

£800,000 food and drink scheme – expressions of interest window open

The Rural Business Investment Scheme – FOOD (RBISF), available under the EU-supported Rural Development Programme, is a capital investments programme to support projects that offer clear and quantifiable benefits to the food and drink industry in Wales.

The scheme is open to existing and start-up micro & small food and drink processors and manufacturers throughout Wales who are not eligible under the Welsh Government's Food Business Investment Scheme.

Eligible businesses can apply for up to £50,000 for any individual investment project. These projects must contribute to the Welsh Government's ambitious [Food Strategy Action Plan](#) (external link) with one or more of the following objectives:

- promote and develop a growing and vibrant food and drink sector in Wales
- continue to develop a green image based on sustainable production methods
- further build resilience into the industry to withstand market changes
- drive improvements in food safety and security
- promote technological innovation in both product and processes
- provide career opportunities at varying skill levels.

Ahead of the opening of the first window for expressions of interest, Lesley Griffiths said:

“Our Welsh food and drink industry is a real success story, experiencing impressive levels of growth in recent years. We are committed to maintaining this momentum by ensuring the right conditions are in place for businesses of all sizes to prosper.

“I would encourage small businesses to find out more about this scheme and if they are eligible, to apply for the funding.”

More information, including eligibility criteria, can be found on the [Rural Business Investment Scheme – FOOD \(RBISF\)](#) page .

Search starts for Wales' next Older People's Commissioner

Created by the Welsh Government in 2008, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales is the independent voice and champion for older people aged 60 and over across Wales. The Commissioner's work is driven by what older people say matters most to them, and ensures their voices are at the heart of all the commissioner does.

The Older People's Commissioner:

- promotes awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales
- challenges discrimination against older people in Wales
- encourages best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales
- reviews the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

The Commissioner has a wide range of legal powers to help deliver the change older people want and need to see.

The current commissioner, Sarah Rochira, was appointed in June 2012 for a four year term. Her term of office was extended last year for a further two years, and comes to an end in June 2018.

The Welsh Government is now inviting applications from people interested in becoming Wales' third Older People's Commissioner. The closing date is 13 October 2017.

Following a full public appointments exercise, which will involve representatives of older people, it is expected a new commissioner will be appointed by the First Minister of Wales in spring 2018 for an initial four year term, with the new commissioner starting in the role in June 2018.

Social Services Minister, Rebecca Evans said:

“Wales was the first country in the UK to establish an Older People's Commissioner, to help ensure we're a country where older people are respected, valued, listened to and supported to lead safe and happy lives.

“The Welsh Government attaches great importance to the role, and I look forward to receiving applications from a broad range of high calibre applicants who are interested in making a real difference to the lives of older people in Wales.”

Striking the right balance: have your say on the Welsh Language

The government's White Paper, 'Striking the right balance: proposals for a Welsh Language Bill', outlines a range of proposals that aim to strike the right balance between promoting the Welsh language and regulating compliance with Welsh language duties.

Recommendations in the White Paper include:

- Establishing a Welsh Language Commission to organise and coordinate work to promote the Welsh language across all parts of Wales.
- Making it clearer to people, public bodies and businesses who they can turn to if they want to develop their use of the Welsh language.
- Giving greater clarity for Welsh speakers as to which services bodies must provide in Welsh, and to work to increase the use of those services.
- Helping bodies develop their capacity to deliver services in Welsh.
- Streamlining the processes involved in making and imposing Welsh Language Standards, and removing the bureaucracy involved in handling complaints of bodies' non-compliance with Standards to ensure people receive a quick remedy.
- The Welsh Government to be responsible for imposing Standards on bodies through regulations and compliance notices. The Welsh Language Commission to be responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the Standards.
- Removing the restrictions in the current legislation so Standards could be placed on any body, so long as it is within the Assembly's power to do so.

Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language Alun Davies said:

"We are very clear of our responsibility as a Government to ensure the legislative framework is appropriate to deliver on the ambition for the language. However, everyone has a part to play, and we want all those who have an interest in the language to contribute to this discussion.

"We know that language policy needs to be rooted in consensus and democratic strength. Together, by renewing our energy, adapting to an ever changing landscape, we can enable the Welsh language to grow – a living language for all that unites us as a nation."

Admiral creates 200 jobs thanks to Welsh Government support

They will be formed as part of Admiral's move into the personal lending market, which over time will see the company offer various new products through an online platform including personal loans and car finance.

The 193 customer service and sales posts will be created following Admiral's successful application for a grant of £668,500 from the Business Finance scheme to aid job creation.

The company currently employs over 9000 people across eight countries, with over 6000 of these in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure Ken Skates welcomed the news:

"Admiral is committed to expanding its operations in Wales. We appreciate its continued presence as a major employer here, and consider this funding a worthwhile investment."

"Welsh Government funding for this new range of products ensured the jobs are created and stay in Wales. I congratulate Admiral on its continued growth and job creation which is a great advertisement for service delivery in Wales."

Admiral Chief Financial Officer, Geraint Jones, commented,

"Wales is one of the fastest growing financial services centres in the UK and Admiral is delighted to be able to launch its new venture into the lending market here in our home city of Cardiff."

First Ministers calls on the Prime Minister to work with, not against, the devolved nations

In a letter to the Prime Minister, both First Ministers acknowledge their shared responsibility to work together across the UK to prepare for Brexit.

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones said:

“The governments of these islands have a lot of work to do to ensure that the UK leaves the EU with as little disruption as possible. This will only be achieved by working together.

“Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and I all have very different political positions, but an issue as important as Brexit requires us to put our political differences aside and work together to provide stability for the sake of our economy, jobs and public services. One government cannot simply hijack powers from the other two.

“Today, Nicola Sturgeon and I have published joint amendments to the EU withdrawal bill that would enable progress to be made among the governments in a way which respects the hard-won devolution settlements.

“We want a bill that works with, not against, devolution. Until that point is reached, we cannot give it our consent. The amendments we have published today are not about stopping Brexit, they are about protecting the interests of the people of Wales and Scotland. I hope they secure widespread support across the House of Commons.

“While the UK government has so far shown a lack of lack of willingness to engage with the devolved nations, and a fundamental lack of trust, we hope today marks a sea change in the way our governments work together on Brexit. Only by listening to each other, can we find a way forward that protects the interests of all parts of the Union.”