on the network each year, cutting down maintenance costs as a result.

The approved funding brings the total investment by the Welsh Government through its Green Growth Wales initiative over the past year to £14million. This funding is helping local authorities to become more energy efficient and save money.

Incomes and savings generated by the local authorities from the projects will be used to repay the investment, support local community projects and leave the council with a net income.

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

“Through our Green Growth Wales initiative, we are supporting the development of public sector energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. I am delighted we have been able to support these ambitious projects, which will save significant money for the future. These projects have huge potential and all public bodies should be developing green growth projects like this to deliver decarbonisation in Wales.”

Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford, said:

“At a time of reducing budgets, public services need to think and work differently. I'm pleased to see this fund will not only enable

these councils to generate savings but also become more energy efficient, improving the wellbeing of local communities.”

Welsh Government sets out plans for a North East Wales Metro

The Infrastructure Secretary has launched [‘Moving North Wales Forward – Our Vision for North Wales and the North East Wales Metro’](#) – which outlines how ambitious proposals will help connect people, communities and businesses to jobs, facilities and services across the region, with the North East Wales Metro integral to these plans.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Modernising the transport network across North Wales and delivery of an integrated North East Wales Metro are key priorities for the Welsh Government. They will provide a fantastic platform to deliver sustainable economic development, connecting people, communities and business to employment, services, facilities and markets through reliable, resilient infrastructure.

“Brexit will mean it is more important than ever to have good connections to markets across the Wales – England border, which already sees around one million journeys per month. Direct links to and from key centres in the Northern Powerhouse, the Midlands and to London and direct public transport services to airports and key rail hubs will all help to drive economic growth.

“I have already committed to projects of nearly £600 million for transport infrastructure improvements across the region whilst working hard to secure an additional £41 million of EU funding for transport schemes in the region. But it’s crucial that our investment and ambition does not stop there.

“I am proud to launch our vision for a fully integrated North East Wales Metro system which will transform transport links in North East Wales. This will be supported by our ongoing work on the future of local bus services, and by the new Wales and borders rail franchise which will be in place from 2018.

“I am also pleased to announce plans for a designated team to work in collaboration with other public sector organisations, operators, business, the third sector and communities on both sides of the border to develop the vision and improve transport integration

across all modes. This will help inform and deliver a transport system that meets the needs of North Wales, ensuring our vision for a connected North East Wales becomes a reality.

“There is huge potential to deliver increased economic growth in North Wales. A modern, high quality integrated transport system is fundamental to achieving that potential and I am committed to working to make that a reality.”

Councillor Dilwyn Roberts, Chair of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board said:

“The announcement is a firm commitment by the government to support economic growth and prosperity in North Wales, putting it on an equal footing with the city regions in South Wales.

“I particularly welcome the ‘whole system’ approach outlined in the Vision that recognises the strong link between the health of the economy and an effective and modern transport system. The plan is enhanced by the recognition of the cross border commuter flows in the Mersey Dee area.

“I look forward to working with the Cabinet Secretary to implement the vision for the benefit of all parts of North Wales.”

Cllr Samantha Dixon, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council and Chair of Growth Track 360, the campaign to secure £1bn of rail improvements for North Wales and Cheshire, welcomed the announcement and said:

“The vision for a Metro for North East Wales will complement the integrated service and infrastructure improvements we are seeking as part of the Growth Track campaign.

“Such investment is essential if we are to create opportunities for generations to come. This investment would increase productivity and economic growth, increasing tax revenues and reducing unemployment across the region.”

[Additional £150,000 to support publishing in Wales](#)

The Economy Secretary, who also has responsibility for Culture and publishing

in Wales, has confirmed that an additional £151k of capital funding will be allocated to the Welsh Books Council in 2016/17 to enable the Council to make improvements to its headquarters, further develop its IT systems and keep pace with digital developments.

