

£8.3m EU-backed investment to meet local business needs

The package will enable the development of new business premises to support local demand in existing ventures as well as creating new employment opportunities.

The £12.7m Kingsway scheme in Swansea, backed with £4.5m EU funds, will provide 850m² of office space targeted at the digital sector, paving the way for the development of a digital village in the city centre.

The space will accommodate existing technology businesses and new start-up companies growing out of the expanding higher education sector in Swansea and the surrounding area.

In Robertstown, Aberdare, a £3.9m scheme to construct 11 new business units will get underway to accommodate local demand. Made possible with £2.5m of EU funds, the units will be located on a brownfield site, formerly a goods yard, next to Aberdare train station and Coleg y Cymoedd.

In Caerphilly, £2m will be invested at the Lawns Industrial Estate, Rhymney, including EU funding of £1.3m to build 10 new units and associated infrastructure on the site where there are already 21 fully occupied industrial units and a substantial waiting list.

The development is aimed at meeting local demand for the expansion of this industrial estate in central Rhymney with close proximity to key local facilities and strategic road and rail links.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford, said:

“I’m delighted to see EU funds being invested in projects to support sustainable business growth and create employment opportunities where they are most needed. These projects are part of our wider commitment to making Wales a more prosperous and secure place to live and work”.

This announcement builds on the work of the Welsh Government’s Valleys Taskforce and the priorities highlighted in the Our Valleys, Our Future delivery plan, including a commitment to close the employment gap between the South Wales Valleys and the rest of Wales.

Councillor Sean Morgan, Caerphilly Council’s Deputy Leader said:

“This investment is excellent news for the economy of the Caerphilly county borough and, most importantly, it will bring much-needed employment opportunities to the Upper Rhymney Valley.

The council is committed to regenerating its local communities and these new industrial units will deliver quality premises where businesses will be able to thrive.”

Leader of Swansea Council, Rob Stewart, said:

“This is good news and a further vote of confidence in the city. The funding will help with delivery of our new city centre and also help with the delivery of the Digital District on the Kingsway which is a key Swansea specific city deal project.”

Councillor Robert Bevan, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council’s Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Housing, said:

“I welcome this significant funding secured by the council from the European Regional Development Fund, which will help kick-start this strategic project in the Cynon Valley.”

The schemes will be delivered by the City and Council of Swansea, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council who will also invest the remainder of the funding.

Bright outlook for Silverlining

A company which designs and produces some of the world’s finest furniture and bespoke interiors is one of a number of businesses joining Welsh Government on a vital trade mission to Hong Kong and Shanghai next month.

Silverlining, based on Wrexham Industrial Estate, is going from strength to strength, looking to double its workforce over the next five years from 70 to 130 people.

The company is unique, designing, delivering and fitting bespoke ultra-luxury interiors and as a result of its success is now considering setting up its own Academy to train its future workforce.

It exports 98% of its products and will be joining the Welsh Government’s Hong Kong and Shanghai trade mission in March to showcase its exclusive products. It has previously attended a number of trade exhibitions with Welsh Government support.

Silverlining has won orders from all over the world, usually by referral as a result of work already undertaken and repeat orders, with most projects worth

over £2m.

The factory combines advanced manufacturing with traditional cabinet making skills. Examples of the unique work includes horse hair braided into speakers; leather which is embossed, finished and patterned for a floor in Singapore; straw marquetry inlaid across a surface that shimmers under a finish which may take a year to complete.

Its current order books are full for over a year, and it often takes more than 18 months to deliver on a single project.

After outgrowing its previous base in Cheshire the company moved to the Wrexham Industrial Estate, and is now at the point where it is considering establishing an Academy to train and tutor the skills needed to maintain the company's exacting standards and world-wide reputation. The Academy will not only teach an array of operative skills including cabinet making, marquetry, leather work and finishing, but also design, drawing, project and business management and leadership skills to support the growth.

Silverlining CEO Mark Boddington said:

"I am committed to North Wales as the headquarters for my company and I am extremely confident that an unprecedented expansion will continue here. The UK is very good at niche advanced manufacturing and as a country we need to export more using these talents.

