

New Lease of Life for town centre Inns

Plas yn Dre, Bala has been a family run restaurant since 1990 but has undergone a transformation in 2017 with a complete re-vamp and the addition of 9 Guest Bedrooms, with support of £72,000 from the Tourism Investment Support Scheme.

The Grade II listed building is now fully open for Easter with a restaurant, lounge and bar area. The main works were to convert the upper 2 floors into the 9 en-suite bedrooms. Having opened the restaurant for the Mother's Day in March, owner Sion Williams is delighted with the feedback to date and is looking forward to a busy season, he said:

"The finished article far exceeds our expectations and the customer feedback is unbelievable with rooms being sold out for much of the Easter weekend."

The Erskine Arms in Conwy will open in May, following a redevelopment which will see the historic inn transformed to include a restaurant and 10 high quality rooms. The redevelopment of this traditional Georgian Coaching Inn has been supported by the Tourism Investment Support Scheme with £140,000 and will create 23 jobs.

The Erskine is owned by Stange & Co. Ltd who also own The Cottage Loaf and The Snowdon in Llandudno and The Glengower in Aberystwyth. Stange & Co. Ltd. is a family owned group of character pubs and inns independently run and focus on homemade hearty food on their menu along with local cask ales at the bar. There will be a strong emphasis on both local and seasonal produce throughout the menu.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

"I'm delighted that we've been able to support the redevelopment of these two traditional Inns. It's fantastic that they've been given a new lease of life and transformed to become a very high quality product providing employment for the area. Both are also at the heart of the town in Bala and Conwy – which adds to the appeal and vibrancy of the towns. I wish both developments the very best for future success."

Last call for applications for two Property Development Funds

The £7m Property for Business Development Grant Fund and the £7m Property Infrastructure Fund are both designed to support business growth and job opportunities with a primary focus on projects in Enterprise Zones, Local Growth Zones and City Regions.

Both Funds also aim to bridge the financial viability gap that exists in parts of Wales between the cost of building, expanding or refurbishing properties and the completed market value of the property.

It is expected that each will attract £13m of private sector investment and help stimulate the market to meet the needs of businesses.

Together the schemes will deliver around 51,100 sq. mt. (550,000 sq. ft.) of new and refurbished floor space in areas that will provide tangible benefits to local economies, address market needs and support business growth.

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure Ken Skates said:

“There has been considerable interest in both Funds which have the potential to make a real impact in terms of improving and expanding the availability of industrial units and office accommodation in target areas around Wales. I would advise anyone interested in learning more about the Funds and applying for support to do so before applications close on 30 April.”

Both funds are for new build, refurbishment, extensions and adaptation projects. The Property Infrastructure Fund is aimed specifically at advanced build development and the Property for Business Development Grant Fund is targeted at supporting businesses with bespoke expansion projects. The maximum grant intervention rate for both funds is 35%.

Stage 1 applications that provide brief information on the project requiring support need to be submitted by 30 April in order to be considered for a provisional application of funding. For more information please email gde.pdg@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

£6m funding for third sector

organisations

£4.5m of core funding has been allocated to Third Sector Support Wales to help them provide advice and training to third sector organisations across the country for key activities such as fundraising and governance.

A further £1.3m has been awarded to the Volunteering Wales grant scheme to provide support to volunteer-involving organisations and £41,000 has been awarded to the Community Foundation in Wales, a charity which distributes grants to community groups and voluntary organisations throughout Wales. The money will part fund two posts at the charity.

The remaining funding will be used to compensate Third Sector organisations who are members of the Third Sector Partnership Council for the time spent working with the Welsh Government and organising network events to share Welsh Government priorities and research the views of the sector to share with Ministers.

Announcing the funding, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“Third Sector organisations play a vital role in Wales, whether that is providing services, supporting vulnerable people, improving their communities or providing opportunities for people to build confidence and learn new skills. I am therefore delighted to be awarding this funding to support them to continue the excellent work they do and to build on it for the future.”

Superfast speeds check-in at Ceredigion hotel

Fast fibre technology – now available thanks to the Superfast Cymru programme – is allowing the hotel to promote itself more effectively and provide new services for visitors.

The Conrah was originally the mansion house of the Ffosrhydgaled Estate and is set in extensive grounds in the Ceredigion countryside, some four miles from Aberystwyth.

Hotel owners Geraint and Wendy Hughes decided to upgrade to superfast broadband after realising the strong demand for the technology from guests and the overall impact it could have on the business.

