

Report reveals 8 out of 10 shoppers prefer Welsh

These are some of the key findings of [a new report by Food and Drink Wales](#) on the 'Value of Welshness'. Others include:

- Shoppers outside of Wales believe Wales is known for good quality food and drink and would like to support Welsh food and drink. 29% would like to see more Welsh food and drink in their shops.
- Wales is more associated with naturalness than GB.
- The scope for growth in Welsh products is substantial and there is strong shopper support for food and drink from Wales. The evidence suggests Welsh branding sits well with, and enhances GB branding.

Promoting Welsh food and drink, both nationally and globally, is a top priority for the Welsh Government and increasing numbers of Welsh brands are being recognised around the world. This was highlighted by the recent BlasCymru / TasteWales event, which featured buyers from as far afield as Hong Kong, the UAE and the USA.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths welcomed the findings of the report. She said:

“In recent years Welsh food and drink has gained a growing and well-deserved reputation for uniqueness and high quality. This is reflected in the fact fourteen Welsh food and drink products have now been awarded coveted ‘Protected Food Name’ status.

“We have an ambitious target to grow the industry by 30% to £7bn by 2020. Although there are undoubtedly major challenges ahead, not least our impending exit from the European Union, I am confident we can overcome them if we continue to promote the unique, special nature of our produce.

“This report shows there is strong support for food and drink from Wales and there are definite benefits for Welsh brands by using “Welshness” to enhance their proposition inside and outside of Wales.”

Andy Richardson, Chair of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board said:

“It is very encouraging for us as an Industry Board to see that this research highlights the importance of Welsh provenance and underpins the confidence we have in our food and drink sector. We are proud of what our businesses produce and the research findings from the Value of Welshness is testimony that consumers feel the same.”

Avian Influenza – Winter 2017 / 2018

The UK is currently free from Avian Influenza (H5N8), but there is a constant risk the disease may arrive, especially now the bird migration season is underway. The current risk of incursion in the UK is **medium** for wild birds and **low** for poultry, although this depends on levels of biosecurity on individual premises.

The Chief Veterinary Officer is advising all poultry keepers in Wales, from small backyard flocks to large commercial premises, to review their biosecurity, sign up for disease alerts and register their birds with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). Keepers are also reminded they must report any unexplained deaths or sickness to their vet.

The advice from Public Health Wales is the risk to public health from Avian Flu remains very low and the Food Standards Agency has made clear the disease does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

The Chief Veterinary Officer said:

“The wild bird migration season is well under way. This means birds will be arriving into the UK from areas where we know Avian Flu is present.

“I can not stress enough the importance of poultry keepers continuing to practice the very highest levels of biosecurity. Even when birds are housed, there remains a risk of infection and keepers of poultry and other captive birds should ensure every effort is made to prevent contact with wild birds. The movement of poultry should be minimised, and clothing and equipment should always be disinfected.”

“If you are concerned about the health of your birds you should seek advice from your veterinary surgeon. If you suspect your birds have AI, you should report it to your local [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) (external link) office immediately.”

If members of the public find dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese or ducks) or gulls, or five or more dead wild birds of other species in the same location, they should report them to the Defra helpline on: 03459 33 55 77 or email: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk. This service covers the whole of GB.

All keepers are encouraged to register their poultry. It is a legal requirement to register if keepers have premises with 50 or more birds. Keepers of premises with fewer than 50 birds are encouraged to [register voluntarily](#) (external link).

Keepers are advised to sign up for [disease alerts](#) (external link).

More information on Avian Influenza, the current situation in Wales and across the UK and advice for backyard keepers, including on biosecurity is available on the [Welsh Government's website](#).

[Accelerated Growth programme creates 2000 jobs in Wales](#)

Launched in 2015, with Welsh Government and EU funding, the Business Wales Accelerated Growth programme has been developed to support ambitious businesses in Wales to fulfil their growth potential.

It offers a bespoke package of support aimed at helping businesses to grow faster, become stronger and more resilient.

Latest statistics reveal that the Business Wales Accelerated Growth programme as well as supporting companies to create 2,308 jobs, has also helped participating companies attract £70.1m of private sector investment and generate £33.1m worth of exports.

