

Finance Secretary confirms commitment to new communities scheme as Landfill Disposal Tax Bill progresses

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill, which introduces a new landfill disposals tax to replace landfill tax in Wales when it is devolved in April 2018, today reaches stage three, in the National Assembly.

The Welsh Government introduced an amendment, which, if the Bill is passed, places the new Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme on the face of the Bill.

The amendment places a duty on Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a communities scheme, which will be targeted at activities which promote or improve the social or environmental wellbeing of communities close to landfill sites and waste transfer stations.

The scheme will be funded by using some of the revenue raised by landfill disposals tax. A decision about how much will be allocated will be made in the autumn.

A procurement exercise to appoint the single distributive body that will run the scheme has begun. It is anticipated the contract notice will be launched at the end of July – the contract is expected to be awarded by the end of the year.

The Welsh Government will administer the overall governance of the scheme.

Professor Drakeford said:

“In a year’s time, Wales will introduce the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years. This is an historic milestone in Wales’ devolution journey as we become responsible for raising our own money to spend on public services.

“I am fully committed to having a new communities scheme when landfill disposals tax is introduced in April. The benefits it provides communities located around landfill sites and waste transfer stations are clear and numerous.

“The new grant scheme will focus on three areas – biodiversity, environmental enhancements and waste minimisation. It will maximise the amount of funding reaching community projects most affected by the disposal of waste to landfill and help improve our environment.

“The details of the scheme will be published separately but work is already underway to prepare for its introduction. I will make an announcement about the amount allocated to the scheme in the

autumn.”

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill is the third of three Bills to establish tax arrangements in Wales – a series of crucial legislation to prepare for the introduction of the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years. The Welsh Government has also adopted a collaborative approach to gain cross-party support for the Bill, agreeing non-government amendments to further improve the legislation.

The Finance Secretary added:

“This Bill is the third piece of legislation to establish tax arrangements in Wales. It has been extremely important to work with colleagues across the Assembly to build consensus so we have a strong piece of legislation to help pave the way to a smooth transition to tax powers.”

New commission with responsibility for higher and further education in Wales to be created

The Welsh Government White Paper also sets out how the new body, which will succeed the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, will regulate the skills sector and have responsibility for funding research and innovation.

In March 2016 Professor Ellen Hazelkorn published her independent review of post-compulsory education in Wales with a range of recommendations that were accepted by the Education Secretary in January this year.

A consultation on the White Paper has today been launched, with the key proposal being the establishment of the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales to provide oversight, strategic direction and leadership for the post-compulsory education and training sector.

The functions of the new Commission include:

- Protecting the interests of learners, ensuring that vocational and academic routes are equally valued and make sure Wales has the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive economy.
- Strategic planning of educational and skills delivery across all post-compulsory education and training in Wales.
- Oversee and coordinate all Welsh Government research and innovation funding with the aim of creating a more dynamic and responsive-to-need

research, innovation and knowledge environment in Wales.

- Funding, contracting, quality, financial monitoring and audit of higher education, further education, work based learning, adult community learning, and relevant employability and employer-led programmes.
- Developing better links between higher and further education and Welsh business.

The Commission would report annually to the Welsh Ministers on the performance of the post-compulsory sector.

Kirsty Williams said:

“I am publishing proposals for a ‘made in Wales’ approach to post-compulsory education and training so that it is easier for people to learn and acquire skills throughout their careers.

“Our lives and economy are undergoing huge technological change. The knowledge and skills needed in a transformed workplace mean that ‘average is over’. There is rapid change in other parts of the UK and the realities of Brexit. Doing nothing, or maintaining the status quo, is not a viable option.

“Our national mission does not stop at the school gates. We need to ensure that those leaving our schools progress into a post-compulsory system which provides genuine parity of esteem for vocational and academic routes, and which equips them with the skills required for sustainable and rewarding careers. . Such a workforce will allow our economy to be more productive and competitive and our people more prosperous and secure.”

[Economy Secretary at Paris Airshow to promote Wales’ aerospace sector](#)

The Paris Airshow, which is held every other year in the French capital, is one of the world’s largest events of its kind. This year it expects to attract record numbers of exhibitors and more than 250,000 trade visitors.

The Economy Secretary will join the six Wales based companies exhibiting on the Welsh Government stand who are looking to maximise business opportunities and secure new orders.

They include Wrexham based engineering company Tritech Group who last year secured around £10m worth of new business at the Farnborough International Airshow.

Speaking ahead of the event, Ken Skates said:

“I am very excited to attend this year’s Paris Airshow and join our Aerospace team and the excellent Wales based companies on our stand. Trittech, Faun Trackway, Spectrum Technologies, Denis Ferranti, Haydale and LMg Solutions will be working hard throughout the event to make new contacts and secure new business.

“The aerospace industry is already a priority sector for Wales. We are a centre of excellence for aerospace manufacturing and Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) related activities and play home to over 160 companies who are active in the sector.

