

New way of delivering grants to vulnerable groups

Throughout the last year, we have been testing a new way of delivering grants in seven local authorities across Wales. The aim of this work was to bring together a number of grants to strengthen the ability of local authorities and their partners to deliver preventative services focused on early intervention for those in the greatest need.

The interim evaluation of the work across all local authority areas to test the Early Intervention, Prevent and Support Grant was published today.

Following a review of the evidence gathered from the pathfinders, and discussions with stakeholders and local authority partners, it was agreed that from April next year the grant would be delivered in two streams; the Children and Communities grant and the Housing Support grant.

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies said,

“We believe this new approach has a number of advantages. It will ensure these crucial preventative services are integrated as effectively as possible. The new grant structure will take up the methods of working trialled by the pathfinders, involving regular communication across partners, peer challenge and review.

“We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities and our wider stakeholders, including providing support to the non-pathfinders, to take forward the new arrangements and emphasise the importance of early intervention and prevention.”

Rebecca Evans, Minister for Housing and Regeneration, said,

“We are grateful to those who have played a crucial role in testing the Early Intervention, Prevention and Support Grant, we have listened to the outcomes of the evaluation and understand the need for stability in the planning and delivery of these crucial services.

“We will support the sector to make a success of this new structure and are united in our commitment to improve outcomes for individuals and communities who benefit from services funded via the grants.”

These arrangements will remain in place for the remainder of this Assembly term and will apply to all local authorities in Wales. They will be carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure the concerns raised by the National

Assembly's Public Accounts Committee and the Wales Audit Office are addressed.

Final report on "grassroots of governance" published

In June last year, we commissioned an independent review on the future role of Community and Town Councils in Wales.

A panel of experts, co-chaired by former Assembly Members Gwenda Thomas and Rhodri Glyn Thomas, was asked to explore the current, and potential role of town and community councils in Wales.

Over the past year, the Panel has held an extensive engagement exercise, with the sector, stakeholders and the public, to understand on how communities in Wales can best be supported through this tier of democracy. The Panel held a series of public events around the country, issued targeted surveys, and invited written evidence.

Today the Panel presented its final report to the Welsh Government. Its recommendations include ensuring that every area in Wales is supported by a Community and Town Council, and that they should be established in areas that don't currently have one; and making all place-based services the responsibility of Community and Town Councils.

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services Alun Davies said,

"Community and Town Councils are the grassroots of governance in Wales – hyper local democracy – and the tier closest to our citizens. They should be accountable to local people and represent the interests of the different parts of the community equally.

"I would like to place on record my thanks to the Panel for the conscientious and constructive way they have undertaken their responsibilities. I will now consider the Panel's recommendations and how we can use this wide-ranging evaluation of town and community councils to support our aims to modern democracy in Wales."

Gwenda Thomas said,

"Over the last year, we feel we have delivered a truly evidence-based review, with over a thousand points of contact including over 800 responses to our dedicated surveys, with over 100 responses

from young people. Our findings and recommendations have been shaped by these views and, in some cases, may seem radical, but we feel represent the scale of opportunity available to Town and Community councils in Wales.”

Rhodri Glyn Thomas said,

“We know that whilst we can learn from the past and only deal with the present, we have a role to prepare Community and Town Councils for the future. We believe that if we are to succeed in improving the well-being of future generations, Community and Town Councils have a vital role in contributing towards this – and should be recognised.”

Professor Glyn Hewinson to lead cutting edge Bovine TB Centre of Excellence in Aberystwyth

A new Centre of Excellence for Bovine Tuberculosis for Wales will open at Aberystwyth University later this year, bringing international expertise together with the aim of eradicating the cattle disease.

Professor Glyn Hewinson, a world renowned expert on Bovine Tuberculosis, will lead the centre’s work. Prof Hewinson is Lead Scientist for Bovine TB at the Animal and Plant Health Agency and has led research into the disease for more than 20 years.

