

First Minister launches Christmas card competition

The winning card will be chosen by the First Minister and used as his official Christmas card, which will be sent across the globe to people including the Queen, the Prime Minister, High Commissioners and Ambassadors from across the world.

Children from Years 3 and 4 are being asked to submit their bilingual entries by Friday 10 November 2017.

The successful young artist will get to meet the First Minister and receive a signed, framed copy of their winning entry.

The First Minister said:

“I am calling all Wales’ budding young artists to reach for their colouring pencils, crayons and felt-tip pens and design my official Christmas card.

“I look forward to seeing all the artistic contributions – I am sure they will bring me much festive cheer.”

Last year’s competition was won by 9 year old Travis Carter of Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbrân, whose winning design was chosen from more than 700 entries.

Entries should be sent to:

Non Jones / Lloyd Bowen
Cabinet Communications team
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Tel: 0300 025 3942

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Christmas card competition entry guidance

- The competition is open to all pupils in years 3 & 4 (7-9 years old) in Wales
- All entries should be to a maximum size of A4 (210mm x 297mm)
- Portrait or landscape orientation
- All entries should be “flat” – no uneven surfaces, no cotton wool, glitter, etc.
- Bright, vibrant colours reproduce well.
- Dark backgrounds should be avoided.

- Any text on the artwork should be bilingual – with Welsh first, followed by English.
 - Please include the pupil's name age, class and school on the back of their entry.
 - Please note that unfortunately we will not be able to return any entries.
 - The closing date for the competition is Friday 10 November.
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[New initiative to put specialist emotional & mental health support in Wales' schools](#)

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething and Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams have agreed a £1.4m investment to strengthen the support from specialist child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to schools.

Dedicated CAMHS practitioners will be recruited to work with pilot schools in three areas across Wales. The practitioners will provide teachers with on-site help and advice, ensuring pupils experiencing difficulties such as anxiety, low mood, and compulsive self-harm or conduct disorders receive early help in schools from suitably trained staff, preventing more serious problems occurring later in life.

The model will enable:

- support for teachers to better understand childhood distress, emotional and mental health problems, and reduce stress experienced by teachers concerned about their pupils, by up-skilling them to recognise and deal with low level problems within their competence
- ensuring that when issues are identified that are outside teachers' competence and skills, that specialist liaison, consultancy and advice is available to enable the young person to be directed to more appropriate services such as CAMHS or Local Primary Mental Health Support Services, and to support the teacher and school in providing for the young person's educational needs
- ensuring systems are in place to share appropriate information between CAMHS and schools, shared care arrangements are agreed for those young people requiring more intensive support, and that arrangements are in place to escalate/de-escalate as the young person's needs dictate.

Initially operating as a pilot programme, the initiative will commence by the end of 2017 and cover two full academic years, concluding in the summer of 2020. The results will be evaluated, and take into account a broad range of measures from the perspective of both teachers and pupils.

Wales has led the way in the UK by being the only nation that requires local authorities to provide counselling services in their area for children and young people aged between 11 and 18, as well as pupils in year 6 of primary school. This initiative complements that work by providing an additional layer of more specialist support in schools.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“One in four people in Wales will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives. Getting the right treatment at an early stage, coupled with greater awareness of conditions, can in many cases prevent long term adverse impacts.

“This unique new initiative we’re unveiling today will see specialist NHS Wales services extend into the classroom. This will ensure children, teachers and others charged with caring for children in our schools, receive support to promote good emotional and mental health. It will help identify and address issues early, helping to prevent more serious problems occurring later in life.

“One of the Welsh Government’s key aims is to improve the health and well-being of the people of Wales. This will help us achieve our ambition of prosperity for all, while taking significant steps to shift our approach from treatment to prevention.

“We hope this initiative will improve accessibility to support services, better address school related stress, and ease pressures on specialist CAMHS by reducing inappropriate referrals. We also hope it will facilitate a wider culture which promotes and values positive mental health and wellbeing within our schools.”

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams said:

“Most young people spend a large part of their time in school, so there is a clear need for teachers to be able to help and support them should they experience difficulties in life, such as anxiety, low mood, compulsive self-harm or behaviour disorders.

“Through this new initiative, we are making schools places that actively promote positive mental health and wellbeing, providing evidence-based prevention and early intervention where it’s needed.

“For children and young people, it will enable them to have their problems addressed earlier, before they escalate. For teachers, it will help ensure they feel able and confident in dealing with emotional distress, and know where to go to seek support.”

Free weekend bus travel pilot off to a fast start

The Welsh Government funded pilot applies to all buses on the extensive TrawsCymru network and will continue every weekend until at least May 2018. When compared with data from the previous year, increases of well over 100 per cent have been recorded across the network, with the T4 service between Newtown and Cardiff currently boasting the greatest increase.

