

Tourism experiences further growth in 2016

Last year was the first of Wales' themed years and it proved to be great success – Visit Wales' marketing activity for 2016 generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – which is an 18% increase on 2015. This is based on those definitely influenced by Visit Wales marketing before taking a trip to Wales. The Economy Secretary recently announced the continuation of the themed years with a new 'Year of Discovery' in 2019 which will build on the three themes of adventure, culture and great outdoors and follow the 2018 Year of the Sea.

In the context of the 2017 Year of Legends it is great to see that Cadw sites in Wales benefited from the increase in visitors in 2016, welcoming 1.4m visitors to its staffed sites– an 8% increase on the previous year and the heritage organisation's best year on record. There were large increases in visitor numbers at its top historic attractions, including Caernarfon, Caerphilly and Chepstow Castles. Caernarfon saw an increase of nearly 60% in visitors – many of which, had travelled to see the site's iconic Weeping Window exhibition. The arrival of a giant Welsh Dragon, which toured Cadw sites as part of its innovative "Historic Adventures" marketing campaign, also played a crucial role in attracting a new generation of visitors to sites. Following last year's success and having now gained widespread fame as Wales' resident Dragon – for the Year of Legends – Dewi the Dragon has been joined by Dwynwen and over the weekend they welcomed two baby dragons to Caerphilly Castle.

The Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

"The tourism Industry in Wales is in fantastic shape and I'm delighted that the Cadw sites attracted so many additional visitors last year. This shows that innovative ideas like the Cadw Dragon help to spark a renewed interest in our heritage which not only has a positive impact on our historic environment but also on Wales's wider economy. These iconic sites are continuing to inspire the people of Wales and bringing our past to life during our Year of Legends.

"Last year, we also saw record breaking spend from overseas visitors and crossed the million visitors for the first time in 8 years, which is excellent news. We fully recognise how competitive the market is and the challenges facing the industry. Our future vision – especially in light of the EU Referendum result – is to do more again to build on this sense of confidence and to internationalise our reputation and approach. We're making the most of every opportunity presented by the UEFA Champions League Final to raise awareness of Wales as a holiday destination in our key markets."

The Economy Secretary, continued:

“Although most of our performance indicators look good and feedback from the industry is positive, overnight GB figures showed a fall in 2016 compared with the record year of 2015, as did figures for all overnight trips to GB. However, the overall picture for Wales – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – shows a substantial increase in overall tourism volumes compared with 2015 . The total of visits across all three categories was 15% up during 2016 – which builds on the previous successful years.

“Campaign work to convert early interest and opportunities arising from the weak pound will continue with the Summer campaign.”

Adverts will shortly appear on London Underground Stations with the Year of Legends TV advert featuring Luke Evans being played on the Waterloo motion screen. The TV advert will also be shown on Channel 4 in London to coincide with the Cabins in the Wild programme – as well as on Sky Regional London and Sky Adsmart Meridian.

Figures published this week on accommodation occupancy show positive trends for 2017 with Room occupancy for guesthouses/B&Bs over the 12 months ending March 2017 at 40%, 2 percentage points higher than the same period in 2016.

Over the 12 months ending March 2017, self-catering unit occupancy rose by 2 percentage points to 54%, compared with the same period in 2016.

[Aberystwyth to Cardiff bus service to continue until at least December](#)

The 6 month extension to the current pilot will allow the Welsh Government to better assess the needs and travel patterns of customers, taking account of the summer tourist season and beyond, before making a long term decision on the service.

Ken Skates said:

“When we introduced the TIC service a little under six months ago, we did so to facilitate direct bus travel between west Wales and Cardiff. We’ve since seen this service used by a variety of groups and individuals, from students to shoppers to holiday goers.

“At the same time, however, we have made no secret that the service is not as popular as we might have expected. This can perhaps be

explained by the introduction of a commercial service run by Stagecoach Megabus earlier this year covering largely the same route, albeit with notable exceptions.

“Given this, I think there is great merit in extending the pilot for another 6 months. This will ensure any long term decision on the future of the service is made with a full year of data, whilst allowing us to continue to talk to passenger groups, bus operators, councils and interested parties about the service they would like to see and how best to achieve it.

“I’m delighted that our Traws Cymru service continues to offer regular bus travel to communities across Wales who might otherwise be without the option of public transport. I’m pleased to announce that the T1C will continue to be part of that offering until at least December.”

T1C service stops at all stops between Aberystwyth – Aberearon – Lampeter and Carmarthen and then operates limited stops between Carmarthen and Cardiff via Cross Hands, Swansea Bus Station and Bridgend Outlet Village.

UEFA Women’s Champions League Final set to inspire women & girls

Holder Lyon will face Paris Saint-Germain in Cardiff City Stadium at 19:45. The event is taking place in the same city as the men’s final, making Cardiff the hub of a real celebration of sport. First Minister, Carwyn Jones, and Public Health Minister, Rebecca Evans, will join the huge numbers of fans expected to attend the match.

First Minister, Carwyn Jones, said:

“Cardiff and the whole of Wales is brimming with excitement as the UEFA Champions League festivities get underway. Fans from across the globe can already be seen throughout the city, with Spanish, Italian and French to be heard spoken in the streets.