The hotel now benefits from offering fast broadband speeds of 80 Mbps – which

can be increased even further if required – as a result of the latest fibre-to-the premises (FTTP) broadband rolled out to the area by engineers from Openreach, the local network business which is part of BT Group.

Geraint Hughes said:

“Superfast broadband has made a massive difference to the hotel. The demand is there from guests for faster internet speeds and we’re now able to provide exactly what the customer wants.

“Although they are away from home, visitors are also keen to stay connected, whether it is for business or personal use, and being able to offer superfast broadband can be the difference between a guest booking to stay or going somewhere else.”

Online advertising is just one of the ways, Geraint and his team have been able to improve the business. They are now able to take bookings on the website better than before and make greater use of social media to promote the hotel. It is also vital in their conference facilities offering.

Guests have also been impressed with the superfast connection. They are able to access work as well as stream videos and upload photos from their stay.

Geraint added:

“Superfast broadband has opened a wealth of new opportunities for us. We now employ a member of staff who is solely responsible for our social media, something which we could never have done previously.

“We also sit down with guests, look online and help them plan their stay – where they want to visit, how to get there, which walking routes they’d like to take – it’s a great benefit.”

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, said:

“I’m delighted to hear how superfast broadband is making a real difference at the Conrah Hotel thanks to the Superfast Cymru programme.

“It is a great example of how faster speeds can have a positive impact for the business and visitors. Having access to quick, strong and reliable internet connection is increasingly important for guests and the Superfast Cymru roll-out is helping meet that demand.

“Areas such as Ceredigion would have no superfast broadband without

the intervention of Superfast Cymru and it's great to see how the team at the Conrah are making the most of the technology."

Alwen Williams, regional director for BT Cymru Wales, said:

"The roll-out of superfast broadband across Wales is already having a huge impact on how families and businesses interact online. The Conrah Hotel is another example of how this new high-speed network is making an impact.

"As more and more homes and businesses gain access to superfast broadband speeds every single day I'd urge people to follow in the footsteps of the Conrah Hotel and make the most of this new technology by upgrading their services.

"We appreciate that this isn't currently possible for small parts of Wales but our engineers continue to work hard to roll out fibre broadband across the country as quickly and as widely as possible."

£1.5m investment to quadruple production capacity at Massilly UK's Swansea facility

The company currently produces 10m aerosol cans a year and the investment, supported by £200,000 from the Welsh Government, will upgrade its existing production line and introduce an additional line, enabling it to produce up to 40million cans a year by 2018.

The investment will secure the sustainable future of the site, create 16 new jobs and safeguard the existing 25 jobs.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Massilly operates in an established niche growth market supplying the UK SME sector and is now operating at full capacity. It has seen its turnover increase by 25% over the last three years and this investment in additional plant and equipment will enable it to exploit further growth opportunities.

"I am delighted support from the Welsh Government helped secure this investment for Wales which will result in a significant increase in the company's production capacity while also

safeguarding and creating jobs.”

Thanks to that investment effort, the Massilly group wants to strengthen its position in the UK tin plate aerosol cans market by offering local manufacturing and support to its customers.

“We definitively believe that giving a local solution to our customers is the most efficient way to fulfil their expectations. We have developed the same model in Spain for the south of Europe and also in Germany and Russia. Our European network, associated with our local structures, help us to deliver specialist expertise, as well as flexibility,”

said Thomas Bindschedler, CEO of Massilly Group.

The company was supported in its application to the Welsh Government for this discretionary grant by advisory firm Broomfield & Alexander. Director of Grants, Mike Fenwick, commented:

“We were delighted to support Massilly UK with the application process, which involved agreeing key terms and conditions, and preparing the supporting business plans and financial forecasts to ensure that the application met with the Welsh Government’s own criteria, as well as complying with European State Aid rules. The investment is great news for Wales and the local economy and we wish Massilly every success with its new investment.”

Massilly UK, established in Wales since 1984 is based at Hendy Industrial Estate, Pontarddulais, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Massilly Holding SA, a private family company headquartered in Macon, France, which has 28 subsidiary companies in Europe as well as Canada, South Africa, Russia and India.

The Swansea plant entered the UK aerosol market in 2012 – the second largest in Europe producing 1 billion cans per annum – targeting the SME sector. The quality of its products, which is considered superior to imported products, has given it a major competitive advantage in winning new business.