The highest increases in total daily bus passenger numbers (including child and concessions) were recorded on the following days and services:

1. TrawsCymru T4: Newtown – Brecon – Merthyr Tydfil – Pontypridd – Cardiff

Saturday 26 August 2017: 1,971 bus passengers used the service compared with 461 on Saturday 27 August 2016 – an increase of 328 per cent.

2. TrawsCymru T5: Aberystwyth – New Quay – Cardigan – Fishguard – Haverfordwest

Sunday 9 July 2017: 555 bus passengers used the service compared with 146 on Sunday 10 July 2016 – an increase of 280 per cent.

3. TrawsCymru T5: Aberystwyth – New Quay – Cardigan – Fishguard – Haverfordwest

Sunday 20 August 2017: 389 bus passengers used the service compared with 126 on Sunday 21 August 2016 – an increase of 209 per cent.

4. TrawsCymru T1: Aberystwyth – Lampeter – Carmarthen

Sunday 13 August 2017: 437 bus passengers used the service compared with 169 on Sunday 14 August 2016 – an increase of 159 per cent.

5. TrawsCymru T4: Newtown – Brecon – Merthyr Tydfil – Pontypridd – Cardiff

Saturday 12 August 2017: 2,130 bus passengers used the service compared with 874 on Saturday 13 August 2016 – an increase of 144 per cent.

Welcoming the news, Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

“The TrawsCymru network covers large areas of Wales, some of which would otherwise be inaccessible by public transport and it’s extremely encouraging to see this pilot boosting summer passenger numbers.

“From Bangor to Cardiff, Fishguard to Wrexham, this scheme provides a perfect opportunity for people from across Wales and beyond to jump on a bus and spend their weekends enjoying the diverse beauty of Wales and I am delighted it has already proved so popular.

“For those who are yet to take full advantage of the pilot, there’s still time to find out where your nearest service could take you. I’ve been keen that this pilot, at the very least, serves to increase the awareness of what bus services are available locally and today’s figures suggest that to be the case. I look forward to seeing how this TrawsCymru increase has impacted other services later this year.”

Welsh Government business mission to MIT Innovations in Management Conference

Held as part of Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Industrial Liaison Program (MIT – ILP), as well as benefitting from world class speakers and workshops, the companies will access a range of experts on a one-to-one basis, tailored to their company’s needs.

Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Infrastructure, Ken Skates said:

“We consider a strong and resilient economy fundamental to a successful Wales. Developing a pro business environment in which businesses can start, grow and flourish is a key priority. The success of Wales in a global market place is demonstrated by the number and profile of companies already operating in Wales.

“But Wales is not complacent and recognises the vital importance of promoting world class skills, expertise, innovation and forward thinking to ensure continued economic success.

“Enabling companies to learn from the best is one strand of the varied business support offered by Welsh Government through their links with MIT-ILP. This programme puts business leaders in direct contact with the finest minds and practitioners from MIT and provides unique networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

“I hope the unique input from the experts presenting in the MIT-ILP

into the companies will underpin and fast track business growth, innovation and collaboration and help to strengthen and future proof the Welsh economic landscape.”

Welsh Revenue Authority Chief Executive and board members appointed

The Welsh Revenue Authority has been set up to collect and manage devolved taxes from April next year. It will become a legal entity from next month, when the board will hold its first meeting.

Following a pre-appointment interview, Dyfed Alsop has been appointed as the first Chief Executive of the WRA until August 2019.

The following have been appointed to the board of the WRA:

- David Jones;
- Lakshmi Narain;
- Jocelyn Davies;
- Dyfed Edwards; and
- Martin Warren

Earlier this year, the Finance Secretary confirmed that Kathryn Bishop will be the WRA's first Chair.

The WRA will be the first non-ministerial department set up by the Welsh Government and will become operational in April 2018. Over the next four years, the WRA will collect more than £1bn of tax revenues.

Further information on the role of the WRA can be found on its new website: gov.wales/wra

Confirming the appointments, Professor Drakeford said: “From next April, Wales will be responsible for collecting and managing our taxes when land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax are introduced.

“Significant work has been underway to prepare for the devolution of tax powers and the setting up of the Welsh Revenue Authority.

“I am pleased to confirm the appointment of Dyfed Alsop as the first Chief Executive of the WRA and five new board members, who will have the important task of overseeing its work. Dyfed and all board members bring a wealth of experience to their roles and together will play a key role in ensuring a smooth transition to tax powers.”

Welcoming today's announcement, WRA Chair Kathryn Bishop said:

“With the formation of the WRA, Wales will take a large step forward in the journey of devolution, with responsibility for revenue generation as well as for public expenditure. The taxation revenue we collect from house-buyers and land fill operators will support the public services provided throughout Wales.

“We will deliver Welsh Ministers' tax policy and follow the strategic direction set by them, but will be operationally independent. We will be an organisation which does what we say we will do – and we hope tax payers and citizens will find our services easy to use and efficient.”