“Indeed some of the biggest names in aerospace and defence, including GE Aviation and Airbus are located in Wales and collectively the sector employs in excess of 20,000 people.”

“Wales is punching above its weight but we want to keep building on our success, and the presence of the Welsh Government and Wales based companies at high profile events like the Paris Airshow is crucial in helping us to generate new business and trade opportunities, and stimulate growth in the sector . I wish all six exhibiting companies every success at this year’s show.”

GD Environmental expands with Welsh Government support creating 39 jobs

The plan, which is backed by £300,000 from the Welsh Government’s Growth & Prosperity Fund, will also safeguard 27 jobs and bring the total employment at its sites in Newport, Pontypool and Llanelli up to 136.

GD Environmental aims to be one of the first carbon positive waste management companies in the UK and has a strong focus on maximising waste recycling and reducing landfill. It currently recycles 98% of the 225,000 tonnes of waste it processes each year.

The investment will expand its liquid waste services in Llanelli; upgrade and refurbish its waste transfer station in Pontypool, and expand its processing plant in Newport, ensuring increased capacity and the introduction of new technology to sustainably recycle hard plastic.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“GD’s focus on recycling and reducing the amount of waste going to landfill supports the Welsh Government Strategy, Towards Zero Waste. The investment will assist their growth plans, increase capacity and help boost their business while bringing new jobs and economic benefits to regions across South Wales.”

The company offers a complete waste management service for the private and public sector and has developed from a core drainage business into a national provider of all forms of waste management.

Its range of services includes scrap processing; plastic recycling; liquid waste processing; dry waste sorting and separating; hazardous waste handling, as well as skip hire, clearing and repair blocked drains and asbestos disposal.

The business has embarked on an expansion programme since it was acquired in 2015 by Oliver Hazell and Mark Hazell. The company expanded its capabilities through the 2016 acquisition of Pontypool based Fred Lloyd & Sons which provided a scrap handling and end of life vehicle arm to the business.

Oliver Hazell said:

“This investment and the backing of the Welsh Government will support our ambitions of becoming an industry leading waste management services requirements in the UK. We are making a significant investment at all three sites to offer an even better service to our customers that will help grow the business and enable us to create more jobs at each location and we continue to offset our carbon footprint whenever possible.”

[New drive to connect Welsh pupils with coding – Kirsty Williams](#)

Computer code is a set of rules or instructions that makes it possible to create computer software, apps and websites. It is a means by which learners can transition from being users to becoming authors of technology.

The Welsh Government aims to expand Code Clubs in every part of Wales.

Approximately 300 clubs currently exist across the country and the Education Secretary wants all pupils to have the opportunity to learn about and get involved in coding as the importance of digital skills continues to grow.

There are currently around 1.5 million jobs in the digital sector in the UK,

400,000 of which involve coding. It is estimated that there will be 100,000 new coding jobs by 2020.

The new plan to expand Code Clubs in Wales – ‘Cracking the code’, aims to:

- Raise awareness and highlight the benefits of Code Clubs to teachers, pupils and parents;
- Break down barriers to participation in code clubs;
- Broker and facilitate coding experiences with business and industry.

The plan will have a specific focus on encouraging stronger relationships between business, industry and the third sector to support the development of coding skills.

The plan will focus on:

- Encourage parents to get involved in coding and the development of digital skills;
- Welsh medium support and resources;
- Getting more girls interested in coding and technology.

A number of local, national and international partners have agreed to work with Welsh Government to support the delivery of the plan. They include Code Club UK, Microsoft Education, Sony, Bafta, Big Learning Company, British Council, BT Barefoot Computing, Computing at school (CAS), Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Raspberry Pi Foundation, the RAF, Technocamps, and Universities in Wales.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Code is part of almost everyone’s lives. When we check out social media, access an app or computer we are using systems created through code. It is an essential building block of our modern world and I want to make sure as many of our young people have knowledge of it as they develop their digital skills.

“Through this £1.3m of new investment we are aiming to expand the number Code Clubs in every area of Wales for learners aged 3-16 so that they can develop their skills which will be vital part of thriving in our increasingly digital economy.

“We will work with teachers, the education consortia and others to help us crack the code for all our pupils.”

Maria Quevedo, Director Code Club UK said:

“We’re excited to be working with the Welsh Government to give more children and young people across Wales the opportunity to attend a Code Club, and to learn about computing and digital making.

“Code Clubs are a fun and engaging way to help the next generation develop these essential skills, so they are capable of understanding our increasingly digital world and equipped for the jobs of the future.”

As part of this initiative, the Welsh Government will shortly be launching an innovative Minecraft Education pilot programme with Microsoft UK

Changes to the curriculum mean digital skills will now be used through all parts of a pupil’s schooling and not just isolated to specific ICT or computer science classes. The Welsh Government’s Digital Competence Framework is now available to all schools and follows two independent reviews that recommended changes.