The programme is currently supporting over 400 companies, across Wales and within a wide range of sectors.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Our Business Wales Accelerated Growth programme is making a real difference to our economy and I am delighted that it has now been successful in helping to support over 2000 new jobs in SMEs and Start Ups right across Wales.

“These companies are the lifeblood of the Welsh economy and I am proud that our bespoke Accelerated Growth Programme is delivering the support Welsh businesses need to help them overcome issues and strategic constraints that may otherwise have hampered their true growth potential”.

“With the help of the programme, 455 businesses are now delivering tangible results, creating jobs, increasing turnover and export sales and making a real difference to communities right across Wales and I look forward to the success of the programme continuing as it moves into its third year and beyond.”

Wales is taking the lead in empowering nurses and ensuring resources are there to care sensitively for patients – Vaughan Gething

Following a productive consultation period and collaboration with the Royal College of Nursing, new guidance will help the nursing workforce prepare for commencement of the Act in April 2018.

The Act places a duty on health boards and NHS Trusts to take steps to calculate and maintain nurse staffing levels in adult acute medical and surgical inpatient wards. It also contains a broader duty to consider how many nurses are necessary to provide the right level of care for patients sensitively in all settings.

Vaughan Gething said:

“Wales is the first country in Europe to legislate on nurse staffing levels and I’m proud of what we have achieved so far.

“The evidence unequivocally tells us that having the right number of registered nurses reduces patient mortality and improves patient outcomes.

“Ensuring patients have safe, high quality care was one of the main reasons why we supported the introduction of the Act. I’m very keen to see the health boards use this guidance to bring the legislation to life and affect positive change for the benefit of our patients in Wales.”

Chief Nursing Officer, Professor Jean White said:

“Nurses are the largest section of the health workforce and fulfil roles right across our health and social care services.

“It is essential that we have a nursing workforce that has the right skill set, in the right numbers with an appropriate skill-mix, deployed at the right time to meet patients’ needs.

“The Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 requires the NHS to ensure there are enough nurses to sensitively care for patients and we’re working hard to help get those numbers right. The publication of this statutory guidance – developed in partnership with the NHS

and key partners like the RCN – is a big step towards making that a reality.”

£2.4 million boost 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 and the Welsh Government.

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.

Cabinet Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“The Tourism Amenity Investment Support scheme is an excellent way for us to assist the tourism sector to make the improvements to the local facilities and amenities. These facilities often go unnoticed – but are an important part of the experience that people have of Wales and they impression with which they leave – and will also benefit those who live in the area.

“The funding has provided a great opportunity for local partners to identify a cluster of products which can really make a difference. Visitors expect the best quality in all aspects of their visit from the accommodation through to information provision, toilets and parking. The management of our tourism destinations is key if we are continue delivering a high quality visitor experience in line with our strategic ambitions – this funding is another building block to create better destinations.”

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:

- **Gwynedd County Council – Upgrade Coach Park and upgrade facilities**

(£40,792). In recent years, around £6m has been invested in and around Harlech Castle and this has seen visitor numbers increase by 35%. However, parking & toilet facilities in the town are substandard and this not only impacts on customer satisfaction but the absence of dedicated coach parking facilities has actually stopped many tour companies from including them on itineraries.

- **Canal and River Trust – Create new visitor parking (Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal)**. Since Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal became a World Heritage site in 2009 the visitor numbers have incrementally increased by as much as 70% in some locations. Trevor Basin, adjacent to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, is a major hub for people visiting the World Heritage site and is now attracting over 250k visitors a year.
- **Natural Resources Wales – Artwork in relation to Coast path for Year of the Sea (£32k)**. To celebrate the Wales Coast Path (WCP) during the Year of the Sea, NRW propose commissioning artwork that will capture the public's imagination, framing our iconic landscape and embodying the path's status as Wales' premium walking route.
- **Neath Port Talbot CBC – Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan (£88,822)**. Currently car parking within Pontneddfechan is informal with parking along the main road into the village. The project to create approx. 43 off road car parking spaces at the Visitor hub at Pontneddfechan increasing the capacity of existing parking provision, safer parking facilities and significantly enhancing the visitor experience and dwell time.

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.