

Insurance company creates 70 new jobs in Cardiff

The jobs are with insurance broker and price comparison provider Assured Futures, who developed the UK's first online comparison of health insurance products over 10 years ago.

The company also provides comparison services for income protection and life insurance products, including over 50s life insurance, with their technology powering some of the UK's leading price comparison websites, including Comparethemarket, Moneysupermarket and Money.co.uk.

Assured Futures already employs over 100 staff at its head office in Cheltenham. Their new presence in Cardiff is part of the company's continued growth as it looks to expand its current services and develop new products.

The new office in Wales will see Assured Futures joining an already buoyant insurance sector along with other world renowned names such as Admiral, Aon, Legal & General and Zurich.

Indeed a recent report by the Association of British Insurers estimated that the insurance and long-term savings sectors employs 8,000 people in Cardiff alone, contributing almost £645 million to the region's economy in 2015.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

I am delighted that following Welsh Government support, Assured Futures has made the decision to expand its operation into Wales, creating an additional 70 jobs in Cardiff's already thriving insurance sector.

With over ten years experience, and as a leader in the comparison website field, we are very pleased to welcome them, and wish them a long and successful future in Wales.

Ian Sawyer, Managing Director at Assured Futures said:

I am delighted to see us expanding our business into Wales in what is a hugely exciting period for Assured Futures. We see Cardiff as the ideal location to continue our growth with its strong history in the insurance and finance sector and talented and experienced workforce in this sector.

We are grateful to the Welsh Government for the support they have provided to us, which was a determining factor in our decision to Cardiff as the location for our new office and look forward to what we can achieve in the coming years.

Finance Secretary announces new Landfill Disposals Tax Community Scheme for Wales

The scheme will go live on 1 April when landfill disposals tax is introduced in Wales. A total of £1.5m will be available to projects every year for the next 4 years from the revenue raised by the new devolved tax.

The scheme will fund environmental and community projects, which support biodiversity, waste minimisation and the diversion of waste from landfill, and wider environmental enhancements in areas up to five miles around a landfill site or waste transfer station.

Professor Drakeford said:

“The Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme recognises there can be a negative impact for communities through the disposal of waste.

“Funding from the scheme will directly benefit the environment for those who live near a landfill site helping to offset the impact of waste to landfill.

“Grants of £5,000 to £50,000 will be available to projects in 2 bidding rounds every year and one project will receive funding of up to £250,000 a year.”

Record numbers of front-line staff working in Welsh NHS

The figures have been welcomed by Health Secretary Vaughan Gething, who said the increase is a clear demonstration of the Welsh Government’s commitment to Wales’ National Health Service.

The statistics show that there are now more than 90,000 people (headcount) employed by the NHS in Wales, up 1,880 (2.1%) since 2016 – a record high.

They also show the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) directly employed NHS staff increased by 1,629 (2.1%) over the last year to 77,917, up

from 76,288 in 2016.

The statistics also show:

- The number of FTE hospital consultants was 2,466, up by 97 (4.1%) from 2,369 in 2016 – a record high
- The number of FTE qualified nurses, midwives and health visitors was 22,612, up 134 (0.6%) from 22,479 in 2016 – a record high
- The number of FTE ambulance staff was 2,084, up by 39 (1.9%) from 2,045 in 2016 – a record high
- The number of FTE scientific, therapeutic and technical staff was 12,799 – up by 370 (3.0%) from 12,429 since 2016 – a record high.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“I’m really pleased there is now a record number of staff working in the Welsh NHS, a clear demonstration of this government’s commitment to our health service. More qualified nurses, more hospital consultants and more ambulance staff is evidence of a government that is investing in the future of its health service.

“The good progress we’ve made around staffing, announced today, is a positive, but we recognise there’s always more work to be done. That’s why we’re investing in the education and training of healthcare professionals in the Welsh NHS, ensuring we develop the workforce of the future.

“I’ve also confirmed that NHS bursaries for student nurses, midwives and allied health professionals in Wales will continue – demonstrating our commitment to ensuring the health service has the staff its needs for the future.

“Through our successful Train, Work and Live campaign, we will continue to do all we can to encourage more health professionals to Train, Work and Live in Wales.”

Education Secretary launches new Foundation Phase Excellence Network

The Foundation Phase Excellence Network brings together leading figures from across the education spectrum to ensure a more structured approach to develop Foundation Phase practitioner support for those working with children age three to seven.

With the aim of inspiring young minds together, and supported by £1million

Welsh Government funding, the network will include representation from local authority education services, schools and child care settings that deliver the Foundation Phase, regional consortia, Higher Education and third sector organisations which will work together to share expertise, experience, knowledge and best practice.

A new online community learning zone has also been established to facilitate the sharing of information, resources and research between practitioners. The zone will also host 20 new case studies including three short films which showcase effective practice in Foundation Phase.

They have been produced by working collaboratively with schools and settings from across Wales in five key areas of practice: child development, environment experiences, leadership, pedagogy and Welsh language. The case studies will be available on the new zone during March and April.

Welcoming the launch, Kirsty Williams said:

“Building on similar models to our already successful National Network for Excellence in Mathematics and National Network for Excellence Science and Technology, this new Foundation Phase network will support workforce and leadership development, boost the research capacity of the education profession in Wales and ensure that implementation of the Foundation Phase happens in a consistent and effective manner.

“Practitioners in the Foundation Phase are doing an incredible job, one of the toughest but most rewarding jobs around, and they deserve all our support. This network and its supporting online resources are just the start of a new level of professional development in Foundation Phase for school settings.

“This development goes to the heart of what our national mission and the new curriculum is about – raising standards, reducing the attainment gap and delivering an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence.”

The new online community learning zone is hosted on the Welsh Government’s learning platform – Hwb – and can be accessed here: <http://hwb.gov.wales/fpen>

Continued funding for British Transport Police

The continuing revenue grant funding will see £265,000 in 2018-19, £273,000

in 2019-20 and £281,000 in 2020-21 going to British Transport Police to fund their existing additional operational personnel operating in the Welsh Sub Division.

Welsh Government has also approved additional grant funding of £194,000 for the first year (2018-19) and £196,000 for a second year (2019-2020) for a pilot scheme to expand neighbourhood policing at Rhyl, Tenby and Machynlleth and surrounding railway routes.

At Tenby and Machynlleth, the PCSO's will be based alongside Home Office police for partnership working. At Rhyl, there will be a uniformed sergeant as well as PCSO's under the pilot scheme, which will be evaluated with a view to potentially renewing it.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Our railways are vital in keeping the country moving, whether it is to carry us to work, to socialise, or in our efforts to reduce the number of cars in our towns and cities.

"It is important to all rail users that they feel safe and the British Transport Police play a huge part in this.

"By expanding neighbourhood policing at Rhyl, Tenby and Machynlleth, we will be looking after passengers on even more of the Arriva Trains Wales lines.

"Our funding has helped BTP, who considerably exceeded their crime reduction target over the last three years, out-performing other BTP areas and Home Office forces, and winning a number of awards. The holder of the forthcoming new Wales and Borders franchise will be expected to continue the tripartite funding contribution currently provided by Arriva Trains Wales."