

Preferred candidate for Welsh Revenue Authority chair confirmed

Before the chair of the WRA is formally appointed, the National Assembly's Finance Committee will hold a pre-appointment hearing on Thursday February 16 to take evidence from Ms Bishop as the preferred candidate.

Ms Bishop's announcement as the preferred candidate follows a recommendation by an independently-chaired appointments panel after a fair and open recruitment exercise regulated by the Commission for Public Appointments.

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 WRA to collect and manage devolved Welsh taxes.

The WRA will become operational from April 2018, when stamp duty land tax and landfill tax are devolved to Wales. The WRA will be a non-ministerial department of the Welsh Government, which is accountable to Welsh Ministers, the National Assembly and Welsh taxpayers.

Notes

- A pre-appointment hearing has been arranged for the chair of the WRA as this is the first non-ministerial department to be established by the Welsh Government. Pre-appointment hearings are used elsewhere in the UK to enable committees to take evidence from the government's preferred candidate for certain key public appointments prior to the final appointment decision.
- The National Assembly's Finance Committee will publish a report setting out its views about the preferred candidate's suitability for the post. A final decision about the appointment will be made by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government.

Kathryn Bishop

- Kathryn has more than 30 years' experience working with organisations undergoing major change – at Accenture, Allied Dunbar, Eagle Star, Zurich and the University of the West of England. Her background includes IT and HR.
- She has a portfolio of commitments and is an associate fellow of Saïd Business School (University of Oxford), where she directs and teaches on leadership programmes for professional service firms and other multinational corporations.
- Kathryn was appointed a civil service commissioner in April 2012 and acted as the interim First Civil Service Commissioner from April to September 2016.
- She is a director of a consulting business, managing projects for clients, including assistance with strategic planning for private sector

organisations, executive agencies and NHS trusts.

- She has held a number of non-executive directorships within government, including the UK Border Agency, the UK Intellectual Property Office and the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA)

The WRA will have comparable powers to other UK tax authorities so its functions can be undertaken consistently and comprehensively.

As well as collecting tax, the WRA will:

- Provide information, advice and help about taxes to taxpayers
- Resolve complaints and disputes
- Promote tax compliance
- Reduce tax evasion and tax avoidance
- Support the development of Welsh Government tax policy

[Lesley Griffiths: Have your say on fly-tipping](#)

Currently, Local Authorities can issue fixed penalty notices for a number of offences, such as littering and dog fouling. The only way to penalise those who undertake small scale fly-tipping though is to prosecute through the Magistrate Courts. Many consider this to be expensive, time consuming and disproportionate for small scale offences.

The majority of respondents to a previous consultation felt introducing fixed penalty notices offered a relatively simple, quick and cheap way of dealing with offenders, which would remove existing financial and resource burdens on enforcing authorities and on the Court system.

The [12 week consultation](#) launched today proposes Local Authorities should have the ability to set the fixed penalty amount at between £150 and £400, depending on their local circumstances. If no amount is specified then the default would be £200. Local Authorities could then use the money raised to help contribute to the costs of enforcement and the clear-up of fly-tipping.

Larger fly-tipping incidents such as a van tipping a load of building waste would still be prosecuted through the courts.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs welcomed the launch of the consultation. Lesley Griffiths said:

“Fly-tipping is undoubtedly one of those lower-level offences that generates much discussion and discontent among the public. It is

unsightly, environmentally unfriendly and it creates extra work for the people who have to clear it up.

“The purpose of the consultation we are launching today is to gain the views of all interested parties on our proposal to give local authorities the power to introduce fixed penalty notices. The conversations we’ve had so far indicates this is a measure that would prove to be popular among the public but we need to ensure if we are going to pursue this option that it is proportionate and workable.

“I hope as many people as possible take the opportunity to respond to the consultation and play their part in developing a system that helps to reduce waste crime and improve the appearance of communities across Wales”.

[Chetwood Financial Ltd comes to Wrexham with Welsh Government support](#)

The new startup, led by a management team who have operated at senior executive levels in UK retail banks and overseas, is supported by £750,000 business finance from the Welsh Government.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates has welcomed the news. He said:

“This is a strategically important project for the professional and financial services sector and great news for Wales.

“The investment will create well paid skilled jobs offering significant employment opportunities in North East Wales, and will also help establish the region as a key location for financial services companies.”

Chetwood is using state of the art technology to make better financial services products. It already has a consumer credit licence and FCA authorisation, and will initially offer innovative loan products through digital channels aimed at prime and near prime customers in the UK.

The company plan to submit their banking licence application in the first half of 2017, with a view to launching savings products in early 2017.

Chetwood will be based on Wrexham Technology Park in one of the offices acquired by the Welsh Government from Moneypenny.

The business will benefit from the growing trend to purchase financial services products online using a bespoke technology platform developed by Yobota, a related company, that will provide the company with the flexibility and agility to innovative.

Andy Mielczarek, CEO of Chetwood said:

“We’re really pleased to be basing our business in Wrexham, and it’s personally exciting for me to be setting up the business in my home town.

