

A brighter future for Ruthin Castle

The work is a holding measure to prevent further collapse of the Castle walls and the fascinating Victorian follies and tunnels built onto and within them until the recently formed Ruthin Castle Conservation Trust is able to develop an ambitious project for their large scale conservation and public access. