

Over £1m of Welsh Government funding helps children get a Flying Start

The funding for the 2017-18 financial year will support a wide range of projects from the full refurbishment of Flying Start buildings and the adaptation of empty premises to provide more space to smaller projects such as improving security and IT equipment.

Flying Start supports families living in some of the most disadvantaged communities across Wales. It offers twelve and a half hours of high quality childcare a week for 2-3 year olds; support for the development of children's speech, language and communication; parenting support; and an enhanced health visitor service.

Announcing the funding the Cabinet Secretary said:

"Giving children the best possible start in life is a top priority for the Welsh Government. Flying Start is a key programme, aimed at helping to improve children's life chances and reducing the need for interventions later on. It is one of a number of programmes that help mitigate adverse childhood experiences which can have a long-lasting impact on children and individuals throughout their lives.

"This is why we provide over £70 million a year in revenue funding to Local Authorities to deliver the scheme and why I am announcing over £1m of capital funding to ensure the children have the best possible environment in which to play and learn."

Swansea based Oyster Bay Systems expands and set to create 19 new jobs with Welsh Government support

Funding support of £120,000 from the Welsh Government's Growth and Prosperity Fund will help accelerate growth as the Swansea based business recruits a team of software experts to develop the next generation of software for the finance industry.

The team will develop new products for Oyster Bay's growing national and international client base and further enhance its offerings by incorporating

the latest cutting edge technologies.

Vienna – which launched in 1998 – was the first product of its kind and has been an outstanding success. The single platform supports multiple products, portfolios, brands, currencies and languages and can be completely tailored to every lender's requirement.

Used across a myriad of financial products in both consumer and commercial lending in more than six countries – ranging from SME lenders to global captive finance companies and including high street and challenger banks – the system can manage portfolios ranging from hundreds to hundreds of thousands of agreements in a single implementation.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Oyster Bay Systems is a made-in-Wales success story and I am delighted that support from the Growth and Prosperity Fund will help accelerate its growth creating a number of highly skilled jobs.

“Innovation has been key to the company's on-going success and this major expansion and investment is designed to boost sales and increase its client base, ensuring it retains its market position in what is a fast moving developing sector.”

The family owned and family run business, established in 1983 by Michael and Louise Breach, is based in Caernarvon House, Charter Court, Swansea Enterprise Park where it employs 28 people and will be the base for the new development team.

MD Michael Breach said:

“This is an exciting time for us as disruptive technologies begin to cut deeper and deeper into the finance and leasing sectors. We would like to thank the Welsh Government for this most welcome support which gives us the confidence to grow the business by actively seeking top recruits to be based in Wales.

“At the moment we are concentrating on augmenting our software development, quality control, systems and user support teams in order to balance the current unprecedented demand for our skills and services with the need to continually update core products to stay ahead of the technology curve”.

Oyster Bay Systems plans to work closely with Universities in Wales for recruiting with the aim of providing jobs for local graduates.

Welsh Government to invest over £2m to develop Welsh ports

The Ports Development Fund will support the growth of Welsh ports, helping ensure they continue being a key contributor to economic growth and providing opportunities for new jobs within the industry.

Economy Minister Ken Skates said:

“It’s clear that continuing and improving links both within Wales and internationally is as important today as it has ever been, and our ports play an important role in this regard.

“We want to see our ports continue to contribute on a local, regional and national level, helping drive a more prosperous and united Welsh economy and I’m delighted to announce this new fund today, which will see our ports come forward with proposals for how best they would use public funding to achieve this.

“I look forward to seeing the proposals and to carry on working with ports across Wales to build on the good work already evident, ensuring they are ready to overcome any challenges and maximise all opportunities.”

Looking forward to summer following Epic Easter

The Year of Legends 2017 has had a great start with Wales being named as one of the top must-visit destinations globally from the likes of Lonely Planet TripAdvisor, Wanderlust and Rough Guides. The recently launched Year of Legends campaign, which includes an advert starring Luke Evans has also been hailed as a game changer by industry leaders. With the busy holiday season in full flow, the work of marketing Wales continues.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“Campaign work now continues to convert early interest and opportunities arising from the weak pound into bookings for the summer. A boost to the Visit Wales budget means that there is £26.3m available to invest in marketing and product development this year – this 41% increase has enabled us to pull together a more ambitious programme than ever before for 2017.