"When we moved to Wales I found the Welsh Government helpful, quick and responsive to our needs and understanding of our ambitions.

The skilled people I needed could be found locally and overall costs were cheaper."

Commenting on the company's exclusive products he said:

"If we simply inlaid wood it would be game over. We aim to be the very best in the world through a combination of creative design, innovative craftsmanship and advanced materials and technology— we believe we can become the Rolls Royce of the furniture business in the years ahead."

Economy and Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Silverlining is clearly a world class player at the very top of the furniture industry. It's good to see how it is planning to develop skills here in North Wales so it can expand further, and ensure the exceptionally high standard of their product continues.

"I welcome their commitment to the region and I am pleased to see

they are taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Welsh Government's trade missions. I wish them every success in Hong Kong and Shanghai"

[Access all areas – Cadw announce free entry on St David's day](#)

Sites including Caernarfon, Caerphilly and Kidwelly castles will be opening their doors to visitors without charge as part of Wales's celebrations of its patron saint, believed to have died on 1 March 589.

Free entry to its sites on St David's Day is part of Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service's continued efforts to enhance, expand and introduce new schemes and initiatives aimed at generating an interest, encouraging participation and improving access to Wales's heritage sites.

Schemes aimed at widening access to Cadw's heritage sites include:

- Free, educational visits – Schools, home educators and other qualifying learning groups can apply for facilitated or un-facilitated visits to a number of Cadw sites free of charge.
- Fostering families scheme – A partnership with Action for Children, foster children and the families who care for them can visit all historic monuments in Cadw's care free of charge by signing up to the Action for Children scheme. We also accept Maxcard holders.
- Timebanking scheme – A partnership with Spice Time Credit Network and Timebank UK, this scheme enables volunteers registered for these programmes, who work in support of their local communities, to 'spend' credits earned through time giving on visits to all monuments in Cadw's care.
- Cadw Rewards Scheme – Free, self-led supported visits to organisations working with families and individuals with complex needs are offered. This includes groups such as Local Authority family services teams, for individuals, families and/or groups working towards improving their circumstances; Rehabilitation charities, such as MIND and those supporting Dementia; Agencies involved in rehabilitation following drug and alcohol dependency; and Agencies supporting Back to Work initiatives
- Cadw Monument Pass – A new pass which will offer holders repeat access

to a site of their choice. The pass is part of an expansion to its membership product offer, in an aim to cater for a range of visitors' requirements, and a cost will apply. Applications for the pass can be made via the Cadw website, where full terms and conditions are also available.

Disabled visitors and their carers, children under 5, visitors to Open Doors events and community education and youth groups also enjoy free access to Cadw sites. Full details of all schemes are available on the Cadw website.

In addition to introducing schemes to widen access to heritage sites, investment has also been made to improve physical access at a number of Cadw sites. Over recent years bridges have been installed at Caernarfon and Harlech castles, both part of a World Heritage Site, offering an alternative to the previous staircase leading up to the entrance of both monuments, to improve accessibility to the sites. More recently a new lift has been installed at Criccieth Castle, offering more visitors the opportunity to view the interpretation and exhibitions at the new and enhanced visitor centre.

Lord Elis-Thomas said:

"Our patron saint was famous for advocating doing the little things. Opening our sites free of charge on March 1 serves both as a small thank you to those who have contributed to record visitor numbers over recent years, whilst providing others with an insight into what our majestic Cadw sites have to offer.

"Making sites as accessible and attractive to as many people as possible has been a real priority for Cadw, and with so many sites having recently taken great strides in achieving this.

"From Criccieth Castle to Castell Coch, I've had the enormous pleasure of seeing first hand improvements ranging from new visitor centres and vantage points to renovations, improved accessibility and cutting-edge displays— all delivered without detracting from the brilliance of the original buildings. We are so fortunate in Wales to have such a truly unique, world class offering and I'm pleased to see new programmes and initiatives being introduced to compliment this, encouraging yet more people to enjoy, understand and learn about Welsh history.

