

Busy Easter gives Industry confidence boost for the summer

37% of businesses reported that they had seen an increase in visitors with 42% reporting the same level of visitors as in 2016. Attractions and activity operators performed particularly well, with 57% welcoming more visitors than Easter last year.

Caravan and campsite operators also fared well, with 46% seeing a boost in the number of visitors compared to the same period in 2016.

Most sectors have taken more profits so far in 2017, compared with the same period last year. Overall, 34% of businesses reported seeing higher profits, with 41% reporting the same as last year.

With a sound Easter as a good foundation for the year, the summer looks to be bright, with 87% of businesses expecting to see more or the same level of visitors as last year during the peak season.

Most (85%) respondents are confident about how their business will perform over the summer. This has been helped with many reporting an increase in advance bookings. Some serviced sector accommodation reported that they were fully booked, with advance bookings taking over the last minute booking trend of recent years.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“I’m delighted that the industry are feeling confident for the season ahead and that the combination of fine weather and a later Easter boosted efforts to attract visitors to Wales and resulted in an increase in visitors during Easter this year. An increase in advance bookings also gives the industry confidence for the months ahead and shows that people are committing to their holiday in Wales sooner than in previous years. The tourism industry in Wales is in a strong position. In 2016 the total number of visits to Wales – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – was 15% up – which builds on the previous successful years. We will continue with our campaign work for the summer as we celebrate Wales’ Year of Legends.”

First Minister opens Eastern Bay Link road

The dual carriageway, which is named after the late engineer and planner, Ewart Parkinson, will improve links to Cardiff Bay, reducing journey times and helping to ease congestion in the city centre.

Ffordd Ewart Parkinson will also boost the local economy by improving access to the Central Cardiff Enterprise Zone and enhancing connectivity across the wider city region.

The road, which was completed by Dawnus Ferroviaŷ Agroman on time and within budget, provided 13 apprenticeships, 2 work experience placements and jobs for 9 graduates and 27 people who were previously long-term unemployed.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“I am delighted to officially open Ffordd Ewart Parkinson, which will provide a major boost to both Cardiff city centre and the Bay. Commuters will benefit from a shorter route and reduced journey times, while local residents will see reduced traffic and disruption in their neighbourhood.

“Improving infrastructure and transport links, reducing journey times and creating jobs has been a long term commitment for my government and this major project is another example of how we are delivering on those promises.”

Cllr Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport at Cardiff Council, said:

“It is wonderful to see the first phase of the Eastern Bay link road being officially opened this week.

“The new road will greatly improve journey times, ease congestion and connections for motorists and will be a great boost to Cardiff and Cardiff Bay.”

Wales is having a Good Air Day

Lesley Griffiths has today issued [new guidance](#) to Local Authorities on air

quality management. The guidance stresses the importance of planning for the long term, integrating policies which can impact on air quality, involving local communities in solutions to local air quality challenges, collaborating with others and preventing problems from getting worse or from arising in the first place.

The new guidance follows the Welsh Government's commitment to developing a clean air zone framework for Wales as part of a UK-wide consultation to develop a new air quality plan for nitrogen dioxide.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

"The average levels of air pollution across Wales continue to improve but we must do more to ensure the overall improving trends continue across Wales and compliance is achieved in pollution hotspots.

"The responses to our recent consultation on local air quality management were very supportive of our air quality proposals for Wales. This new guidance and our commitment to develop a clean air zone framework for Wales marks our determination to ensure clean local environments for the wellbeing of our future generations".

The UK's first Clean Air Day is being co-ordinated by the charity Global Action Plan. It offers people a chance to find out more about air pollution, to share information with friends and colleagues and to take action to make the air cleaner and healthier for everyone. Clean Air Day activities will focus in particular on the cities and regions of the UK already known to be putting in place low emission zones or clean air zones.

[Clean Air Day](#) (external link) in Wales will also mark the development of a much-needed programme of awareness-raising and educational activities in Wales.

[Welsh legends and locations feature in Transformers: the Last Knight](#)

Alongside Merlin and King Arthur, the Paramount Pictures production also features a transformer dragon in this action packed sequel to Transformers: Age of Extinction which sees giant robots exploring the history of Transformers on Earth in order to combat a new threat.

Directed by Michael Bay and written by Art Marcum and Matt Holloway (Iron Man) and Ken Nolan (Black Hawk Down), it stars Mark Wahlberg, Sir Anthony

Hopkins and Josh Duhamel.

It will be released in the UK on 22 June 2017 and in the USA on 21 June and set to become one of this summer's biggest hits.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Transformers is a hugely successful big screen franchise and its great news – and very apt – that they chose to film part of this highly anticipated sequel in Wales. It features some legendary figures and locations from Wales which ties in perfectly with our Visit Wales 2017 Year of Legends promotion. It also provided a tremendous opportunity for crew from Wales to get involved and gain invaluable experience of working on such a major production.”

Wales Screen helped find suitable locations for the production team who selected a disused quarry within the Brecon Beacons National Park as the ideal backdrop for some dramatic action sequences that featured Josh Duhamel who shared Instagram posts of his time in Wales as did Director Michal Bay.

The crew of 400 – which included 50 freelancers from Wales – spent a total of 28 days in the area last August preparing the site, filming and then deconstructing the set.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, which has experience of working with large scale productions that have previously filmed in the area, also assisted during filming.

John Cook, CEO Brecon Beacons National Park Authority added;

“Having Transformers film in the Brecon Beacons National Park last summer was an exciting time for everyone involved. We are lucky to have a wide variety of beautiful locations available here, including everything from dramatic open landscapes, native forests, spectacular waterfalls and in this case a deserted quarry. Our Filming Officer and team of Park Wardens are experienced in working with a wide range of filming requests and these in turn support the local economy.”

[First Minister sets out a way forward for devolution post-Brexit](#)

Speaking at a Wales Governance Centre event in Cardiff, the First Minister

will say that while leaving the EU has the potential to destabilise the United Kingdom, it also offers the opportunity for the country's reinvention.

The paper presents a blueprint for a major constitutional renewal of the UK, which can meet the challenges Brexit poses for the devolved nations and the future governance of the country as a whole.

The First Minister will say:

"Leaving the European Union is the biggest challenge facing the United Kingdom, a challenge thrown into even sharper relief by the outcome of the General Election.

"Decisions taken now will affect Wales for decades to come. Our ability to trade, travel, attract investment, determine policies, legislate, support our countryside, invest in our regions – all of these will be influenced by how we leave the EU.

"I have been completely consistent in arguing that securing full and unfettered access to the Single Market should be our top priority. But, the fall-out from Brexit also has the potential to destabilise the United Kingdom as we know it – or, if we work together, we can use this as an opportunity to reinvent and strengthen our Union."

The paper proposes replacing the current Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) with a new UK Council of Ministers that would take forward negotiations, reach binding decisions and help resolve disputes.

The council, served by an independent secretariat and a structured work programme, would bring the 4 governments together to negotiate and agree binding UK frameworks in devolved areas where they are needed, as well as considering non-devolved policies, such as state aid.

The paper also proposes a convention on the future of the United Kingdom. The convention, chaired by a respected, independent figure, would consider major questions which will face the UK once it is outside the EU and take evidence from all political parties, civil society and all parts of the UK.

The First Minister added:

"The opportunities presented by EU exit must be about the future, not the past – and that is what our paper is about. It represents an important step forward in the work which we must undertake together with England, Scotland and Northern Ireland – through discussion, not diktat – to map our collective future."

[Brexit: Securing Wales' future](#)