

Welsh Government focuses on low carbon transport

This is the first of two “Opportunities in Ultra Low Carbon Emission Transport and Local Mobility” events, and will be held in Wrexham Glyndwr University. The second will be in Cardiff’s Sophia Gardens at the end of February.

Opening the event, Transport Minister Ken Skates said:

“These conferences are important, as they focus on our commitment to reducing our carbon emissions in Wales.

“Our Environment Act sets out a clear pathway to a low carbon Wales, within the context of existing UK and international obligations, with a reduction in emissions of at least 80% by 2050.

“Decarbonisation has a significant place in our new Economic Contract, which is part of our innovative Economic Action Plan.

“Its purpose is to support delivery of Prosperity for All, our national strategy for Wales. The Plan sets out the pathway for transition to a low-carbon economy. It specifically commits us to leading the way in decarbonising our transport networks and improving the air quality of the communities they serve.

“In Wales, as part of our consultation on ‘Achieving a low-carbon pathway to 2030’ we included a range of Transport specific ideas, such as encouraging electric vehicle take-up by developing the charging network and providing in-city incentives.

“We also reinforced our commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of taxis and buses to zero within ten years, included ideas for increasing cycle use and better understanding of the relationship between speed limits and emissions.

“We have committed to providing £2 million to help secure a network of rapid electric vehicle charging points throughout Wales, and we are engaging with a range of stakeholders to identify the priorities for deploying delivery options.

“However, whatever we may seek to do, people are core and fundamental to achieving this. By working together we will find solutions important for Wales and take account of influences and what they will mean for future car ownership and personal mobility forming part of the equation we need to absorb.”

Welsh Government host public events in Mid Wales to tackle obesity as part of new plan

The Welsh Government has launched a new plan to help people in Wales maintain a healthy weight and wants to hear the people of Wales' views on the actions proposed.

Launched by Health Minister Vaughan Gething '[Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales](#)' is an online consultation with a series of engagement events across Wales.

A number of events will take place in Mid Wales in February including a public launch on Monday 11 February at the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells starting at 6:30pm, where people will have an opportunity to hear more about the proposals as well as share their own ideas on how to best tackle obesity in Wales.

Information and representatives will also be on hand in the following locations to capture people's views:

- Wednesday 13 February, between 10:30am-11:30am – Newtown Integrated Family Centre, Park Street, Newtown
- Friday 15 February, between 9am-12pm – Aberystwyth University Students' Union
- Friday 15 February, between 2pm-5pm – Aberystwyth town centre, located on A487 opposite Barclays Bank and Lloyds Pharmacy
- Saturday 16 February, between 9am-3pm – Bear Lanes Shopping Centre, Newtown, located near Broad Street entrance

Being overweight increases the risk of developing major health conditions such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. It is also a risk to people's mental health leading to low self-esteem, depression and anxiety.

Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, said:

"This is an issue we simply cannot ignore, it is the greatest public health challenge facing our generation and I urge people to engage fully with this consultation.

"Tackling the root causes of why people become overweight is complex; it will require intervention at every level. We are under no illusion – there is no quick fix or easy solution to this problem. The proposals outlined are based on the best evidence available of what could work to turn the tide on obesity."

Stuart Bourne, director of public health for Powys Teaching Health Board, said:

“I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales consultation and encourage everyone with an interest in health and wellbeing to get involved. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of developing serious health conditions, including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers.

“With over a quarter of four to five year olds and nearly two thirds of adults being either overweight or obese, it is clear that this is a major priority for population health. A strong strategic approach involving partners and the public – nationally and locally – will be critical if we are to be successful in tackling obesity and its damaging effects on health and wellbeing.”

The proposals set out in the consultation have a strong focus on prevention and are supported by research and international evidence from Public Health Wales into what can help people maintain a healthy weight. Feedback from the public gathered during the consultation will be used to help inform the final Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy, due to be published in October 2019.

The consultation runs until 12 April 2019. To read the consultation document and proposals in full, as well as respond, visit <https://beta.gov.wales/healthy-weight-healthy-wales>.

[Joint statement by the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales](#)

We have repeatedly pressed the UK government to engage fully with us on its preparations for the UK leaving the EU and we will continue to contribute as fully as possible to the work of the European Union Exit and Trade (Preparedness) Committee over the coming weeks.

We are particularly keen to do so to press home the point that all the evidence we have seen to date suggests that the UK is simply not prepared for a ‘no deal’ Brexit in less than 2 months’ time. Our firm view is that such an outcome to the Brexit negotiations would be a catastrophe which would cause significant short-term disruption to the lives of ordinary citizens as well as to businesses and long-term harm to our economy.

And while a longer period to prepare for ‘no deal’ as proposed by some Conservative MPs might reduce the risk of people in Scotland and Wales being

unable to access the medicines that they need or the range of foods they want to buy, it would do nothing to mitigate the longer-term economic damage that such a radical rupture with our EU neighbours would cause. The jobs lost at Shaeffler in Llanelli and the cancelled investment at Nissan in Sunderland are just a foretaste of the future. The CBI has estimated a no deal Brexit could cost the Scottish economy £14 billion a year by 2034.