“Today’s UEFA Women’s Champions League Final will put women’s football in the global spotlight. This wonderful event has the power to inspire women and girls in Wales and across the world to take up sport, especially football.”

Public Health Minister, Rebecca Evans, who has responsibility for grassroots sport, said:

“There are around 40,000 women and girls playing football regularly across Wales. Increasing the number of women and girls taking part in sport remains one of our key priorities, and the FAW Trust’s aim is to increase the numbers playing football to 100,000 by 2024. The UEFA Women’s Champions League Final is a fantastic showcase for women’s football which will help us achieve this ambition.”

Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport Vaughan Gething will also cheer on the 1,500 women and girls from across Wales taking part in today’s FAW Women’s and Girls’ National Football Festival at Cardiff University Sports

Fields Llanrumney, which forms part of the FAW’s UEFA Champions League Community Engagement Programme.

This annual event will see teams from across Wales participate at under 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and senior age groups. All participants will be provided with a pair of free tickets to watch the UEFA Women’s Champions League Final.

[Welsh teams to compete in Homeless World Cup, thanks to Welsh Government funding](#)

The funding will enable social inclusion charity Street Football Wales (SFW) to send a Welsh women’s team and men’s team to the event in Oslo this summer

The announcement comes as SFW takes part today in a demonstration match on a floating pitch on Roald Dahl Plass to mark the Champions League Final in Cardiff.

The Homeless World Cup is an annual football tournament organised by the Homeless World Cup organisation which advocates the end of homelessness through football.

The 2017 tournament, which will mark the 15th edition of the HWC, will be held in Oslo, Norway from August 29 until September 5, 2017. About 70 countries and over 750 players are expected to take part.

Street Football Wales, which is hosted by Pobl Group, operate a football league for men and women across Wales and representatives from the league make up the teams who compete for Wales in the HWC.

Michael Sheen OBE, patron of Street Football Wales said:

“It is fantastic that Welsh Government have joined the team at

Street Football Wales and along with other partners are backing them to go all the way at the Homeless World Cup in Oslo! The team works incredibly hard to raise the funds to enter the tournament each year and this grant will make a huge difference. I'll be there to cheer them on and I hope this is the beginning of everyone in Wales getting behind their national teams for the Homeless World Cup!"

The Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans, said:

"I met Street Football Wales recently and saw the difference their projects can make to people's lives, not only in regards to health and wellbeing, but also in terms of self-confidence and personal development.

"I made a commitment to do all we can to support SFW to send a team to the Homeless World Cup, which is why I am delighted to announce this funding today. I am sure the teams will do a fantastic job of representing Wales on the world stage and I wish them all the very best of luck!"

Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, Carl Sargeant, said:

"I'm delighted that thanks to Welsh Government funding we are able to send a team to the Homeless World Cup. Street Football Wales are doing a great job in improving the lives of people who face social exclusion through homelessness. Having a home gives people a sense of belonging and emotional wellbeing. This is why providing people with a safe, warm and secure home remains a key priority for me. I wish the teams well in their forthcoming games."

Keri Harris, Project Leader for Street Football Wales said:

"Street Football Wales makes a life changing difference to hundreds of vulnerable people across Wales. Representing Wales at the Homeless World Cup is one of the many ambitions our players share. This grant makes taking a Welsh male and female team to Oslo an exciting reality that will inspire people across Wales."

Quantum Advisory expanding and creating 40 jobs with Welsh Government support

The expansion, backed by £200,000 business finance from the Welsh Government, has seen Quantum relocate its Cardiff headquarters to larger premises in St Mellons and will increase the number of employees in the capital city to more than 90 within three years.

The news has been welcomed by Economy Secretary Ken Skates who said:

“Quantum Advisory is an indigenous business working in one of our key economic sectors and I am pleased Welsh Government support helped secure this expansion for Wales.

“The investment supports the Financial and Professional Services sector strategy and will create high value sustainable jobs associated with actuarial science which is a growth market.”

Quantum Advisory – the trading name of Quantum Actuarial LLP – provides pension and employee benefits services to employers, scheme trustees and members. Advising on £3.5 billion of pension fund assets the company has delivered a pension administration service to clients since its inception as well as investment, actuarial and pensions consultancy services to clients both in the UK and internationally.

Andrew Reid-Jones, Partner at Quantum Advisory, said:

“The Welsh Government has been instrumental in enabling us to realise our strategic growth plans. Our previous office was at full capacity, but as a direct result of the Welsh Government’s support we were able to move into a larger neighbouring premises to accommodate projected future growth and provide further central services to our regional offices.”

Since setting up the company in 2000 with a single office in Cardiff, Quantum now boasts regional offices in Amersham, Birmingham, Bristol and London and last year saw an increase in turnover of 10%.

The employee benefits and pensions consultancy market is dominated by a small number of large corporate entities and Quantum is the only consultancy headquartered in Wales and is a niche player in the market specialising in providing tailor made services and solutions.

The size of the UK pension market is around £3.3 trillion of assets under

management and the market continues to grow driven by a number of factors including auto-enrolment and legislative and regulatory change.