“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 first nine months of 2016.”

Figures published today shows that one of the measures of tourism performance – [The Great Britain Tourism Survey](#) – showed a decrease in the number of British staying visitors. These provisional figures for overnight visits from the GB for the year ending September 2016, are one indicator of tourism performance in Wales. Although they show a fall of 1.5% in terms of trips, this is in line with figures for the GB as a whole.

The Economy Secretary, continued:

“Last week I announced that £24m will be available for the development and marketing of tourism through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 -2020. With the existing EU tourism funded projects currently in development with partners in Wales, we are looking at more than a £100 million investment in the sector up until 2020 which will have a big impact on Wales’ competitiveness in the global marketplace.

“We’re also poised to make the most of one of the greatest shows on earth – the UEFA Champions League Final – coming to Cardiff in June. This will not only mean a boost to visitor numbers and economic impact during the event – but will also have an impact on Wales global profile long after the matches come to an end.

“We look forward to working with the industry on making 2017 a legendary year for tourism in Wales.”

Confidence is high among the industry following the first Bank Holiday of the Year.

The EPIC installation had a great reception at Margam Park.

Margam Park Manager Michael Wynne said:

“We are delighted that Visit Wales chose Margam Country Park as the first stop on the EPIC sign’s tour of Wales during the Year of Legends campaign, and the response has been fantastic. We’ve had a lot of visitors to the park over the Easter Weekend and many selfies have been taken in front of the sign already!

“Margam Park has a long history and more than a fair share of its own myths and legends so this year’s campaign is a great way to showcase what we have to offer. Our bank holiday events saw the park host some epic battles involving medieval knights, archers and horsemen and we are looking forward to welcoming visitors throughout the Easter holidays and beyond to enjoy the beautiful surroundings here at the park.”

Speaking on behalf of The Welsh Rarebits Collection, Wales’ premier marketing consortium for the best independent boutique hotels, Mike Morgan, said :

The whole sector has benefitted from continued capital investment by our member Hoteliers. We know, from over 30 years of marketing high end hotels, that there is always strong demand for genuine quality, but that intangible ‘Croeso’ helps us to compete on the global stage. A notable Year of Legends campaign is the icing on the cake, and Visit Wales has given us all something to get behind and take the Welsh hospitality industry to the world. A strong set of Easter figures usually points to a busy summer season, and we can’t wait to welcome the many new converts to Wales who are visiting for the first time as a result of the exchange rate.

Following refurbishments over the winter months, Folly Farm had a busy start to the holiday season:

Chris Ebsworth, Managing Director at Folly Farm, said;

“We’re feeling confident about the season ahead following heavy investment in a new visitor entrance and gift shop, a new pirate themed playground and improvements to several of our zoo enclosures. Easter is generally a good measure for the season and we’ve had an excellent weekend with visitor numbers up by 25%. Visit Wales’ marketing campaign for this year is bold and confident, building on their success last year and we feel that Pembrokeshire is well placed to play a significant role in helping Wales achieve long term success.”

£422k awarded to Credit Unions across Wales

The funding will help credit unions continue to support financially excluded members as well as help their longer term sustainability. Projects will include schools savings schemes and community engagement programmes.

Carl Sargeant said:

“We know the importance of credit unions in helping people who are struggling to manage their money. The Welsh Government funding provided between April 2014 and December 2016 has helped credit unions support more than 29,000 financially excluded members with just over £23 million provided in loans to those who need this help. This demonstrates the role credit unions play.

“Credit unions are ideally placed through their relationships with local employers, schools and other community organisations to help strengthen the financial resilience of communities, through improved access to responsible credit and saving opportunities. In reaching out to local schools they help to encourage a savings habit from an early age.”