

Funding now open for creating better tourism destinations

The funding is aimed at public, third sector and not for profit organisations for investment targeting small scale infrastructure (visitor amenity) projects in the tourism sector in Wales. This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

The Minister had an opportunity to see the developments taking place under the Elan Links scheme which is a £3.3million investment into the Elan Valley area over the next five years. It will safeguard the unique and varied heritage of the Elan Valley and enhance the area for the long-term.

Funding was secured from the last round of TAIS funding for four projects – opening access to inaccessible and/or underutilised sites at Elan, including the World War 2 pillboxes which were visited by the Minister; creating three family friendly hubs across the Valley; building a new woodland cycle trail and improving destination signage.

Dr Ieuan Joyce, Chair of Elan Valley Trust and the Elan Links scheme, said:

“The Elan Valley is a special place with a unique landscape, story and history. The funding received through the Tourism Amenity Investment Scheme means that we can increase the activities available for people to enjoy the Elan Valley. It aligns with the long-term vision for the Elan Links scheme of boosting opportunities for visitors while at the same time securing the natural and cultural heritage of the area.”

Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“The Tourism Amenity Investment Support scheme is an excellent way for us to assist the tourism sector to improve local facilities and amenities. These facilities often go unnoticed but they are an important part of people’s experiences when they visit Wales and they also benefit those who live in the area.

“I’ve seen today the difference that this funding has made to the Elan Valley project and also seen how local partners have come together and identified what can really make a difference in their area. This funding is another building block to create better destinations. I wish the team at Elan Valley well with the project and urge local partners to see how this funding could be used to improve their destinations.”

This fund is part of a suite of programmes that are aimed at improving the tourism offer in Wales at every level. Supporting improvements to local facilities and amenities will help support the wider tourism economy and help tourism SMEs to grow.

To support this growth the Micro and small business fund is open all year round for applications.

More information on the [Tourism Amenity Investment Support \(TAIS\)](#) (external link).

Applications for the fund will close **25 May**.

[Destination Qatar](#)

Welsh companies looking to build their trade links with the Middle East will be among the first to capitalise on the new daily flights between Cardiff and Doha which begin this week.

First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, who will be on tomorrow's inaugural Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Cardiff, has announced that a trade mission of ten Welsh companies will be heading to Qatar later this week (5-11 May) to capitalise on the new links.

The companies taking part in the trade mission to Qatar are:

- AmniTec
- Axiom Process
- Calon Wen Organic Dairy Produce
- Catnic – Tata Steel UK.
- Penfro Consultancy
- Rachel's Dairy
- Rhug Organic Farm
- Site Heat – Treatment Services
- Teddington Engineered Solutions
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The trade mission provides an opportunity to strengthen and build ties with prospective partners and investors both independently and through Welsh Government organised business receptions and events.

Speaking ahead of his trip to Doha, the First Minister said:

“The new direct service between Cardiff and Doha has the potential to deliver exciting new economic opportunities for Welsh businesses looking to do trade with the Middle East, India, China, Singapore and Australasia. This trade mission demonstrates the appetite there

is among Welsh businesses to make the most of this new global trade link and show the world exactly what they have to offer.

“This week marks the result of two years of hard work – with Welsh Government and Cardiff Airport working together to put forward an attractive proposal to bring this service to Wales. The direct flight opens up the prospect of further investment, and the Welsh Government will continue to maximise opportunities to raise Wales’ profile in new global markets – this week’s trade mission is just the beginning.”

The Economy and Transport Secretary said:

“The direct service between Cardiff and Doha is an exciting opportunity for Wales, providing a direct route to and from the world’s fastest growing hub airport, Hamad International.

“From the construction and energy supply chain to food and drink, there are a number of Wales based companies already active in Qatar, whilst Qatar Petroleum is the major shareholder in South Hook, one of the largest liquefied natural gas terminals in Europe, in Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire. This link provides further opportunities for both nations to build on these ties and act as a further catalyst for trade, investment and partnership.

