

## People in residential care to keep even more of their money

The move is part of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government commitment to increase the capital limit used by local authorities who charge for residential care from £24,000 to £50,000 during the current Assembly term.

The increase is being delivered in a phased approach, which commenced from April 2017 when the limit in relation to residential care was increased to £30,000.

The capital limit determines whether a person pays for the full cost of their residential care, or whether they receive financial support towards the cost from their local authority.

There are up to 4,000 care home residents who pay for the full cost of their care. Increasing the capital limit to £50,000 has the potential to benefit a significant number of these, depending upon the value of the capital they hold.

Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"The Welsh Government is committed to supporting older people, and those requiring care, to live the lives they want to lead.

"We promised to more than double the capital people can keep when in residential care – freeing up more of people's money for them to use as they wish.

"We are now well on our way to delivering that pledge to the people of Wales. We know that well over 400 people are already benefiting from the increase in the limit, and we expect this to rise substantially when the limit is increased to £50,000."

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## Economy Secretary in Qatar to build trade links ahead of Cardiff to Doha flights

To further strengthen Wales's relationship with Qatar, the Economy Secretary is attending a Welsh Government business briefing being run in conjunction

with the British Embassy, Qatar Airways and Cardiff Airport and in parallel with the British Festival Qatar 2017.

The visit is part of the Welsh Government's ongoing work to help businesses in both Wales and Qatar capitalise on the trading and export opportunities associated with the launch of new daily, direct flights between Cardiff and Doha, which will begin in May.

The Economy Secretary said:

"This is my first visit to Qatar and I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the business community here about all Wales has to offer.

"Wales is an outward facing and welcoming nation, and we are proud of our strong record of welcoming high profile overseas investors and exporting quality goods all over the world.

"The launch of daily direct flights between Doha and Cardiff next year, along with the direct flights already operated between Manchester and Doha which serve the North Wales economy, offers us huge opportunities to strengthen the relationship between our two countries.

"I am optimistic that this visit, along with the trade missions that have already taken place, will help us to build new trade links, increase export levels and attract more inward investment opportunities in Wales, and I look forward to businesses in both our countries working closely and productively together in the months and years ahead."

The British Ambassador to Qatar, Mr Ajay Sharma, said:

"I am delighted to welcome Mr Skates, the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, to Doha to further strengthen the links between Wales and Qatar. The UK-Qatar relationship is extremely strong, and the new flights between Doha and Cardiff will grow that relationship further. It is important that all areas of the UK benefit from engagement with Qatar. I am sure that this visit will make a real difference to this agenda."

Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer, Mr. Ehab Amin said:

"We very much looking forward to the launch of our direct daily service to the Welsh capital next year, our first regular direct flight linking Wales and South-West England to our global hub in Doha. Cardiff is a strategically important destination for Qatar Airways, and the new route will most certainly benefit both leisure

and business travelers by connecting passengers to our expanding global network of more than 150 destinations.

“For Welsh businesses in particular, this new route will be extremely beneficial, as it will enhance investment and export opportunities by providing businesses with new links to markets around the world using our award-winning airline.”

Roger Lewis, Chairman of Cardiff Airport, stated:

“The new daily Qatar Airways service represents a pivotal moment for Cardiff Airport. The far reaching consequences of these flights for passengers and businesses across Wales and the South West of England are transformational.

“The service will bolster the critically important relationship between Qatar, Wales and the United Kingdom which is being substantially strengthened. I am confident Qatari businesses will make the most of the fantastic opportunities to develop trade and investment in the region, and look forward to welcoming more visitors through our airport from next May.”

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## [Environment Minister announces ambitious plans to improve air quality](#)

Environment Minister, Hannah Blythyn today emphasised the Welsh Government’s determination to take a lead on tackling air pollution by announcing four measures aimed at improving air quality in Wales.

Tuesday 05 December 2017

The Minister told Assembly Members she is taking action through an ambitious cross-Government programme of work.

