

Wales ready to lead Electric Vehicle charge

The Economy Secretary was speaking ahead of a Welsh Government hosted Low Carbon Intelligent Mobility event bringing internationally recognised manufacturers including Aston Martin Lagonda, Toyota, Renault, Peugeot and Nissan together with academics, public service providers and specialists at Hensol Castle.

The event will see Welsh Government outline its policies to support decarbonisation, focussing on the automotive supply chain changes and opportunities as cars go from the internal combustion engine to electric and hydrogen power sources.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Skills, innovation and sustainability are all things I, as Economy Secretary, have put front and centre of my economic policy over recent years, most explicitly in last year’s Economic Action Plan.

“It’s this focus, alongside the expertise and vision of companies such as Riversimple, Calsonic and Hemmels here in Wales which means we are in a fantastic position to maximise on the enormous opportunities presented by low carbon vehicles, which are unquestionably the future of travel.

“And the prospects do not begin and end simply in manufacturing the cars of tomorrow, but through exploring and finessing the innovative technology and supply chain opportunities with interested parties and partners who all stand to benefit.

“We at Welsh Government are absolutely determined to facilitate this and, through events such as this linking likeminded business with academia, supply chains and decision makers, I hope to unearth further opportunities for growth and collaboration, creating wealth, jobs and wellbeing in the process.

“Today we have a line-up of electric and hydrogen powered vehicles from Nissan, Peugeot, Renault and Toyota. Coupled with the highly anticipated fully electric RapidE and Lagonda vehicles from Aston Martin being made here in Wales and the already established hydrogen offering from Riversimple, and others, there is every reason to believe Low Carbon Intelligent Mobility is on the brink of something quite special, with Wales leading the charge.”

'Refill Cardiff' sees capital city tap in to free water

Cardiff is the latest Welsh city or town to sign up to the Refill campaign. Participating businesses sign up to the Refill app and put a sticker in their window to show passers-by they are welcome to stop by and fill up their water bottle for free.

A 'Refill Cardiff' launch will take place at Cardiff Central Library today. Following the event, a group of volunteers will visit businesses in the city to encourage more to sign up to the campaign.

The Welsh Government is supporting the national roll-out of the scheme by City-To-Sea, with over 600 refill stations already signed up across Wales and more joining every week. The Welsh Government has also funded a Welsh language version of the Refill app.

Cardiff University is a Refill 'champion'. The University's Water Research Institute, which is researching 'plastics in freshwaters', is aiming to get all accessible water stations on campus signed up to the app and encouraging other organisations across the city to join the scheme. Cardiff Council has also added public buildings to the app, such as libraries or Hub buildings.

There are currently 86 Refill stations in the Cardiff area. Refill is helping tap water be more widely available in public spaces like transport hubs, shopping centres and public buildings.

Hannah Blythyn said:

"Making drinking water more available is a really simple way to cut down on single-use plastics and is much better for the environment.

Earlier this year I announced my ambition to see Wales become the world's first 'Refill Nation' and make asking for a water refill a social norm, so it's really good to see our capital city join the scheme."

Hannah Osman, Refill Wales Coordinator, said:

"We are so excited to see Refill Cardiff join the Refill movement and making a real difference by reducing reliance on single-use plastics. Every time we refill a re-usable bottle we save on our own money and the planet's resources, and all those individual refills add up to a huge impact.

It's great to see so many local businesses supporting Refill Cardiff by signing up to provide free refills."

Professor Isabelle Durance, Director of Cardiff University's Water Research Institute, said:

"We are very excited to be championing the Refill movement in Cardiff. The University is committed to reducing its energy, water and plastic use. Simple but effective schemes like Refill are a great way to achieve this, but perhaps as importantly, to make us more aware of the need to better manage our natural resources.

In addition to promoting the campaign, we are providing water refill stations in several of our campus buildings, empowering staff, students and the whole community to care for our environment, for future generations."

Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member responsible for Clean Streets, Recycling and the Environment at Cardiff Council said:

"Now that the app has been launched, residents and visitors in Cardiff will be able to see exactly where they will be able to refill their plastic bottles in the city on their smart phone. The Council is committed to reducing the use of single use plastics and we will continue to work with our partners to continue to expand the scheme."

[Aled Roberts to be appointed new Welsh Language Commissioner](#)

Mr Roberts, who will be appointed for a term of seven years, will replace Meri Huws, when her term comes to an end on March 31st 2019.

Making the announcement, the First Minister said:

"It gives me great pleasure to announce my decision to offer the appointment of Welsh Language Commissioner to Aled Roberts. As a former lawyer, local government leader, school governor and of course, respected Assembly Member, he brings with him a range of skills and experience that make him ideal for the role.

"More recently, Aled has led the work of reviewing the system for planning Welsh medium education and worked closely with local authorities to improve their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, a role he will relinquish in order to become the Commissioner.

“I would also like to thank Meri Huws for everything she achieved during her term as the Welsh Language Commissioner. Meri has undertaken the role with great conviction and has worked hard to extend the rights of Welsh speakers. She has laid a firm foundation upon which Aled can build.”

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan added:

“The Welsh Language Commissioner’s main aims are to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh and to uphold the rights of Welsh speakers. Aled’s appointment is therefore vitally important in realising the Welsh Government’s vision that has been set out in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. It sets the ambitious target of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and increasing the proportion of Welsh speakers who use the Language on a daily basis from 10% to 20% which will require a great deal of commitment from everybody, including the Commissioner.