The House of Commons, National Assembly for Wales and Scottish Parliament have all rejected the Prime Minister's deal. It would make the UK as a whole poorer and would open the door to a "blind Brexit" with years of difficult negotiations on the future relationship and no guarantee a trade deal will even be concluded.

Alarmingly at this late hour, following its defeat, the UK government still appears unable to identify the "alternative arrangements" to the Irish backstop which it says would allow the House of Commons to vote for the deal. In addition the EU remains totally committed to the backstop, which it says will not be re-negotiated.

The point has been reached where there is now no time to waste. We therefore renew our call for the Prime Minister to make clear that she and her government will ensure 'no deal' is taken off the table. This should include putting forward secondary legislation now to remove 29 March 2019 as exit day from the EU (Withdrawal) Act.

The Prime Minister must also request an extension from the EU of the Article 50 deadline. We call on the Prime Minister to request such an extension immediately to put an end to the threat of the UK crashing out of the EU without a deal in only 8 weeks' time.

The EU has made it clear that in terms of negotiations on the future relationship, it would respond favourably if the Prime Minister was to drop her "red lines". We therefore further call on the UK government to abandon those red lines, which the EU has repeatedly said, severely restrict the possible outcomes of Brexit.

Funding changes to school building programme will help pressures on local authority budgets – Kirsty Williams

The proposed changes will see the Welsh Government increase its share of the funding through the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) from 75% to 81%. This means local authorities and further education institutions delivering the new buildings using the MIM will only pay 19% towards the annual ongoing costs of the design, construction, funding and maintenance of the new facilities.

This is the final step in a suite of changes to the funding provided by the Welsh Government in the 21st Century Schools and Education programme. When combined, these changes will allow local authorities and further education institutions to make better informed decisions about how they invest in school and college buildings in the longer term.

Minister for Education Kirsty Williams said:

“Our flagship 21st Century Schools and Education programme represents the largest investment in our schools and colleges since the 1960s.

“Changing the intervention rate will provide our delivery partners with vital support in these times of austerity and help us to attain our goal of creating sustainable learning environments across Wales, which also cater for the wider needs of our communities.”

Minister for Finance Rebecca Evans said:

“This is a real opportunity to help transform learning environments across Wales. These changes will help to release additional funding in local authorities in these times of austerity.”

Welsh charity funding announced on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

The funding announcement marks International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation which raises awareness of FGM – a human rights violation and crime.

In Africa, more than three million girls are estimated to be at risk from FGM each year and around 200 million women and girls worldwide are living with the consequences of genital mutilation.

It is estimated 137,000 women and girls in the UK are living with FGM.

On Monday, FGM experts warned the BBC’s Victoria Derbyshire show that FGM is increasingly being performed on babies and infants in the UK. The claim comes just days after the UK saw its first conviction for FGM.

Complications from the procedure can be life-altering, including; sepsis, infertility and the need for further surgery to enable childbirth.

The funding from the Welsh Government's Wales for Africa scheme has been awarded to Hayaat Women Trust who work to support and empower less advantaged people in Welsh communities and in Somaliland.

The project aims to amplify the actions of 21 trained young female activists in Somaliland. Through social action they'll work towards a nation-wide anti-FGM campaign advocating for the abandonment and criminalisation of FGM in Somaliland.

In a statement to the Welsh Assembly today (Wednesday 6th) the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt, called on Assembly Members to affirm that Wales will not stand by.

She said:

"Female Genital Mutilation is a form of abuse, inflicted upon children who cannot say no. Justification of FGM needs to be challenged and this can only be done through policy and societal change – which this project will push for.

"It's warming to see local Welsh charities being able to significantly benefit others who are at serious risk of harm, whilst enhancing themselves and our communities in the process.

"Our national strategy for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence commits the Welsh Government to challenging cultural attitudes which can underpin traditional yet harmful practices like FGM. We are doing this by working with specialist BME services, and through our communications campaigns."

Fowzia Ali from Hayaat Women Trust said:

"About 98% women in Somaliland have undergone Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting – one of the highest rates in the world.

"FGM is an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls – an enduring form of gender-based violence fuelled by social norms and misinterpretation of religious teachings.

"The practice puts millions of girls and women at risk of uterine infections and HIV transmission on a mega scale whilst imprisoning its survivors to lifelong psychological trauma, untold suffering and is the main culprit for the staggeringly high maternal and intrapartum mortality rate.

"Our project TuWezeshe Akina Dada: Wales is a youth-led awareness

raising campaign amplifying the voices of young women in Wales and many regions of Somaliland against FGM. We'll work via an Africa-UK young women's leadership movement which aims to empower a generation of African and African diaspora young women to become effective leaders against sexual and gender based violence."

Announcing the grant awardees, the Minister for International Relations, Eluned Morgan, said:

"The Wales for Africa programme has gone from strength to strength, especially with small grants like the one we are announcing today, transforming lives.

"I'm proud that through projects like these we can continue to build relationships between Wales and Africa, not only improving lives in Africa, but also bringing benefits to Wales by allowing volunteers to exchange skills and have life-changing experiences."

The Wales for Africa Small Grants scheme is a flagship initiative enabling organisations across Wales to access funding for projects which contribute to Wales' delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.