

## [Tim Peake joins Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to announce £7.2m to get girls into STEM](#)

The astronaut, joined the Minister at an event organised by The Prince's Trust Cymru at Tramshed Tech where they met young people involved in the youth charity's STEM-related programmes. There, the Minister announced an investment of £7.2m, including £5.2m of European Union funding, for two similar projects. Gwynedd Council's £1.9m STEM Gogledd and Swansea University's £5.3m Technocamps 2 have been awarded £1.4m and £3.8m of EU funding, respectively.

Both projects will help to ensure young people, particularly girls and young women, continue STEM studies at GCSE and beyond with the aim of pursuing STEM-related careers.

Over the next four years, STEM Gogledd will work with 600 young people, 60% of whom will be female, to enrich and promote STEM subjects through a range of activities that complement the mainstream curriculum within schools across Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy.

Technocamps 2 will work with 3,600 young people across West Wales, North Wales and the South Wales Valleys, two-thirds of whom will be female. It will target secondary schools which do not currently offer computer science as an option at GCSE, or where the subject is only recently available. The project will enable pupils in these schools to take part in workshops to build on their existing knowledge and enthusiasm for IT and computing.

Announcing the funding, the Minister said:

"It is a pleasure to be standing alongside Tim Peake today to announce such an important investment which will help to build the skills of our young people to help drive a the Welsh economy.

"Wales must become a STEM nation if we are to build a modern, dynamic, open economy that benefits everyone in Wales. Both the pace and nature of technological change is increasing dramatically and, to have the skilled workforce to capitalise on it, it is vital we have more young people who choose to study STEM subjects to a sufficiently high standard. While this is quite a challenge to address for both boys and girls, the challenge for girls is much greater.

"This is why I am grateful to organisations like The Prince's Trust for their pioneering programmes and to role models, like Tim, who are influential in promoting the study of STEM subjects. Tim's Principia mission inspired a generation and showed just how far,

literally, science can take you.

“We cannot just rely on people like Tim, though. We must all play our part in stimulating interest in these crucial subjects as a way of securing the next generation of STEM professionals in Wales. This is why I am so pleased to announce this £7.2m investment, £5.2m of it from the EU, for STEM Gogledd and Technocamps. This is a great example of EU funds helping to enthuse and excite young people, particularly girls, about the opportunities available to them.”

Philip Jones, Director of The Prince’s Trust Cymru said:

“We are delighted that Tim Peake was able to join us and Welsh Government in promoting the importance of STEM to Welsh Education today. At The Prince’s Trust Cymru, we believe every young person should have the chance to succeed, and we believe Welsh Government’s latest commitment to STEM activities will help transform more young lives in Wales.”

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## [Transport Secretary calls on UK Government to invest in Welsh rail](#)

In May, Ken Skates announced Cardiff University’s Professor Mark Barry would lead on the case for investment in rail infrastructure in Wales, against the backdrop of the UK Government’s £50bn investment in HS2.

The Transport Secretary will summarise the case in the Senedd this afternoon (Tuesday 17 July).

He will tell Assembly Members:

“The initial findings of this work are stark. Wales has not received an equitable share of UK rail investment over a sustained period, denying us the economic benefits enjoyed elsewhere in the UK.

“Network Rail’s Wales Route, which makes up 11% of the network, has received little more than 1% of total spend on enhancements in England and Wales.

“This has resulted in low lines speed on the South Wales Mainline, capacity and speed constraints along the North Wales Coast,

infrequent commuter services for the Swansea Bay city region, and inadequate cross-border services in both North and South Wales.

“I continue to support HS2, but call once again on the UK Government to make the right choices to benefit north Wales, and exert pressure on them to mitigate against the probable impact of HS2 on the economy in South Wales.”

The work carried out by Professor Barry highlights the use of old, inefficient, and unreliable infrastructure constraining the number, speed, and quality of services.

“These constraints dampen demand, restrict economic growth, and increase costs to passengers and tax-payers.

“I will continue to set out a broader vision for a successful rail network. One that helps us meet our obligations to the environment, responsibilities for Well-being and Future Generations, delivers the goals of the Economic Action Plan, and meets the UK Government’s commitment to rebalance the economy.

“The work undertaken has identified direct transport user benefits of at least £2bn, generated by reducing journey times for rail passengers. Additional benefits also arise from reduced road congestion leading to environmental and safety improvements.”

James Price, Chief Executive, Transport for Wales said:

“The success of the Wales and Borders rail service relies on efficient and reliable infrastructure with the ability to transport more people more efficiently. We look forward to working with the Welsh and UK governments to deliver improvements that meet the needs of passengers in Wales and across the border.”

