

Carl Sargeant announces £4.4 million for advice services

£2.2 million will support the delivery of services which can offer direct advice relating to welfare benefits, housing, debt, money management and discrimination.

A further £2.2 million will be awarded to Citizens Advice Cymru to deliver the Better Advice, Better Lives Scheme. The scheme encourages benefit take-up for families with disabled children, for those living in deprived areas whose health is likely to be affected by poverty, and for council tax and housing benefits.

Carl Sargeant said:

“Advice services are an important part of our efforts to tackle poverty. They provide practical support to people who are struggling financially or need help regarding their benefits or housing. I am pleased to guarantee this funding for the next financial year. During the first half of 2016-17 advice organisations responded to over 33,150 requests for information and advice which illustrates how beneficial these services are.

“I am also pleased to secure funding for Citizens Advice Cymru to deliver the Better Advice, Better Lives Scheme for 2017-18. A key feature of the project is that it is referral based and delivered in community settings which means it reaches disadvantaged groups and people who are less likely to seek advice themselves. Since the start of this project in 2012, the scheme has helped over 171,000 people.”

Plans for £20m investment to help those with Additional Learning Needs announced

The Welsh Government wants to improve results and aspirations of those who need extra support in the education system. £10m of the funding is part of the additional £100 million extra investment over the Assembly term to improve school standards.

The new funding will be supplemented by an investment directed from existing budgets – expected to be a further £10m over the remaining Assembly term. While this is subject to confirmation of budgets at the next spending review, protecting this funding will be a priority.

In December the Welsh Government revealed proposals for an ambitious law to create a bold new approach to supporting learners with additional learning needs (ALN). If passed, the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Bill will completely overhaul the system for supporting pupils with ALN, affecting every classroom in Wales.

The £20 million of planned investment will support ALN learners in a range of ways over the next five years, including helping the education sector transfer to new system set out in the Bill, encouraging organisations to work closely together, developing the workforce and raising awareness of ALN.

Last year just 23% of learners with ALN achieved five good GCSE's including Maths and Welsh or English compared to 59% of all pupils and Ministers want to improve on this.

Alun Davies said:

“Our aim is to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people. Children and young people with additional learning needs make up almost a quarter of our school population; we cannot raise standards without targeting resources and improvement activities towards this group of learners.

“This £20m funding package builds on investments we have already made in transforming additional learning needs provision in Wales.

“This funding will help develop the skills of frontline staff to better support ALN learners. It is essential that all staff including early years professionals, teachers, FE lecturers and support staff are all aware of the new approach.

“Our ambition is for classroom teachers and FE lecturers will have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all learners. We want to ensure the new system is introduced in a way which ensures learners with additional learning needs are able to access the benefits of the new system as quickly as possible, balanced against the need to ensure services and professionals are ready to deliver it.”

Welsh Government support helps safeguard 280 jobs at Celsa two steel sites in Cardiff

Celsa Manufacturing (UK) is the UK's largest manufacturer of steel reinforcement products with 100% of its output produced from recycled scrap. Across its two main sites at East Moors Road and Tremorfa in Cardiff, it directly employs 600 people, together with 194 full time contractors while its activities in Wales support around 3000 supply chain jobs

The investment will help safeguard the future of around 280 jobs including employees, contract workers and supply chain personnel.

Four projects – with a total capital expenditure of £3.6m – are being supported through the Welsh Government's Environmental Protection Scheme to reduce CO2 emissions, cut energy consumption and costs, improve efficiencies and boost performance.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“The Welsh Government is committed to supporting the steel industry in Wales and I am pleased we are able to respond to the unprecedented pressures facing this key sector. Steel processing is an energy intensive operation and the high cost of energy is a major factor affecting the whole of the UK steel industry. This investment will help reduce energy consumption and cut costs.

“Our Environmental Protection Scheme provides one of the few ways of supporting large companies like Celsa with high energy usage to become more efficient. This not only delivers significant environmental benefits but also provides direct and indirect economic benefits for the Welsh economy.

“Celsa is a Welsh Government Anchor Company, a significant employer in the Cardiff area and a major contributor to the Welsh economy and this investment will ensure the business continues to be sustainable while operating under difficult market conditions. This investment will help reduce energy consumption and cut costs to help build a viable future for steel in Wales.”