“This trade mission will build on recent visits by both myself and the First Minister and will be followed by a specific food and drink trade development visit later in the year. This is all in addition to the recently announced marketing partnership agreement with Qatar Airways which will increase Wales’ visibility in key markets as a holiday and business destination.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for some of our finest Welsh companies to showcase exactly what they have to offer a key market and I look forward to continuing to work with them and companies across Wales to ensure they are fully equipped to capitalise on these links.”

Third Menai Crossing electricity connection to be examined

National Grid is currently developing plans for a new 400,000 volt connection between the existing substation at Wylfa on Anglesey and the existing

electricity transmission network on the mainland in North Wales. The project is known as the North Wales Connection Project and will also facilitate the export of power from the proposed Wylfa Newydd power station.

The joint study between the Welsh Government and National Grid will look at any potential opportunities between the North Wales Connection Project and the Welsh Government's proposed third crossing utilising the bridge to house National Grid infrastructure in order to cross the Menai Strait.

Should there be a feasible solution, the study will look at timelines for delivery and also assess if it provides the best value. National Grid has an agreement with Horizon to provide the connection to Wylfa Newydd by the mid 2020s.

The feasibility study agreement will be funded through the £3m design and development stage of the third crossing which is part of the two-year budget agreed by the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

The consultation looking at four possible options for a third Menai crossing closed on 9 March and all responses are currently being evaluated.

Economy and Transport Secretary, Ken Skates said:

"The Welsh Government has made known its ambition for a shared third Menai Crossing and this feasibility study will now examine in detail the potential opportunities, challenges and obstacles to making that vision a reality.

"Any solution must of course be fit for purpose, not only to deliver a safe electricity connection but to protect the environment around it and provide the best value for money for the taxpayer.

"We have held constructive discussions with National Grid to explore if a third Menai crossing could be utilised to carry power onto the national grid, including from the proposed Wylfa Newydd, and today's announcement is a step forward establishing if this is possible.

"The third Menai Crossing is a huge investment project which has the potential to make a big difference in supporting the needs of communities and visitors, tackling congestion issues and providing a boost to the economy.

"The Welsh Government has an ambitious programme for transport improvements over the coming years and a third crossing over the Menai Strait is a key part of our plans."

Gareth Williams, Senior Project Manager, National Grid said:

“We are pleased to be working with Welsh Government to look at the possibility of placing cables to connect Wylfa Newydd over the proposed third crossing of the Menai Strait. The project could present challenges in terms of construction programme, cost and technical delivery and we will examine these to see if they can be overcome.

“In tandem, we’ll continue to move ahead with our current plans for a tunnel as our customer, Horizon requires a connection by the mid 2020s. It will be vital that we deliver a reliable connection on time to unlock the billions of pounds of investment Wylfa Newydd will bring for North Wales.”

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Finance Secretary announces £260m for infrastructure investment

The funding announcement comes as the Finance Secretary will publish a mid-point review of the Welsh Infrastructure and Investment Plan, which highlights how the Welsh Government has invested £9bn in new hospitals, schools, houses and transport links since 2012, in the face of ongoing

austerity.

The new capital will fund a range of infrastructure investments, including active travel, next generation broadband, the NHS all-Wales capital programme, school community hubs throughout Wales and the Tech Valleys programme, which is part of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys and the Economic Action Plan.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“I am pleased to announce this additional capital funding, which will help us to continue to deliver ambitious infrastructure projects throughout Wales.

“Our aim is to ensure our infrastructure investment contributes to the growing Welsh economy and helps to deliver prosperity for all.”

Speaking about the mid-point review of the Welsh Infrastructure and Investment Plan (WIIP), which will be published Tuesday May 1, he added:

“The mid-point review is an opportunity to look back at what we’ve achieved since the WIIP was published in 2012. But it also provides a timely opportunity to consider the future direction of our infrastructure investment.”

Since the publication of the WIIP in 2012, the Welsh Government has invested £9bn of capital funding in infrastructure in Wales and developed new innovative finance initiatives, including the new Mutual Investment Model, to complement conventional capital funding.

The £266m of new capital will build on this work and help to meet the needs of present and future generations. The investment is aligned to the commitments in the programme for government Taking Wales Forward and Prosperity for All.