The centre will cost £3.6m and is backed by Sêr Cymru II, a Welsh Government, EU and University funded programme to grow and develop academic research expertise in Wales.

The new Centre of Excellence will be a hub for national and international research into bovine TB. The programme also aims to commercialise the products it develops, collaborating with industry on products such as new diagnostic tests and vaccines.

Bovine TB has a significant financial and social impact on farm businesses and the wider rural community. The cost of fighting the disease is estimated to cost around £26m a year in Wales alone, through the TB control programme and compensation to keepers whose animals are slaughtered.

Sêr Cymru II aims to build on current research strengths and bring new research expertise to Wales. The programme is funded by Welsh Government, the

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, participating Welsh Higher Education institutions and the European Regional Development Fund.

Announcing the programme, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

“Bovine TB is the most pressing animal health challenge for Wales today. It’s had a devastating impact on the national cattle herd and the farming community, while being a significant burden on public finances.

“The Centre of Excellence could be a real ‘game changer’ in the fight against bovine TB and is part of our long-term aim of eradicating the disease for good.”

Dr Christianne Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, added:

“Professor Hewinson is a pioneer in the field of research into Bovine TB and will bring with him World-class expertise and leadership. He is held in the highest regard among his peers internationally and his appointment is a real statement of intent in our determination to tackle this disease.”

Speaking about his appointment, Professor Hewinson said:

“I am delighted and honoured to be appointed to a Ser Cymru Research Chair at Aberystwyth University, leading a new Centre of Excellence for Bovine TB. The centre will explore fundamental aspects of Bovine TB science, supporting efforts to tackle this devastating disease, in collaboration with both Government and industry organisations.”

Professor Peter Halligan, Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales, commented:

“Attracting new international talent to Wales to increase our already impressive scientific research and development capabilities is essential for Wales’ future economic prosperity and our ability to compete effectively across global marketplaces. I am very pleased to welcome Professor Hewinson, who will be the 12th world class research Chair brought to Wales as part of the Sêr Cymru programme.”

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, said:

“We are delighted to be establishing a Centre of Excellence for Bovine TB in Aberystwyth University with the support of Welsh Government. The economic and emotional cost of bovine TB to rural communities can be devastating and the appointment of Professor Hewinson, with his wealth of experience working in disease control, represents a highly significant investment as we seek new approaches to tackling this long-standing problem.”

[Finance Secretary unveils a Budget to build a better Wales](#)

This will be the first Budget to include revenues raised from Welsh rates of income tax as Wales gains the partial power to set and vary income tax for the first time.

The partial devolution of income tax from 6 April 2019 is the next step in Wales’ devolution journey and follows the successful introduction of the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years – land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax – in April 2018.

The outline draft Budget 2019-20 has been developed against the backdrop of continued austerity and the shadow cast by the ongoing uncertainty associated with Brexit.

Professor Drakeford said:

“The Welsh Government has done – and will continue to do – everything it can to protect frontline services from the worst impacts of austerity. And this draft Budget is no exception.

“This has been my most difficult budget to date. With less money, more demand and inflation growing we have worked hard to squeeze every penny we can for those services that matter the most to people.”

The outline draft Budget 2019-20 builds on plans published last year and reflects the second year of the two-year budget agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

The Welsh Government’s revenue plans include:

- More than £500 million extra for health and social care – this includes £220 million to meet the Nuffield gap and an additional £287 million for services, pay and performance

- An additional £50 million for social care in 2019-20, £30 million of which will be allocated from the health and social care funding
- £15 million additional funding for schools
- A package of £12.5 million of measures to help tackle child poverty.

Local authorities were facing a reduction in funding of £43 million in 2019-20. The Welsh Government has worked hard to reduce this by improving the amount of funding it provides directly to local authorities through the revenue support grant. It has also been able to restore funding to a number of grants and make a number of other funding decisions, which local government will benefit directly from, which add up to £84 million.