"Our heritage and our culture belong to us all and I look forward to joining people from across Wales in celebrating it, both on St David's day and beyond."

Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic environment service working for an accessible and well-protected historic environment. For more information, please go to [Cadw's website](#) (external link).

Recruitment events to identify skills talent for over 100 new vacancies coming to South East Wales

The establishment of this new £30m centre, which is receiving support from the Welsh Government, was announced by the First Minister last July and is expected to create 300 highly skilled and well paid jobs. These recruitment events are part of a local employment drive to help fill the first tranche of vacancies being created.

Supported by the Welsh Government, Coleg Gwent, Newport Job Centre, Careers Wales, and the Career Transition Partnership, the initial three CAF recruitment open days are being held as follows and people are being encouraged to go along:

- 1 March 2018 – Coleg Gwent (City of Newport Campus): 12:00pm – 7:00pm
- 7 March 2018 – Newport Job Centre (Charles Street):10:00am – 1:00pm
- 8 March 2018 – Careers Wales, Ystrad Mynach (Sue Noake Leisure Centre) 10:00am-2:30pm

The new assembly hub is being designed so that CAF can build a range of different trains, including diesel multiple units (DMUs), electric multiple units (EMUs), trams and high speed trains. The employment opportunities are wide ranging – from technicians, engineers and logistics specialists, through to production and testing operatives, to communications, payroll, finance, logistics and purchasing personnel.

Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Minister, Eluned Morgan said: “That Newport has been able to secure this new facility, against stiff competition from more than 100 other sites across the UK, is a major coup for the Welsh economy. In addition to bolstering our already impressive manufacturing sector, the job opportunities on offer present a massive boost to the local economy and I would encourage as many people as possible to attend these recruitment events because the scope of vacancies available is wide ranging.”

Richard Garner, CAF’s UK Director, said: “As a dynamic, people-focused and fast growing rolling stock business, we pride ourselves on sourcing the best talent and will invest in developing our people to maintain the high level of expertise and professionalism”.

“We firmly believe our people are our strength and everyone working for CAF plays a vital part in the success of the company. We are on the look-out for talented people to join our team and welcome applications from keen, motivated and enthusiastic individuals who relish responsibility and are looking for an exciting, challenging and rewarding career. In return for your hard work and commitment, you can expect to join a global brand at an

exciting time in our journey and the chance to develop your skills further in a supportive and collaborative working environment.”

The new facility, which will be the first of its type in Wales, will enable the Company to assemble, test and commission new vehicles and will have capacity to undertake future manufacturing projects as well as maintenance and servicing activities.

For more information about the recruitment events please email careers@cafrail.co.uk

[NHS Wales responds to busiest January on record](#)

NHS Wales Chief Executive, Andrew Goodall, said:

“Our latest figures show that last month was the busiest ever January on record for our A&E Departments. A&E attendance by those aged 85 and over, was the second highest ever for any month on record. Flu has also had an impact on capacity across our system with the highest rates for six years.

During this busy time, our NHS and social care staff have continued to deliver emergency and planned care with compassion and professionalism. I would like to thank them for their exceptional commitment and hard work during this extremely challenging period.

Despite the increased workload, their second highest month of activity on record, the Welsh ambulance service maintained its record of meeting the national target for responding to red calls in every month since the new response model began.

We have worked closely with health boards and partners to develop plans for the winter period, and invested an extra £60m to deliver emergency care and ensure planned care can continue. Despite increased pressure, the number of people having to wait more than 36 weeks for treatment actually decreased at the end of December and we expect to see reductions in waiting times up to the end of March. More cancer patients were treated within the target time in January to December 2017 than in any previous year.

We continue to invest in social services to support our healthcare system and despite the exceptional demand the numbers of Delayed Transfers of Care were the third lowest December on record. This month, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services

announced an additional £10m for social services to support people in their homes and communities and relieve pressure on the NHS.

We will continue to respond to areas of performance that need to be improved but despite record levels of demand on service, our staff have provided a resilient and professional response to support patients this winter.”