

Plans for a rail operator Welsh headquarters move closer

Following award of the contract for the Wales and Borders rail service and South Wales Metro to KeolisAmey last year, Keolis UK announced it will move its headquarters from London to a new office in Wales by 2019, and will relocate its global rail division from Paris to Wales by 2020.

This week the Minister met with Guillaume Pepy, Chair of Keolis parent company SNCF, in Cardiff Bay to discuss progress on the Keolis UK HQ move to Wales and further collaboration opportunities between Wales and France.

The Minister said:

“Guillaume Pepy has been instrumental in reforming the French railway industry since his appointment as Chairman of SNCF in 2008. He brings with him a great depth of experience in the rail industry and expertise in how new rail operators KeolisAmey, operating as Transport for Wales, will make a positive impact to our transport sector

“This partnership strengthens European economic links and I am delighted that work to move Keolis’ headquarters to Cardiff is progressing well . Working in collaboration with European transport industry leaders is key in helping us achieve our vision of creating a world class transport network of which the people of Wales can be proud.”

Guillaume Pepy said:

“I am very impressed by Wales’ determination to enhance the country’s future through a modern public transport system. SNCF is fully committed to supporting the success of this strategy.”

In addition to the Keolis commitment, Amey announced it will open a new design hub in Wales where it will offer consultancy services and further jobs will be created when the companies open a shared services and customer contact centre providing services to both businesses.

The £5bn investment committed as part of the new Transport for Wales passenger service agreement is set to create 600 new jobs, with 30 new apprenticeships to be created every year.

€1.9m EU funds to link communities in Ireland and Wales through stories of Celtic saints

St David, the patron saint of Wales, is commemorated in the city of St Davids, where he spent much of his life, whilst St Aidan is closely associated with Wexford, particularly in the town of Ferns. As well as enabling both communities to rediscover their shared heritage, the project aims to use this shared history as a way of attracting new visitors to these coastal communities.

Led by Pembrokeshire County Council, in partnership with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Wexford County Council and Visit Wexford, this cross border project will drive forward economic growth across the two regions through regeneration, cultural and educational projects and business to business mentoring.

It is claimed St Aidan travelled from Wexford to Pembrokeshire to study under St David for several years. This mentor relationship inspired St Aidan to return to Ireland to build his own monastery at Ferns. Both Ferns and St Davids have historically important cathedrals, the cathedral at Ferns is the smallest in Ireland and the cathedral at St Davids being a key tourist destination.

There are plans for the restoration of St Non's well at St Davids which is said to be the birthplace of St David, permanent artworks will be commissioned in both regions which will thematically correspond with each other. Schools will take part in a joint project to animate the story of the 2 saints, with pupils taking part in a visit to the partner country.

Jeremy Miles said:

“Ancient Connections is a great example of EU funds being used to benefit cross border areas in Ireland and Wales by encouraging visitors to find out more about our fascinating shared history. I'm delighted we've been able to fund this unique project which celebrates the ancient links between our 2 communities.

“By sharing knowledge and experience, we hope this will stimulate economic growth and create and safeguard jobs in the cultural, heritage and tourism sectors. In light of Brexit, it is more important than ever that we support and celebrate the strong links between our 2 countries.”

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe TD, said:

“I welcome the announcement of another project funded by the Ireland Wales Programme. The EU funding granted to Ancient Connections will promote understanding of our shared history and support tourism development to the benefit of both our countries.”

The Leader of Pembrokeshire County Council added:

“We are absolutely delighted to hear that we have been successful in our Ancient Connections grant application. This has been a truly collaborative piece of work with a great many partners in the private, public and third sectors working with us throughout the application process. We can now look forward to 3 years of exciting cultural, heritage, arts and community-based tourism development activity in Wexford and North Pembrokeshire which will help to attract more overseas visitors, particularly out of high season.”

[Welsh Government host public events in North Wales to tackle obesity as part of new plan](#)

In Wales 60 % of the adult population and 27% of four and five year olds are overweight.

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 in January, February and March.

The first events will take place in North Wales with a launch and public meeting at the Quay Hotel in Conway on Tuesday 29 January starting at 6:30pm. People will have an opportunity to hear more about the proposals as well as share their own ideas on how to best combat obesity in Wales.

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

- Tuesday 29 January, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Quay Hotel, Conwy
- Wednesday 30 January, between 9am-1pm – Conwy Farmers Market
- Thursday 31 January, between 9am-5pm – Bangor University
- Friday 1 February, between 10am-4pm – High Street, Bangor

- Saturday 2 February, between 10am-4pm – Queens Square, Wrexham

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.