“We are grateful to the Welsh government for their support so far and look forward to working with them over the coming years. We are already hiring into Wrexham, and we are starting to work with Coleg Cambria and the Welsh universities to create a pathway for us to bring in the best talent in to our business.”

This week the Welsh Government has announced that 696 new jobs have been created and an additional 787 have been safeguarded as a direct result of Government support.

[Healthier living NOW can reduce dementia risk](#)

The Welsh Government and Public Health Wales are encouraging people in Wales to pledge to take six steps to reduce their dementia risk.

The second phase of the dementia risk reduction campaign launches today and aims to raise public awareness that you can reduce your risk of dementia and calls on us to ACT NOW:

- Active (physically and socially)
- Check your health regularly
- Try new things
- No to smoking
- Only drink alcohol within the guidelines, if at all
- Watch your weight.

The Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans AM explains:

“The risk of dementia increases with age and as more people are living longer, the number of people developing dementia will grow. These are simple steps that people can take not only to reduce the

dementia risk, but other conditions including cancer, heart disease and stroke. The message is clear – don't wait; act now to reduce your risk."

One person who is determined to keep active to help reduce his dementia risk is 47-year-old Norman Parselle from Newport. Norman lost both his mother and his father to dementia, and is keen that others follow his lead to a more healthy lifestyle to reduce their dementia risk. Norman explains:

"When my parents were alive, my family made a big effort to make sure that they stayed active. Even when their dementia got quite bad, we would take them out and about. They played skittles regularly and always had music on at home. We managed to keep them living at home until the last six months before they died, so they could lead as normal a lifestyle as possible.

"Who knows what's around the corner for any of us? But I do know that lack of physical activity, isolation and depression can contribute to the decline of people with dementia, so keeping fit and active, and socialising with friends may reduce the risk of getting dementia, and stave it off for as long as possible. That's why, seeing how the disease affected my parents, I decided to get involved with my local walking football club in Newport. About 20 of us regularly play on a Monday night, 6-7pm, in the sports hall at Llanwern High School. I enjoy the banter and camaraderie that we have, and, it still has an element of light-hearted competitiveness, keeps me fit, and is lots of fun."

The campaign is being supported with a 10-day roadshow across Wales to provide help and advice on how people can reduce their risk of dementia. Key roadshow venues include:

- St. David's Shopping Centre in Cardiff on Saturday 11th February 2017
- Aberystwyth Arts Centre in Ceredigion on Wednesday 15th February 2017
- The Quadrant Shopping Centre in Swansea on Saturday 18th February 2017

For those who can't make it to a roadshow they can get lots of information and tips to get them started by searching for Change4Life Wales on Facebook and Twitter.

For information on walking football clubs and other initiatives in your local area, visit change4lifewales.org.uk

Economy Secretary visits set of big budget US drama

Ken Skates visited the set of TNT's Will, a high end drama series based on the early life of William Shakespeare and met members of the cast and production team.

Will is being filmed largely in Pontyclun's Dragon Studios and is due to broadcast in the US this summer with UK dates to follow. It boasts the largest budget and highest spend of any production shot in Wales to date.

Will is the latest in a growing list of US productions to be filmed in Wales and follows other high profile productions such as Da Vinci's Demons, The Bastard Executioner and The Collection.

It is anticipated that the production, which has been backed by Welsh Government finance, will generate around £18m spend into the local economy.

The first series of Will was commissioned following the success of an initial pilot programme filmed in London. Following support from the Welsh Government the production company decided to undertake a significant proportion of filming and production of the first series of Will in Wales.

Speaking after his visit, Ken Skates said:

"I was so pleased to be able to visit the set of Will, which really is an impressive and quality production with the highest budget of any film or programme to be in Wales so far.

"The scale of the project is resulting in the largest local spend related to TV and film production even seen in Wales which is great news for the local economy and a real coup for the Welsh film and TV sector more broadly.

"We are continuing to work hard to attract high end drama to Wales with a specific focus on the lucrative US market and the probability of repeat series.

"I know the Will production will act as another great endorsement for what Wales can offer the film and TV industry, in terms of our location, expertise and talent. I am delighted that Welsh Government has been able to play a decisive role in bringing this investment to Wales."

Ninth Floor UK Productions Limited – the company behind the series – will be based at Dragon Studio in Pontyclun for nine months of the year with location

shooting in and around South Wales as well as London.

Executive Producer Alison Owen said:

“Filming at Dragon International Film Studios has provided many advantages for the production – using Dragon’s four stages and its extensive backlot, we have been able to create a whole world in one place.

“The streets of Shakespeare’s London spread out on the backlot, whilst the huge Theatre takes up one whole stage, additional interior sets complete the show’s universe. Other breath-taking exterior locations are a stone’s throw away, giving scope and breadth to the show’s visual landscape.

“The close proximity of so many locations has given us an ease and efficiency enabling us to be ambitious with our show, giving us terrific ‘bang for our buck’ and putting the budget on the screen. With access to the experienced Welsh crew based in the area, in Cardiff and Swansea, while only a couple of hours from London on the train, it has been the perfect choice for us.”

Last month the Welsh Government launched a promotional showreel featuring clips from the latest major productions filmed in Wales to promote Wales worldwide as a premier location for TV and feature film production.