

Tourism experiences further growth in 2016

Last year was the first of Wales' themed years and it proved to be great success – Visit Wales' marketing activity for 2016 generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – which is an 18% increase on 2015. This is based on those definitely influenced by Visit Wales marketing before taking a trip to Wales. The Economy Secretary recently announced the continuation of the themed years with a new 'Year of Discovery' in 2019 which will build on the three themes of adventure, culture and great outdoors and follow the 2018 Year of the Sea.

In the context of the 2017 Year of Legends it is great to see that Cadw sites in Wales benefited from the increase in visitors in 2016, welcoming 1.4m visitors to its staffed sites– an 8% increase on the previous year and the heritage organisation's best year on record. There were large increases in visitor numbers at its top historic attractions, including Caernarfon, Caerphilly and Chepstow Castles. Caernarfon saw an increase of nearly 60% in visitors – many of which, had travelled to see the site's iconic Weeping Window exhibition. The arrival of a giant Welsh Dragon, which toured Cadw sites as part of its innovative "Historic Adventures" marketing campaign, also played a crucial role in attracting a new generation of visitors to sites. Following last year's success and having now gained widespread fame as Wales' resident Dragon – for the Year of Legends – Dewi the Dragon has been joined by Dwynwen and over the weekend they welcomed two baby dragons to Caerphilly Castle.

The Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

"The tourism Industry in Wales is in fantastic shape and I'm delighted that the Cadw sites attracted so many additional visitors last year. This shows that innovative ideas like the Cadw Dragon help to spark a renewed interest in our heritage which not only has a positive impact on our historic environment but also on Wales's wider economy. These iconic sites are continuing to inspire the people of Wales and bringing our past to life during our Year of Legends.

"Last year, we also saw record breaking spend from overseas visitors and crossed the million visitors for the first time in 8 years, which is excellent news. We fully recognise how competitive the market is and the challenges facing the industry. Our future vision – especially in light of the EU Referendum result – is to do more again to build on this sense of confidence and to internationalise our reputation and approach. We're making the most of every opportunity presented by the UEFA Champions League Final to raise awareness of Wales as a holiday destination in our key markets."

The Economy Secretary, continued:

“Although most of our performance indicators look good and feedback from the industry is positive, overnight GB figures showed a fall in 2016 compared with the record year of 2015, as did figures for all overnight trips to GB. However, the overall picture for Wales – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – shows a substantial increase in overall tourism volumes compared with 2015 . The total of visits across all three categories was 15% up during 2016 – which builds on the previous successful years.

“Campaign work to convert early interest and opportunities arising from the weak pound will continue with the Summer campaign.”

Adverts will shortly appear on London Underground Stations with the Year of Legends TV advert featuring Luke Evans being played on the Waterloo motion screen. The TV advert will also be shown on Channel 4 in London to coincide with the Cabins in the Wild programme – as well as on Sky Regional London and Sky Adsmart Meridian.

Figures published this week on accommodation occupancy show positive trends for 2017 with Room occupancy for guesthouses/B&Bs over the 12 months ending March 2017 at 40%, 2 percentage points higher than the same period in 2016.

Over the 12 months ending March 2017, self-catering unit occupancy rose by 2 percentage points to 54%, compared with the same period in 2016.