

Summit to ensure Welsh-medium textbooks

The special event will address concerns about the supply and creation of Welsh-medium and English-medium text books for the new created in Wales qualifications and the new curriculum that is currently being developed.

It will bring together representatives from the Welsh Government, WJEC, Qualifications Wales, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, educational consortia, CYDAG and others to look at the issue of providing the right text books and materials for Wales' education system.

The summit will look at:

- The current situation for Welsh-medium resources.
- Identify the challenges and issues for the future for both Welsh and English textbooks to meet the needs of reformed curriculum and qualifications.
- Provide an opportunity to propose ideas for the way forward.

Kirsty Williams said:

"We are in the midst of massive change in Welsh education as we develop new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

"I have been concerned when told of the lack of availability of Welsh textbooks. I do not expect children who do their exams through the medium of Welsh to be disadvantaged in any way. We have worked with WJEC to look at this issue and there are now new practices which have helped to reduce the difference in timescales between the availability of textbooks in English and Welsh.

"However, I am clear that these are merely temporary solutions for the current reform of qualifications. I am not happy with the current situation. This event brings together the people who can make a difference and help come up with long-term solutions."

Overnight visitor figures show a strong picture for Welsh tourism

The Economy Secretary was responding to the latest Wales Tourism

Accommodation Occupancy statistics, which show that room occupancy for guest houses and bed and breakfasts in Wales between March 2016 and February 2017 stood at 40%, a 2 percentage point increase on the previous 12 months.

Meanwhile occupancy rates for self catering units increased by 4 percentage points in the same period to 55%, while hostel bed space increased by 3 percentage points to 51%.

At 67% the occupancy rate for hotel rooms was the highest of all but down slightly on the figures for the previous 12 months.

Ken Skates said:

“These latest occupancy statistics show a strong picture for tourism in Wales, and continue to reflect the success we have experienced over the last two years.

“Figures for the first 9 months of 2016 show a substantial increase of 12% in the number of overseas visitors coming to Wales and a 9% increase in the amount they spend while they are here. We have also seen a significant increase in the number of day visitors coming to Wales.

“In what is an extremely competitive market place, tourism in Wales is in a strong position. We’ve had two record breaking years and our aim is to sustain growth – being aware that global events and competition will mean that not every year will be a record breaking one. The overall picture – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – indicates that Wales saw an increase of almost 16% in overall tourism volumes during the three quarters of 2016, which includes the important summer peak.”

“We are working hard to sustain these levels of success in 2017 through continued investment in marketing and product development. Our Year of Legends 2017 has also got off to a great start with Wales being named as one of the top must-visit destinations globally from the likes of Lonely Planet Trip Advisor, Wanderlust and Rough Guides.”

[Welsh seafood producers to cast their](#)

nets far and wide at global showcase

The event, which takes place in Brussels between 25th and 27th April, provides an ideal platform to showcase high-quality Welsh seafood and gives Welsh producers a valuable opportunity to engage with over 30,000 buyers and suppliers from over 150 countries.

The important work of the Welsh Seafood Cluster will also be highlighted at Seafood Expo Global 2017. The cluster brings together fishermen, fishmongers and aquaculture businesses that have an ambition to grow and is dedicated to adding value to fish and shellfish caught or farmed on Welsh shores.

Joining Rebecca Evans at the event will be Welsh Seafood Cluster businesses the Lobster Pot, Extra Mussels, Bangor Mussel Producers, WM Shellfish and South Quay Shellfish.

Looking forward to her attendance at Seafood Expo Global 2017, the Minister said:

“We all know Wales has a wide range of world class food and drink producers who are really making their mark on the world stage. Our seafood is a hugely important part of our food and drink offer.

“The seafood industry makes a significant contribution to the Welsh economy. The latest figures show Aquaculture is worth £17.2M and the shellfish caught off the Welsh coast is worth £10.6M. The Seafood Cluster continues to grow in strength and ambition and I am sure it will play an important part in increasing the value of the sector even further.

“Following the UK’s vote to leave the European Union it is more important than ever we continue to have a presence at trade events like Seafood Expo. By engaging with buyers and suppliers from around the world, our producers have the opportunity to cast their nets far and wide as they try and attract potential new customers and access new markets.

“We are already more than half way towards achieving our target to grow the Food and Drink industry in Wales by 30% to £7 billion by the year 2020. I hope attending events like this can provide an international platform to showcase the very best Wales has to offer, as well as raise the profile of our brand.”

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams explains the National Reading and Numeracy Tests in Wales

Kirsty Williams said:

“Schools through the ages have always used tests to check how well children are doing. In the coming weeks, across Wales, all pupils in years two to nine will take the national reading and numeracy tests.

I want to be clear about why we have our national reading and numeracy tests – to assist our schools to plan next steps for learners to develop these core skills. The tests are not about ‘grading’ the pupil or for that matter the school.

Our national tests have been developed especially for use in Wales so that teachers in all schools have the same information on the reading and numeracy skills of their pupils. The tests take place in schools every year at the end of April, beginning of May.

There are two numeracy tests: a 30 minute test on procedural numeracy and a 30 minute test on numerical reasoning. The procedural test measures skills in things like numbers, measuring and data. The numerical reasoning test looks at how children can solve everyday problems.

There is also a one hour reading test, split into sections and with breaks for younger learners. The reading tests are made up of short questions based on two or more texts. Some of the questions check how well the text has been understood, others aim to find out if children are able to make judgements about what they are reading. Before the start of the test, children can try out some practice questions so that they will know what the different types of questions are like and what they may be asked.

The key to our approach in Wales is how we use what the tests tell us. They provide useful information to add to what a child’s teacher knows about their reading and numeracy from their work every day in the classroom. Teachers can use the results to identify strengths and also areas where a pupil may need more help and support. By the end of the summer term, a child’s school will give parents test results for each test that their child has taken. These reports show schools and parents how each learner has done in the tests, compared to all other learners in Wales of the same age. Of course, any test can only provide one piece of evidence of a learner’s work, and this needs to be considered alongside a

teacher's assessment of their work throughout the year.

The approach we have taken with tests is very different to England. Our numeracy and reading tests are designed to look at a pupils' annual progress and see what support they may need. The test results are not used to judge a school's performance and do not go towards 'ranking' the school, unlike in England where school league tables are informed by SATs results.

I am undertaking an ambitious programme of education reforms, which I describe as our national mission, to raise standards of literacy and numeracy and tackle the link between poverty and educational attainment. Our numeracy and reading tests will remain a key part of the way we help pupils achieve their full potential."

EU student funding guarantee for Welsh universities announced

EU nationals who are currently in receipt of student loans from Student Finance Wales and those EU nationals who intend to begin studying in the academic year 2018/19 will be eligible for support from loans and grants.

EU students should consult their university's student finance office, or the Student Finance Wales website, for information about the support available.

Kirsty Williams said,

"Wales has an internationally renowned higher education sector and it is vital that we continue to attract bright students from around the world to study and research at our universities.

"This decision not only provides welcome certainty for our universities and colleges regarding future funding, but also assures prospective EU students they will not have the terms of their funding changed if the UK leaves the EU during their studies.

"Our universities are central to our social and economic future, which value and celebrate their links with Europe, and thrive through the diversity of the people who come to them.

"We are determined to protect Wales' reputation as a friendly and tolerant place to study and carry out world-class research. Whatever the long-term implication of the referendum result, we remain an outward looking and welcoming nation where we are committed to sharing knowledge across national borders."