

Organisations to benefit from Wales for Africa grant

The Welsh Government's Wales for Africa Grant Scheme provides funding for community groups and organisations in Wales with links to projects in Africa.

Over 15 organisations in Wales will share the grant funding for projects that will improve health and education, improve livelihoods and tackle the effects of climate change in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Wales for Africa Small Grants scheme is a flagship initiative of the Welsh Government's Wales for Africa programme. The scheme enables organisations in Wales to access funding of up to £5,000 for small-scale projects that contribute to Wales' delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

One project benefiting from a £4,900 grant is Zanzibar Mental Health Shamba who, through education and training, are seeking to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health problems in both Zanzibar and Wales.

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

"The Wales for Africa programme has gone from strength to strength, with small grants, like the one we are announcing today, transforming lives – from reducing infant mortality rates in Uganda to increasing the number of children who stay in school.

"I'm proud that through these projects we 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."

Mike Greenwood, Secretary of the Machynlleth-based group said:

"We're excited to have been awarded this grant. Zanzibar has a very different approach to mental health and whilst there is terrible stigma attached to the condition there, they actually have better recovery rates from severe mental illness than we do. We have a lot to share and learn."

Another project to benefit is Zimbabwe Newport Volunteering Association, who through volunteer work and the creation of youth clubs will help to empower young people of Mufakose to be aware of global issues, whilst promoting sustainable development goals.

The scheme is administered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action WCVA on behalf of the Welsh Government.

Agreement to boost transport connectivity in North Wales and North of England

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) broadly sets out the working relationship between the two organisations with the aim of ensuring that each other's work supports and complements transport movements between the North of England and North Wales.

As part of the agreement, a "West and Wales Transport Forum" will be established which will bring together key transport stakeholders on both sides of the border including the Welsh Government, UK Government and Transport for the North to support a co-ordinated approach to the sequencing of strategic transport investments that impact on both regions.

The updated MoU will further cement the current joint working arrangement and drive a shared common vision for a vibrant, sustainable and growing economy.

It also sets out both parties' commitment to engaging and collaborating to ensure that views and objectives are taken into account in the development and delivery of the Welsh Government's Transport Strategy and Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan and Investment Programme – which are set to be considered this week.

The MoU will be vital in helping deliver improved outcomes for passengers, freight and all transport users between the North Wales and the North of England as well as furthering transport improvements which will boost economic growth in both regions.

Welsh Government Minister for Economy and Transport and Minister for North Wales, Ken Skates said:

"The Welsh Government has a clear vision of creating a sustainable, efficient and quality integrated transport network which will connect people, communities and businesses to jobs, facilities and services.

"Each and every day thousands of people cross each side of the border for work and leisure purposes meaning investment in one region can affect economic outcomes on the other. It is therefore vital we continue and strengthen our close working relationship

with Transport for the North to realise how strong cross-border transport links can ensure the benefits of improved connectivity are felt jointly in Wales and the North of England.

“The updated Memorandum of Understanding will help us maximise opportunities to provide a boost to the economy and enable both parties to continue a collaborative approach on transport initiatives that are of mutual interest for the benefit of the travelling public.

“It’s also great news the West and Wales Transport Forum will be established which will be vital in bringing key transport partners together with the aim of securing cross-border transport improvements. I’m pleased the Secretary of State for Wales has agreed for the UK Government to be represented on the forum and potential opportunities for investment in rail infrastructure can be discussed first hand.”

Barry White, chief executive of Transport for the North, said:

“Our partners came together to create Transport for the North in order to better understand where the opportunities are across the region, and how best we can use transport to bring them together.

“We know these opportunities aren’t just confined to the North and that a truly integrated transport system doesn’t recognise borders and the people and business that cross them. We want a transport system that is world-leading, coordinated, and puts people first. This aspiration is an integral part of our Strategic Transport Plan – specifically our West & Wales Corridor – which will look to support growth in the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zones, the Atlantic Gateway, the North Wales Arc, the Port of Liverpool, and the Crewe HS2 Hub among many others.

“That is why I’m delighted to have signed our Memorandum of Understanding with the Welsh Government. The North of England and North Wales in particular have so much potential that we all want to unlock. Doing this will be an integral part of re-balancing the UK’s economy.”

UK Government Minister for Wales Nigel Adams said:

“The UK Government is actively committed to improving cross-border transport services between Wales and England and I look forward to working with this Forum and its members over the coming months. We will engage with all stakeholders and focus on the opportunities and challenges that exist on cross border transport and we will together deliver the maximum impact and benefit for local users and the wider economy.”

[New GP indemnity scheme in Wales moves a step closer](#)

Speaking at the Welsh NHS Confederation annual conference today in Cardiff, the Health Minister confirmed NHS Shared Services Partnership – Legal and Risk Services as the partner to operate the Future Liability Scheme (FLS) from April 1 this year. They currently manage the indemnity arrangements for GPs working out of hours and secondary care indemnity.