This will include the publication of a Clean Air Plan for Wales in 2018 which will include:

- a Clean Air Zone Framework to ensure the consistent and effective implementation of Clean Air Zones by Local Authorities, wherever they are needed. The framework will ensure businesses and members of the public have a clear expectation of what a zone is and how they will be affected,
- improvements to Local Authority reporting on air quality issues in their

- areas and their plans to deal with them,
- the establishment of a National Air Quality Assessment and Monitoring Centre for Wales, to advise local and national government on the extent of poor air quality and the effectiveness of current and future actions. This will provide a continuous focus on achieving compliance with legal limits in specific hotspots whilst reducing exposure to pollution more widely,
- a re-launch of the Welsh Government’s Air Quality in Wales website with improved air quality forecasting capability, new sections for schools and health advice.

Hannah Blythyn said:

“Air quality in Wales is much cleaner than in previous decades. We must take further action now, though, because our understanding of the health effects of air pollution has greatly increased, it remains the biggest environmental risk to public health.

“Poor air quality is often considered to be just an environmental issue but it also has a significant impact on our natural resources and economy. We must tackle poor air quality from all possible angles.

“The actions that I have set out today demonstrate our determination for Wales to be a leader in delivering innovative and effective solutions to tackle air pollution, achieving clean air for all”.

The Minister also called on the UK Government to back up its commitment of phasing out new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040 with a concrete set of milestones to be achieved ahead of that date:

“This is a necessary and positive step, but 2040 is a long way off. I would, therefore, welcome Assembly Members’ support in calling on the UK Government to work closely with us to develop clear timescales for a progressive transition to zero emission road transport”.

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## Cabinet Secretary for Education announces new appointments to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

Kirsty Williams announced that the first of the new members, Sir Keith Burnett, Helen Marshall, Sarah John and James Davies, joined the Council on 1 December. The other new members, Lesley Davies, Aqil Ahmed, Christine Ennew and Robert Humphreys, will take up their roles early in 2018 as current members stand down.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I am very pleased to announce these new appointments to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, which are an important step in our proposals to reform the Post Compulsory Education and Training sector.

“We have taken the opportunity to refresh the current membership so it is better able to support HEFCW and the sector as we progress our plans to establish the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales.

“I was impressed with the quality of candidates and delighted that the exercise attracted such a strong and diverse field of candidates. It reassures our view that the reforms we are pursuing in Wales is the right approach for Wales and people want to be a part of it.

“I am delighted that we were able to appoint such high calibre candidates from the fields of HE, FE, industry, business and work-based learning – individuals who are highly regarded in their fields and who I know will make a valuable contribution to, and positive impact on, the work of the Council as we move forward.

“I look forward to working with the new members over the next few years and welcome their contribution to our work.”

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# Successful summer for Wales' tourism industry

The Tourism Industry Barometer shows that 42% of businesses surveyed have had more visitors than last year, while 39% reported a similar level. Food venues are doing particularly well with more than half (54%) feeding more people in 2017 than they did last year. In addition 50% of attractions and activity operators are seeing more visitors with 46% of those reporting an increase saying their own marketing has lifted their numbers. The survey also showed that businesses report more UK visitors – 39% of operators have noticed more British people enjoying their holidays and short breaks in Wales.

Following a strong year, expectations are running high for 2018. About half of respondents expect more visitors next year, and a further 45% expect the same level.

During a visit to the National Botanic Garden, the Tourism Minister, Dafydd Elis-Thomas, heard how, in line with these figures, the Garden has also had a very successful year – seeing almost a 25% increase in their visitors in 2017.

The Tourism Minister said:

“I’m delighted to take on the Tourism portfolio at a time when indications are very positive for 2017. In coming to the role I do not underestimate the extremely competitive market place we operate in but tourism in Wales is in a strong position, and these figures give a positive snapshot of how the industry has been performing. It’s great news that the Garden has also had a great year and hearing of the plans for future growth is further testimony to the confidence of the industry.”

Director of the National Botanic Garden, Huw Francis, said:

“If the present is anything to go by, the future of the National Botanic Garden looks very bright. The team here have been working very hard at broadening the Garden’s appeal and new developments are proving a big hit with local people and tourists alike.”

“With help from Welsh Government, we’ve invested in a new play park, a hay bale maze, water zorbing and a brand new tropical Butterfly House, the development of which created a huge amount of interest.

“This year, we’ve teamed up with award-winning Pembrokeshire Falconry to create the British Bird of Prey Centre which has helped with the further increase in footfall with daily flying displays of

amazing native birds of prey. And there's more to come. The target is for 10% year-on-year increases in visitors over the next five years."