

Welsh transport network ready for Winter

The winter of 2009/10 saw stocks at some local authorities reach crisis point, and Economy Secretary Ken Skates is keen to ensure Wales is fully prepared over the coming months, whatever the weather.

Mr Skates said:

“I’ve been on record more than once commending the excellent work that goes into keeping our roads as safe as possible 24/7, 365 days a year, with the winter period often the most challenging for all concerned.

“Whether it be at a local or national level, it’s vital for communities and economies across Wales to have the confidence to continue to go about their business safely and with minimal possible disruption. There are a number of measures in place to make this a reality.

“Replenishment of salt stocks throughout Wales has been undertaken to provide a total stock holding of 216,000t. Arrangements are in place to replenish these stocks as the need arises, with further salt reserves held by Welsh Government if needed.

“Thirteen new front line salt spreaders are available for use on the motorway and nearby trunk roads in advance of the winter season to further increase winter resilience, with all plant and equipment serviced to ensure everything is ready to go.

“Road side weather stations have also been serviced, with additional weather stations installed at beneficial locations for this winter season to ensure the most accurate weather and road condition information is available.

“This is all in addition to the usual patrols of trunk road before and after adverse weather to ensure drainage systems are working and our agreement with bus operators and others to notify Traveline Cymru immediately of any disruptions so that the public are notified at the earliest possible opportunity.”

On rail preparation for winter, the Economy Secretary said:

“Last year saw too many trains cancelled because of leaves on the track – something I felt National Rail and Arriva could have worked together better to prevent. While rail infrastructure is non-

devolved I have asked my officials to press Network Rail on maximising their use of the specialist Railhead Treatment Trains and to press Arriva Trains Wales on their rolling stock and train-crew availability.

“I understand that Network Rail in consultation with Arriva have already undertaken additional vegetation clearance to minimise the effects of leaf fall, while Arriva have confirmed they have put in place additional measures to ensure the maximum number of trains are available during the winter. I am hopeful that these measures will be successful in reducing disruption over the coming months.”

[Ysgol Eirias pupils share their views on ideas for new Welsh taxes with Finance Secretary](#)

The shortlist has been drawn up following feedback from the public about ideas for a new tax after the Finance Secretary said he would test the Wales Act 2014 powers, which allows Wales to propose new tax ideas in devolved areas.

Further work is being carried out on all four ideas – one will be proposed to the UK Government in the New Year to test the Wales Act mechanism.

During the visit to Ysgol Eirias, the Finance Secretary watched a short film made by year 10 pupils about why they believe a plastic tax is needed in Wales. He also discussed the other three tax ideas with them.

The Cabinet Secretary also took the opportunity to launch a two week social media campaign, including an anonymous poll, on the shortlist of new tax ideas.

Professor Drakeford said:

“The power to propose new taxes is an important one, which we can use to deliver improvements for our communities. In July, we started a national debate asking people to put forward ideas for potential new Welsh taxes and received a good response.

“In the draft Budget, I announced a shortlist of four ideas for further work. I was pleased to visit Ysgol Eirias today to watch a film prepared by pupils about why they believe a new Welsh disposable plastic tax is needed and to discuss the other ideas we

are considering with them.

“The film was very engaging and we had an interesting debate about how taxes change behaviour for the benefit of communities across Wales. I’d like to thank them for the time they took in preparing the film and for their welcome.

“Today, I also launched the Welsh Treasury’s social media campaign, including an anonymous poll, about the shortlist of four tax ideas. We have taken an open and balanced approach to our tax policy and want to build on this.

“We want to hear the views of as many people as possible and I urge people and stakeholders across Wales to get involved, share their views and help us shape future Welsh taxes.”

Tim Williams, the year 10 form teacher and teacher of religious studies at Ysgol Eirias said:

“As a school, we have placed a great emphasis on teaching our young people to try to live more sustainable lifestyles. The form class, 10W, also felt that it is important to try to reduce the amount of single-use plastic items littering our streets and getting into the oceans.

“When Mr Drakeford invited proposals on new ideas for Wales, the form realised there was a great opportunity here for Wales to be a world leader in sustainable living; that hopefully other countries will copy too.

“What an honour for us also to be part of the debate about the first new Welsh taxes created in Wales since the Middle Ages.”

For the latest news follow @WelshTreasury.

[Fewer people in Wales dying from heart disease – new report](#)

Cardiovascular (heart and circulatory) disease is the biggest killer in Wales, causing more than a quarter (27%) of all deaths, or over 9,000 deaths each year – an average of 25 each day.

There are an estimated 375,000 people living with cardiovascular disease in Wales – 4% of the population.