Teresa Owen, Executive Director Public Health at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, said:

“Obesity is a major public health issue, with many people in North Wales struggling to maintain a healthy weight. The Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is working hard to review and implement new healthy weight approaches to support children and adults.

“In addition, teams are working with partners to encourage people to be more active, as part of the Let's Get Moving and Sport North Wales collaborative, so we welcome the opportunity to comment on the new Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Strategy and encourage other partners to be involved in the North Wales launch.”

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.”

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>.

Tourism funding to build better destinations

The funding has been made available through the Tourism Amenity Investment Support scheme (TAIS), 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.

The funding has been allocated to infrastructure projects across Wales which will see improvements to visitor amenities as well as products which help develop high quality destinations.

Deputy Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“This scheme is an excellent way for us to assist the tourism sector to make the improvements to local facilities and amenities, and I’ve seen the improvements made in many areas with the help of this funding over the past year. Facilities such as footpaths, toilets, signage, car parking are often only noticed when the provision is lacking or not up to scratch – which shows that they are an important part of the experience that people have of Wales. This is also an investment by the public sector for in amenities those who live in the area and will benefit locals and visitors alike. These projects also make it easier for local residents and visitors to become more active in Wales’ natural environment.”

The funding has provided an opportunity for local partners to identify a cluster of products which can make a difference in their area. Visitors expect the best quality in all aspects of their visit from the accommodation through to information provision, toilets and parking.

The projects include Improvements to cycle paths; Upgrades to access & facilities at blue flag beaches; Visitor parking; Signage and public conveniences and reflect local and regional destination activity as well as national priorities.

Specific examples include:

- Antur Stiniog Cyf, Llechwedd, Blaenau Ffestiniog New bike trail network with the addition of three new trails to the existing trail network at the Llechwedd site and develop and restructure one of the original trails to appeal to a wider market. There will be a new blue grade trail (1.4km long) to appeal families and beginners; a new red trail (1km long) suitable for intermediates, a new black section (0.7km) to link to the existing trail network.

- Dwr Cymru Cyf – Llyn Brenig Visitor Centre, Cerrigydrudion. The work will include the installation of cameras and supporting technology to provide access to high quality images of breeding ospreys. Access improvements surfacing 296m of existing forestry track at Llyn Brenig and Signage improvements including new directional exit route signage.
- Ceredigion, Gwynedd, Pembrokeshire & Powys County Councils This joint project will see the installation of ‘Smart’ CGI display screens on Traws Cymru T2 & T5 CGI Display Screens showing public information in seven strategic locations along the West Wales Coastal Corridor and at bus stops serviced by the Traws Cymru T2 & T5 bus routes, between Fishguard & Porthmadog.
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority – pilot a roll-out of drinking water fountains across seven key Pembrokeshire tourist destinations.
- Swansea Council To make the Blue Flag Caswell Bay, Gower an accessible destination for visitors with profound learning or physical disabilities. New facilities will include a modular Changing Places unit, complete with hoist, shower and changing bed, as well as specialist beach equipment, such as floating beach wheelchairs to allow easy access to the beach and water. A storage unit will also be purchased to store the new equipment safely.

All organisations have received a letter offering the funding through TAIS, these offers will be formally accepted over the next few weeks and a project plan put in place with the relevant managing authority.

[Powis Castle’s Book of Hours amongst collections being protected in Wales](#)

In total six Welsh institutions will benefit from conservation funding.

Successful projects also include shipping records held by Anglesey Archives; the records of the 41st Regiment at the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh in Brecon; the Barbier Archive preserved at Cardiff University; and an eighteenth century estate map from the collections of Powys Archives.

This funding forms part of a Welsh Government / NMCT partnership allocation of over £41,000 to conserve items currently held under restricted access because of their fragile condition, making them much more accessible to students, researchers and local users. Additional funding for these projects was also provided by the Colwinston Charitable Trust.

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Lord Elis-Thomas said:

“This partnership, established in 2008, has opened up access to

items and collections of national and international significance across Wales. This year's projects illustrate the wide ranging value of our archival heritage, from illuminated treasures such as the Powis Castle Book of Hours, to the records of our industrial past in North Wales."

"I'm very pleased that the Welsh Government have again been able to provide support for the preservation of this material, and am grateful to the NMCT Trustees and the Colwinston Charitable Trust for their support of archive conservation projects in Wales."

Professor David McKitterick, Chairman of NMCT, added:

"I am absolutely delighted that such a range of important collections will be conserved, thanks to the support of NMCT, the Welsh Government and the generosity of the Colwinston Trust. Our partnership with the Welsh Government has seen investment of nearly £300,000 in the conservation of Wales' written heritage since 2008 – and all of it is now publicly accessible thanks to our support."