Luis Sanz CEO and Managing Director of CELSA Steel UK said:

“As a major energy intensive user, CELSA is always looking for ways of reducing its environmental impact, improving its energy efficiency and cutting cost. We are continually researching new technologies which help in all these areas and it is extremely

helpful that the Welsh Government has a scheme which encourages the adoption of and investment in those new technologies. Even though we have already done much to cut CO2 emissions it is essential that we further reduce our consumptions and environmental impact at a time when the cost of electricity for industrial users in the UK is giving us a competitive disadvantage.

“There has been excellent collaboration between CELSA and Welsh Government to make these investments happen and secure a more stable platform for the future growth of our business. This will benefit the company, our employees, the local and national community.”

The four carbon reduction projects have the potential to deliver 67,026 MWh energy savings and cut CO2 emissions by 12,074 tonnes annually, which is over and above the EU standards the company already complies with.

Expansion by Code Serve will create 50 jobs in Brynmawr with support from the Welsh Government

Code Serve provides comprehensive and specialist fabrication and coded welding services nationwide and provides structural steelwork for major infrastructure projects around the UK.

It has outgrown its current facility – the former AIC Steel site in Newport where it employed 15 people and has relocated to the former Tecweld building on Noble Square Industrial Estate in Brynmawr.

The investment, which is just under £1m and includes the purchase of new equipment, is backed by £400K from the Welsh Government’s Repayable Fund for SMEs.

The company has already created 20 of the 50 jobs and taken on a number of people who were employed by AIC Steel which went into administration last year.

The news has been welcomed by Economy Secretary Ken Skates who said:

“I am delighted support from this Fund is enabling the company to accelerate its expansion plans to meet the growing demand for its services.

“This investment is not only a boost for the steel sector, which is

a top priority for the Welsh Government, but it will create a significant number of jobs, offering a wide range of career opportunities which is great news.”

Managing Director Dan Dark, who established the business in 2009, said: “This is an exciting opportunity for the business which has seen year on year growth and marks a new chapter in its development. Our new premises will play a key role in helping us achieve our medium and long term growth goals.

“We would not have been able to proceed at this time without support from the Welsh Government and we look forward to taking on new staff and creating new jobs. I am pleased that we have already taken on some former AIC Steel employees who were made redundant when the company went into administration last year.”

The new 37,000 sq ft. facility can accommodate the company’s expansion plans and comprises a detached single storey industrial unit with a two storey office section, modern extensions and a goods yard.

The building, previously used for heavy steel fabrication, is equipped with all necessary lifting equipment to handle large scale projects with space to undertake additional processes in-house.

The investment in new equipment and larger premises will result in more efficient manufacturing process and expand its capability by offering processes such as shot blasting, testing and painting that are currently outsourced.

Code Serve operates at the higher end of the fabrication spectrum and is one of few businesses to achieve the high level accreditation of Execution class 4 for CE marking in fabrication and welding. It has provided coded welders to support the development of Hinkley C Nuclear power plant, an area of work that is anticipated to grow significantly. Other large projects include the new roof on court 1 at Wimbledon, new stand at Anfield stadium, various cross rail sites in London and the new northern hub at Ordsall chord Manchester.

Expansion for Neath plant provides boost for steel and construction sectors

Express Reinforcements Ltd, which is based on the Milland Road Industrial Estate, is investing £150,000 in bespoke machinery and associated IT hardware and software that will increase capacity at the depot.

The Welsh Government is supporting the project with £65,000 to ensure the investment goes ahead at the Neath facility.

The investment is essential for the Neath plant – which was formed in 1984 – to meet the growing demand for its products.

The new equipment will not only increase production but will automate the recording of production data during the manufacturing process.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This expansion is important for the sustainable future of the Neath facility and supports both the steel industry in Wales – a priority for the Welsh Government – and the construction industry, one of our key economic sectors.

“Welsh Government funding support was essential to secure this project for Neath that will create and safeguard jobs while the increased production will also open up new supply chain opportunities in Wales and provide further opportunity to manufacture and supply steel products from Wales.”

Andy Lodge, Managing Director of Express:

“This is a great example of industry and government being aligned and working for the benefit of all stakeholders. This investment will help to give a more stable platform for our Neath business and enhances the long-term sustainability of that business. The spirit of partnership has been excellent to deliver this result.”