The Welsh Government's Annual Statement of Progress on Heart Disease reveals the rate of deaths for all heart conditions has fallen over the past five years. It shows:

- Over the last 20 years in Wales, there has been a 68% reduction in the rate of people dying from premature coronary heart disease, before the age of 75; Since 2009 alone, there's been a 20% reduction, due in part to the improved detection of heart disease amongst GPs, the ban on smoking in public places and other public health interventions, and better treatments within the NHS
- The number of people dying from a heart attack has fallen by 134 over the last five years, to 1,478
- The number of people dying from heart failure has reduced by nearly 40% in the last five years (by 192 deaths, to 332 deaths in 2015)
- There has been a steady reduction in the number of people dying from cardiovascular disease – with 1,000 fewer people a year dying compared to 5 years ago. In 2010 just over 10,000 people died from cardiovascular disease, by 2015 this had fallen to just over 9,000.

The report also shows:

- The Welsh NHS is treating patients quicker and closer to home: Through investments in community cardiology, health boards have all developed innovative approaches that allow patients to be diagnosed, assessed and where appropriate treated in their local community.
- A reduction in the number of people being treated for coronary heart disease: The number of people being treated by their GP for coronary heart disease has fallen gradually in recent years. Since 2008-09 there has been a reduction of 10,105 patients being treated by their GP for coronary heart disease
- More patients undertaking cardiac rehabilitation than ever before: Cardiac rehabilitation offers lifestyle advice and support, including guidance on diet and exercise. It helps people with heart disease to manage their condition and reduce the risk of repeat attacks and hospital readmissions. In 2015-16, 59% of eligible patients sought support following a procedure. This is a 17% increase on the previous year, when 42% of the patients eligible in Wales took part.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Heart disease is a major killer in Wales, particularly affecting our poorer communities, with 1 in 7 men and nearly 1 in 10 women dying from the disease.

“The report shows the Welsh NHS has made continued progress in improving the care of patients with heart disease. We've seen a steady decline in the rate of people dying from all cardiovascular disease, thanks to advances in the field of medicine and improvements in lifestyle behaviours which reduce the risk of developing or dying from cardiovascular disease. But the biggest reduction has been in the rate of people under the age of 75 dying

early from coronary heart disease, with a 68% reduction over the last 20 years.

“But we’re determined to improve this further. One avoidable death is one too many – we know there’s more to do in treating and preventing heart disease.”

First Minister appoints new Ministerial team

Dafydd Elis Thomas will join the Government as Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, with Ken Skates remaining as Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport.

Vaughan Gething remains Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, with Huw Irranca-Davies as his deputy as Minister for Children and Social Care.

Mark Drakeford remains Cabinet Secretary for Finance. Responsibility for Local Government moves to Alun Davies as Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, supported by Rebecca Evans, Minister for Housing and Regeneration.

Lesley Griffiths remains Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, with Hannah Blythyn joining the Government as Minister for Environment.

Kirsty Williams remains Cabinet Secretary for Education, with Eluned Morgan joining the Government as Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning.

Julie James joins the Cabinet as Leader of the House and Chief Whip, with responsibility for digital infrastructure and equalities.

Jeremy Miles will be nominated for the role of Counsel General, the Welsh Government’s chief legal advisor.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“I am proud to announce my new Ministerial team, which provides a balance of experience and stability, with new drive and energy.

“This strong team will drive forward our ambitious plans for Wales – focusing on growing the Welsh economy, creating jobs, supporting our public services and improving the day-to-day lives of the people of Wales.”

Ministerial portfolios and responsibilities:

- **First Minister of Wales**, Rt Hon Carwyn Jones
- **Counsel General Designate**, Jeremy Miles
- **Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services**, Alun Davies
- **Cabinet Secretary for Finance**, Mark Drakeford
- **Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services**, Vaughan Gething
- **Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs**, Lesley Griffiths
- **Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport**, Ken Skates
- **Cabinet Secretary for Education**, Kirsty Williams
- **Leader of the House and Chief Whip**, Julie James
- **Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport**, Dafydd Elis-Thomas (Deputy to Ken Skates)
- **Minister for Housing and Regeneration**, Rebecca Evans (Deputy to Alun Davies)
- **Minister for Environment**, Hannah Blythyn (Deputy to Lesley Griffiths)
- **Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning**, Eluned Morgan (Deputy to Kirsty Williams)
- **Minister for Children and Social Care**, Huw Irranca-Davies (Deputy to Vaughan Gething)

[Funding for CSOs to be extended](#)

£16.8 million has been allocated during 2018-19 to extend the project beyond the original commitment to fund 500 CSOs in addition to warranted police officers until March 2018.

The funding will be split amongst the four Welsh Police Forces and British Transport Police to cover the costs of the additional CSOs in their areas.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“The Welsh Government has been providing funding for an additional 500 Community Support Officers for several years and the scheme has been a success.

“The officers are highly visible in their communities, engaging with people, providing reassurance and tackling anti-social behaviour. They are playing a pivotal role not only in making our communities safer, but in making them feel safer.

“Continuing this funding beyond the original commitment represents a significant investment in community safety at a time of unprecedented pressure on public sector budgets, and on police funding in particular.”