Cardiff University Professor of Practice in Connectivity, Mark Barry said:

“Wales’ railways are stuck in second gear. Long-term under-investment compared to the UK as a whole has left them unfit for purpose.

“It’s no great surprise fewer people in Wales choose to use the train than in the rest of the UK, leading to less efficient rail operations, higher subsidies per passenger and more road congestion. This is a brake on our economic growth, improvement of air quality and carbon reduction.”

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# Education Secretary launches the Summer Reading Challenge

Every year, thousands of families all over Wales are involved in the UK's biggest reading event for children in libraries, the Summer Reading Challenge, which aims to get children between the ages of 4 and 11 to read six books or more from their library during the summer holidays. In Wales the challenge has a distinct Welsh focus and includes Welsh medium books.

Taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge is free and is one example of what public libraries offer to help children develop a love of reading, gain confidence and learn new skills.

The theme of this year's challenge is 'Mischief Makers' or 'Dyfeiswyr Direidi' and Dennis the Menace and his friends are encouraging children to get involved. By reading six library books over the summer holidays, children will get rewards and stickers to collect, with clues from Dennis to help readers complete the challenge and find the treasure chest of tricks.

Young people aged 12-24 can also take part through the Welsh Books Council's 'Reading Hack' initiative which sees them volunteer in libraries to support the Summer Reading Challenge.

Kirsty Williams said:

"The Summer Reading Challenge has proved hugely successful in motivating children to read more over the summer holidays.

"Reading is such a rewarding pastime for children and is fundamental to their development. Not only does it improve literacy skills, but it boosts their knowledge and most importantly fuels their imagination. If, as often happens, this glorious sunshine turns to rain as soon as the holidays start, what better way to keep the kids occupied when they can't get out and about!"

"Research has also shown that this helps keep their reading level up before going back to school in September. I would encourage parents to make the most of the time with their children this summer, dive into a book and who knows where you'll end up!"

For more information on the Summer Reading Challenge including how to get involved, and resources for schools, go to:

<https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/>

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## New chapter for Llechwen Hall as owners embark on major extension and refurbishment plan

Llechwen Hall's origins were as a 17th Century long house and the owners of the hotel are embarking on a project to expand the bedroom capacity and upgrade the hotel to a 4 Star quality.

The redevelopment of the popular weddings venue will include a spa and leisure facility, and allow the business to attract more corporate customers and higher spending leisure guests.

The investment for Llechwen Hall is from the Micro & Small Business Fund, supported through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and Welsh Government

This project will further improve the performance and strengthen the tourism offer within the region.

Ramish Gor, Financial Director for Llechwen Hall, said:

“We are proud and excited to be working on such a fantastic opportunity to further develop Llechwen Hall, making it a high-end, unique, destination hotel in the South Wales valleys. We look forward to welcoming both our local community and tourists from afar to come and experience a hospitality that complements the beautiful country that we love to call home. We'd like to thank Visit Wales and the Welsh Government for their huge support and for turning our vision into a reality.”

The Valleys Taskforce has also recently published a first-year progress report, detailing the breadth of the work over the last 12 months. One of the key priorities for the valleys taskforce is improving the tourism accommodation stock within the area.

The Tourism Minister, said:

“Investing in top end hotel experiences, with an emphasis on creating 4 Star quality is a priority for the Tourism sector. As the region develops its own tourism related solutions to regeneration, such as Bike Park Wales, there is a parallel opportunity to create a gear change within the quality of hotel accommodation, and help convert day visits to overnight stays.

It's excellent news that the owners are investing in Llechwen Hall – and I wish them every success with the venture.”

The development will support an additional 31 Full Time Equivalent jobs and of the current 19 FTEs, 13 are young people thereby supporting opportunities for young local people in the area to take up full time jobs and develop a career in tourism.

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## **“The rights of EU citizens in Wales must be protected” – Finance Secretary tells Senator Cadic**

Senator Cadic, who is a member of the French Senate's Brexit Group, will meet members of the French community living in and around Cardiff to hear their experiences following the UK's decision to leave the EU.

He and the Finance Secretary will discuss the rights of French citizens currently living or moving to Wales. Senator Cadic will also learn more about Wales' plans post-Brexit.

Nicholas Hatton, co-chair and founder of the3million will join the meeting to talk about the support for EU citizens in Wales.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Professor Drakeford said:

“EU citizens living in Wales make an enormous contribution to our economy and society and their rights must be fully protected after the UK leaves the EU.

“Although immigration policy is reserved, the Welsh Government will work with the UK government to ensure EU citizens living in Wales are provided with certainty over their future rights and entitlements.

“Wales is an outward-facing nation – we are leaving the EU but we do not intend to leave Europe. We want to keep working together, learning from each other, travelling and trading together.”