The investment is in addition to the additional capital funding of £184k provided by the Welsh Government to the Welsh Books Council during 2015-16 and the additional revenue funding of £123k that the Council will receive during the 2017/18 .

It reflects the Economy Secretary's ongoing commitment to supporting Wales' publishing industry.

Ken Skates said:

"The Welsh Books Council plays a crucial role in promoting and supporting Wales' publishing industry and ensuring the creation of a wide range of Welsh language and English language publications.

"In recent years, we have been encouraging publishers in Wales to embrace digital developments such as e-books. This is something they have embraced and there are now approximately 1600 e-books available.

"As we celebrate World Books Day I am pleased to confirm this additional funding which will help the Welsh Books Council to update its IT infrastructure and ensure it has the business-friendly and accessible platforms in place to support the industry . It will provide a significant boost to both the Welsh Books Council and help to strengthen Wales' publishing industry more widely."

Helgard Krause, Chief Executive of the Welsh Books Council said:

"We are delighted to receive this additional funding, especially as it allows us to invest further in our distribution centre to the benefit of not only publishers but also booksellers and libraries. Government support such as this is central to sustaining an efficient service to the publishing industry in Wales offered during times of rapid technological change."

[Proposals for new teaching standards](#)

in Wales

The plans are part of the national mission to reform education to benefit pupils. The new standards aim to promote teaching excellence and support career-long professional development for all teachers.

The new standards will:

- Develop the leadership skills of all teachers.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to develop their skills throughout their career to meet the needs of the education system.
- Better support new entrants to the teaching profession by bringing together the requirements for the award of Qualified Teacher Status and the successful completion of induction.
- Enable teachers to work together more effectively to make sure all learners benefit from excellent teaching and learning.

It is proposed that the new standards will apply to all serving teachers from September 2018 and initial teacher training programmes from September 2019. This will provide time to build familiarity with the new standards before they become mandatory.

Kirsty Williams said:

“We are working closely with the profession to help teachers and practitioners be the best they can be, while raising the standard of teaching and, importantly, raising the standing of the profession as a whole.

“The current professional standards are no longer fit for purpose and do not match my vision for our school workforce. The old system set minimum expectations that we want to move beyond.

“These new standards are about making sure teachers develop the right skills throughout their career and all those teaching in our classrooms take on a leadership role as we all work together to raise standards. This is about moving to a system of career-long development. My vision is to strengthen leadership and make sure that there is greater consistency across our schools.

“I am grateful to all those teachers, leaders and other partners who have been directly involved in developing these new standards – it is testament to what can be achieved through us working

together.”

[New expert healthy relationships group to advise on curriculum](#)

The panel will provide advice and support on issues relating to the delivery of healthy relationships education within the curriculum. This includes a range of areas including improving understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, respect and consent, sexism and bullying.

Emma Renold, Professor of childhood studies at Cardiff University’s School of Social Sciences has agreed to chair the Group.

As well as teaching on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the field of childhood studies, Professor Renold has recently collaborated with Welsh Women’s Aid, NSPCC Cymru and the Children’s Commissioner to develop the online resource AGENDA: A Young People’s Guide to Making Positive Relationships Matter.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Providing good quality learning for children and young people on healthy relationships is essential to tackling a range of important issues and I want to have the best expert advice to help us achieve this.

“I am delighted such an experienced figure such as Professor Emma Renold has agreed to chair the group as she brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this new role.

“She is internationally recognised for her work on gender and sexuality in childhood and youth across a wide range of areas including bullying, violence and sexualisation and I look forward to working with her.”

Professor Renold said:

“It is both a privilege and an honour to help support the effective delivery of sex and relationships education within the curriculum in Wales.

“Chairing this panel is an incredible opportunity to draw upon

research evidence, and collaborate with experts, including young people, to identify the most effective resources and practices that will address and enhance children and young people's gender and sexual well-being."

The panel will be made up of individuals and organisations with relevant experience and expertise.