

Record Numbers Use Airport Bus Service

The period between March and August 2017 saw over 86,000 people use the service, up 15% on the same period last year.

With Cardiff Airport continuing to grow and Wales being increasingly recognised globally as a premier tourist destination, Economy Secretary Ken Skates said he was encouraged to see the T9 service playing an increasing role in facilitating travel.

Mr Skates said:

“Cardiff Airport is one of the fastest growing airports in the UK and continues to go from strength to strength. I’ve been clear that a reliable, frequent bus service linking the airport to Cardiff and beyond is key, never more so as the airport moves into the exciting next stage of its development.

“Alongside the airport’s increased stature, destinations and possibilities, these T9 passenger figures are hugely encouraging and demonstrate the growing appetite for regular public transport between Cardiff Airport and the capital.

“Over half a million passengers have now used the service since it was introduced in July 2013 and I look forward to the T9 continuing to form part of Wales’ offering, building on these positive trends and facilitating further travel to and from Wales for thousands more over the coming months and years.”

The figures for the past six months compared to last year are as follows:

March 2016 – 13,041 – March 2017 – 13,223

April 2016 – 8,653 – April 2017 – 12,969

May 2016 – 10,695 – May 2017 – 15,786

June 2016 – 13,358 – June 2017 – 15,264

July 2016 -14,589 – July 2017 – 13,976

August 2016 – 14,500 – August 2017 – 15,089

[New Riverdee centre opens thanks to £499,950 Welsh Government funding](#)

The newly refurbished centre has been made possible thanks to £499,950 from the Welsh Government's Community Facilities Programme and £491,397 from the Big Lottery's People and Places Fund.

The building, which is owned by River Dee Community Church, now has an accessible improved layout and has increased its capacity to be used by various community groups.

Carl Sargeant said:

"The Community Facilities Programme has to date provided funding totalling over £16 million to 60 projects across Wales. The programme is not just about improving buildings. In applying for these grants community organisations, such as the Riverdee Community Church, have had to demonstrate how the facilities they offer provide vital community services which help prevent or tackle poverty.

"I enjoyed meeting staff and volunteers at the centre and having the opportunity to see the work that has been undertaken thanks to the grant from the Community Facilities Programme."

[£1.2m to help councils and NRW prepare for winter flood risk](#)

Local Authorities are responsible for managing the risk of flooding from streams and surface water as well as the management of their own coastal protection. This includes the regular inspection and maintenance of these. All 22 local authorities have been offered the opportunity to apply for up to £40,000 each to carry out the following work:

- Essential maintenance works to flood risk management assets, which reduce risk of flooding to properties, to ensure they remain resilient ahead of winter,
- Mapping and collation of asset data,
- Asset surveying to establish location, condition, cost of repairs, lifespan of assets, etc.

Natural Resources Wales are responsible for managing assets which reduce the risk of flooding from main rivers and the sea. The £300,000 will enable NRW to carry out the following additional maintenance work;

- management of vegetation and trees on flood embankments,
- channel management works (removal of, silt and weed),
- clearing obstructions from rivers and trash screens,
- Purchase additional kit and tools to further assist maintenance and resilience work,
- Carry out additional contingency exercises to ensure resilience and preparedness for any severe weather incidents.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I am pleased to be able to provide this vital funding to support asset inspection and maintenance of our flood defences prior to winter. Asset inspection and maintenance is a vital part of the work Risk Management Authorities carry out to ensure our assets continue to function effectively in severe weather conditions. This funding is provided to help local authorities and Natural Resources Wales carry out this important work, reducing the risk of flooding to our communities.”

£1.28 million invested to cut classroom bureaucracy – Kirsty Williams

The funding will support the creation of new school business managers in eleven local authority areas.

The two year pilot will see groups of primary schools having a school business manager to provide dedicated support for head teachers and teachers so they can better focus on raising standards and the needs of pupils.

School business managers can help organise and run a range of non-teaching activity in a school, from finance, administration and procurement, freeing up head teachers and staff to focus on leadership and teaching.

The project is part of a range of Welsh Government actions to help address teachers' concerns over their workload, including a new guide launched today on how teachers can reduce unnecessary activity, with advice on planning lessons, marking and assessing and collecting data.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

“I am delighted to announce funding of almost £1.3 million to fund new school business managers to take on some of the non-teaching responsibilities. This will free up heads and teachers to focus on what matters most – their pupils.

“We are working closely with the profession to help teachers be the best they can be for the benefit of pupils. I want to get the basics right and let teachers get on with teaching so we can continue to raise standards.

“Reducing unnecessary workload and enabling teachers to spend more time supporting pupils’ learning is so important. The resources developed with unions and others and published by Estyn today will help ensure that workload issues are considered and we will continue to take action in this area.”

Sir Mansel Aylward announced as new Chair of Life Sciences Hub Wales

Launched in 2014, the Life Sciences Hub has become a focus of the vibrant life sciences sector in Wales. Bringing together academics, business and clinical and professional services, the hub covers all sector activities from funding and business support to international development.

As part of his new appointment Professor Aylward will lead on the development of a repurposed vision and mission for the Hub including delivering opportunities to broaden the scope of the Life Sciences Hub and create value for NHS-Industry engagement.

Welcoming the new Chair, Julie James said:

“Wales’ life sciences sector has gone from strength-to-strength over recent years, punching well above its weight on a global stage and is now worth circa £2bn to the Welsh economy.

“Key to this success and driving innovation across the sector has been the Life Sciences Hub Wales Limited and I am delighted that Professor Sir Mansel Aylward has accepted my invitation to Chair its Board.

“He has extensive experience of working in the Life Sciences Sector across academia, health and business and will play a key role in

building on the success of the Hub to date and I look forward to seeing how the Hub develops under his leadership.”

Having spent his career working across the sector, Professor Aylward brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role.

He said:

“I am both honoured and delighted to be appointed as the Chair of the Life Sciences Hub. This appointment comes at a critical time when the Board of the Life Sciences Hub will be developing a repurposed vision and mission which must include developing opportunities to broaden the scope of the Hub and creating value from engagement by NHS Wales with industry and academia.

“Moreover, the Hub has to flourish as a key element of the Welsh Government’s vision to accelerate economic development activity within the life sciences sector by further encouraging a wide range of organisations across industry, academia, NHS Wales and investors to work collaboratively to establish Wales as one of the best environments on the international stage for innovation, enterprise and best practice in this sector.

“Not least, I also consider it important to align the aims and objectives of the Life Sciences Hub with several of the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. I shall devote commitment and my endeavours as Chair to achieve these aims and strongly seek to contribute leadership and governance of the Board and the drive to ensure the success of the repurposed Life Sciences Hub.”

Professor Aylward will take up his new role as Chair in October 2017.