In May, the Welsh Government announced £266 million of new capital investments alongside the publication of the Welsh Infrastructure Investment Plan mid-point review. The outline draft Budget builds on those capital announcements and includes:

- £78 million for the local transport fund, over 3 years (£26 million a year from 2018-19 to 2020-21)
- £60 million over 3 years for a local authority road refurbishment scheme to repair the damage caused by a series of hard winters and this summer's heatwave
- Almost £43 million over 2 years to support the development of the Taff's Well rail depot
- £35 million for the Social Housing Grant
- £25 million to create 7 strategic hubs across the South Wales Valleys, in line with the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys' Our Valleys, Our Future plan (£9 million in 2019-20 and £16 million in 2020-21)
- £15 million over 2 years to fund the Collaborative Change programme and waste recycling programme to help maintain Wales' strong record in waste management and recycling
- £7 million over 2 years to establish the Valleys Regional Park in line with the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys' Our Valleys, Our Future plan
- An extra £4.5 million to support plans to deliver 19 new integrated health and care centres.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford added:

“As we move through these uncertain times we remain committed to doing everything we can to help our public services meet the very real challenges they face today, while acting now to improve prospects for the future. This budget uses every source available to us to build a better Wales.”

The Welsh Government will not propose any changes to the rates and bands for land transaction tax in the outline draft Budget, however landfill disposal tax rates will rise in line with inflation, as announced last year.

The Finance Secretary will today announce he intends to consult on plans to exempt care leavers under 25 from paying council tax in Wales.

He will also consult on proposals to put those private hospitals and independent schools, which have charitable status and are exempt from paying non-domestic rates, on an equal footing with NHS hospitals and state-funded schools, which are eligible for non-domestic rates.

The Welsh Government is today publishing a one-year revenue budget for 2019-20 and capital plans for the next 2 years – 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The outline draft Budget is the first stage of the Budget, which sets out where Wales' funding comes from and how it is allocated to the main spending departments. The detailed departmental spending plans will be published on 23 October, in line with the new budget process introduced by the National Assembly last year.

[Funding green light for major redevelopment of Llys y Frân](#)

This project will create an iconic recreational park and activity centre which will attract an estimated 40,000 additional tourists, outdoor enthusiasts and local residents. The funding will enable the development of a year-round product both for recreation and education, and will have a positive economic, social and environmental impact whilst also improving the health and well-being of both local residents and visitors.

EU funding of £1.7 million is being invested in the development through the Welsh Government's Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to create 13 must see destinations across Wales.

The redevelopment at Llys y Frân will include a refurbishment and expansion of the visitor centre and full refurbishment of the café with a new water themed play area. A new Outdoor Activity Centre and Waterside Cabin will be built to support walkers, cycling and water sports enthusiasts. The centre will include a wet suit drying room, bike repair workshop, meeting rooms, staff office, food stop, bike storage, bike wash downs and cycle hire.

To build on Llys y Frân's cycling product, a Pump Skills Park and cycle trail will be constructed to provide a natural entry to the 10 km cycle trail around the reservoir. A single track wild trail with red and blue runs departing the existing green-run track will be developed to maximise the offering to cyclists of all abilities.

The Minister, said:

“Llys y Frân has so much potential and I’m delighted that we can support Dŵr Cymru with funding to take this vision forward for what will become an iconic water based and outdoor hub for the area.

The development will benefit the local community, as well as draw more visitors to Pembrokeshire.

Our aim through the Tourism Attractor Destination programme is to focus efforts and investment on key projects in each region so we have a real impact on Wales’ profile in this globally competitive market. This development will give people compelling reasons to visit the area and I look forward to plans which I have seen coming to fruition.”

Peter Perry, Dŵr Cymru’s Managing Director, said:

“We are delighted to welcome the Minister to Llys y Frân to share with him our exciting plans to create a first-class tourism destination.”

“Our plans represent an opportunity for Llys y Frân Reservoir to become an exciting, vibrant visitor attraction that will complement other attractions in Pembrokeshire and bring benefits to the local, rural tourism economy.”

Planning for Phase 1 of the project is already in place and construction is expected to start in December.