The Future Liability Scheme (FLS) will be aligned as far as possible to the scheme announced in England. This will ensure GPs in Wales are not at a disadvantage relative to those in England. It will also ensure GP recruitment and cross border activity will not be adversely affected by different schemes operating in England and Wales.

The scheme will cover clinical negligence liabilities arising from the activities of all contractors who provide primary medical services. This includes GP practice staff and other medical professionals such as salaried GPs, locum GPs, practice pharmacists, practice nurses, healthcare assistants.

The Health Minister, Vaughan Gething said:

“This new scheme will provide greater stability and certainty for GPs in Wales. It will support GP practices and primary care clusters in their delivery of sustainable and accessible health care.”

The confirmation of NHS Shared Services Partnership – Legal and Risk Services to operate the FLS scheme has been welcomed by GPC Wales and NHS Wales, who have worked with Welsh Government in developing the scheme.

Dr Charlotte Jones, Chair of GPC Wales, said:

“GPC Wales supports the Welsh Government’s decision for Legal and Risk Services to operate the future liability scheme from 1 April 2019. The proposed scheme will address one of the biggest financial pressures on GPs, and will enable all GPs, practice teams and wider cluster healthcare professionals to work more closely together taking forward the transformation of Welsh primary.”

Anne Louise Ferguson, Director of Legal Services, NHS Shared Services Partnership – Legal and Risk Services, said:

“NHS Shared Services Partnership Legal and Risk Services is looking forward to providing a high quality service for GPs in Wales which will build on our success in the delivery of secondary care indemnity.”

54 new classrooms for schools across Wales to reduce classroom sizes

The new classrooms will be provided to schools that have the largest infant class sizes, and also which have high levels of deprivation and/or additional needs.

The £36m fund is made up of £16m of revenue to assist local authorities in recruiting additional teachers, and £20m of capital which will allow local authorities to build additional classrooms and learning space that are needed to reduce infant class sizes.

Announced in April last year, the revenue element of the grant is funding over 90 additional teachers and over 20 additional teaching assistants in schools throughout Wales, laying the groundwork to reduce infant class sizes.

Today, the Education Minister visited Llanharan Primary School in Rhondda Cynon Taff where work to build a two classroom extension is due to begin in April, giving pupils more space to learn. The school is also benefiting from an additional teacher and a teaching assistant through the funding.

Llanharan Primary school was a prime candidate for the funding, as it has 2 infant classes with over 29 pupils, and has above the national average levels of free school meals.

Kirsty Williams said:

“The issue of class sizes has always been a cause for concern for parents and teachers. I’m therefore delighted to announce capital funding for an additional 54 classrooms to reduce infant class sizes.

“Combined with the £16m we have already invested in appointing over 90 new teachers, this funding will benefit over a 100 schools across Wales.

“Taken into context with our wider reforms of strengthening initial teacher training and professional learning, and doing away with unnecessary bureaucracy, this will make a real difference on the front line; ensuring that every child gets the best start in life.

“By providing schools with new classrooms and additional teachers we can allow teachers to devote more time and attention to individual pupils.

“Not only is this beneficial for the pupil and the teacher, but to the school’s ability to improve as a whole; a central part of our national mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap, and deliver an education system which is a source of national pride and confidence.

[Rough sleeper count shows support is vital – Julie James](#)

“Although the annual estimates of the number of people sleeping rough in Wales have shown no significant increase compared to the same time last year, we all know from walking through our towns and city centres that this most visible form of homelessness remains persistent in Wales, and there is much more for us all to do.”

The Rough Sleeper Count is an estimate of the number of people sleeping outdoors over a two week period and over a one night period in Wales. Local authorities estimate that the figures show an additional two people sleeping rough over the two week period compared to the same time less year, an increase of less than one per cent to 347 people.

Local authorities reported 158 people sleeping rough on the night of the snapshot count, a decrease of 16 per cent or 30 people, on the previous year. However bad weather was reported across Wales on the night of the count which may have affected figures.

Across Wales there were 184 emergency bed spaces on the night of the snapshot count, of which 18 per cent or 33 bed spaces were unoccupied and available.

Julie James said:

“While we have to be cautious about these estimates, the number of people sleeping rough appears to be stabilising overall and in some areas numbers appear to actually be decreasing.

“We are investing more than £30m this year and next year to prevent and tackle homelessness. We are committed to building more affordable housing and protecting our social housing stock.

“We will continue to trial the Housing First model in various pilots across Wales, supported by over £700,000 of additional funding. These projects are in their early days but we are already seeing signs of success with people who have been sleeping rough for a long time supported into housing.

“I recently visited the Salvation Army Housing First project in Cardiff and met someone who has been successfully housed through the project. He told me about the dramatic difference it has made to his life and what it means to have his own home again. The reasons people find themselves sleeping rough can be complex and varied; we are committed to ensuring that everyone in Wales has a home that meets their needs.”