“I look forward to working with Aled to achieve these aims and to build on the work Meri has done over the last seven years.”

Aled Roberts said:

“I have always been passionate about the Welsh Language and have greatly enjoyed recently working with local authorities on their plans for Welsh medium education and assisting the Welsh Government with their ambitions for the future of Welsh in education.

“I am excited about taking on this role, building upon the work of Meri Huws, and look forward to working to achieve the target set out in Cymraeg 2050 and ensuring Welsh speakers’ rights are upheld. I have no doubt of the scale of the challenge ahead and I am committed to forging effective relationships across Wales and beyond to meet it head on.”

First Valleys Regional Park Gateway sites revealed

Chair of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys Alun Davies named Dare Valley Country Park, Caerphilly Castle, Cwmcarn Forest, Blaenavon World Heritage Visitor Centre, Cyfartha Park and Bryngarw Country Park as the first sites.

Local Government Secretary Alun Davies said:

“The Valleys Regional Park is at the heart of our ambition to help Valleys communities maximise their rich natural and cultural heritage to deliver real social, economic and environmental benefits.

“Our Valleys contain some fantastic natural landscapes and cultural treasures. This Valleys Regional Park will kick-start work to raise their profile internationally, while better connecting them to our towns and villages and encouraging more active lifestyles.”

The £7m investment will start to connect Valleys with high-quality walking trails and cycle routes. It will support the development of a high-quality network of uplands, woodlands, nature reserves, country parks, rivers, reservoirs and canals, as well as heritage sites and connect them with our towns and villages.

Alun Davies will today announce the Discovery Gateways as part of an oral statement updating Assembly Members on the Our Valleys Our Future Delivery plan for 2018.

He said:

“As part of this work I have visited other regional parks across Europe, and the Discovery Sites announced today have a great deal to offer visitors. From the fantastic mountain biking on offer in Cwmcarn Forest, to the industrial history of Blaenavon and the pageantry of Caerphilly Castle, there is so much to offer. With this investment we will work to make these sites world-renowned, while doing more to attract people locally to the landscapes and heritage on their doorstep. I intent to announce further sites in the coming weeks.”

Poultry farmers and pet bird keepers urged to prepare for winter Avian Flu threat

Since June 2017, there have been no detections of avian influenza in poultry or kept birds in the UK and the UK has retained its OIE country freedom status since September 2017.

There are some simple measures that all bird keepers, whether they are running a large commercial farm, keeping a few birds in their back garden or rearing game birds, should take to protect their animals against the threat of avian influenza in the coming winter months. These include:

- keep the area where birds live clean and tidy, control rats and mice and regularly disinfect any hard surfaces. Clean footwear before and after visits.
- place birds' feed and water in fully enclosed areas that are protected from wild birds, and remove any spilled feed regularly.
- put fencing around outdoor areas where birds are allowed and limit their access to ponds or areas visited by wild waterfowl.
- where possible, avoid keeping ducks and geese with other poultry species
- for poultry keepers in England, Wales and Scotland, sign up to a free APHA service to receive text or email alerts to any outbreaks of bird flu in the UK. In Northern Ireland, all bird keepers are encouraged to subscribe to a free text alert service by simply texting 'BIRDS' to 67300.

These measures are particularly important if you are in or close to one of the GB Higher Risk Areas. You can check whether or not you are in a Higher Risk Area by using our interactive maps.

A joint statement by all four of the Chief Veterinary Officers in the UK today said:

“Avian flu continues to circulate in many parts of the world and with the colder months soon upon us the risk of disease from migrating birds is increasing. It is critical that all keepers of poultry, including game birds and pet birds, act now to reduce the risk of transmission of avian flu to their flocks.

“Good biosecurity should be maintained at all times, including regularly cleaning and disinfecting the area where you keep birds and separating them from wild birds wherever possible.

“Keepers should also ensure they register on the Great Britain Poultry Register and we are pleased that new forms are now in place to simplify this process. Keepers in Northern Ireland must register their birds on the DAERA Bird Register. This can now be completed and submitted on-line”

All bird keepers across Great Britain should also register their birds on the Great Britain Poultry Register (GBPR). If you have 50 or more birds, this is a legal requirement, although keepers with fewer than 50 birds are also strongly encouraged to register. New simplified and user-friendly forms will speed up the process this year.

In Northern Ireland it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers to register every bird on the DAERA Bird Register, other than pet birds kept in the owner's home.

Registering your birds means the government can contact you in the case of an outbreak and provide information on the steps to take to limit the chances of your birds getting the disease.

Last winter, the H5N6 HPAI strain of bird flu was only detected in wild birds and there were no outbreaks in domestic birds, either in commercial or small holdings. Although there have been no findings in the UK since June 2018 the virus is still circulating in wild birds in North Europe (including Denmark and Germany) and has caused outbreaks in poultry. In addition, the H5N8 HPAI virus continues to circulate in Eastern Europe, highlighting the need to stay vigilant.

The Government continues to monitor for incursions of avian flu and is working with the poultry and game bird industries; hen rehoming and pure and traditional poultry breeds stakeholders to help prevent incursions.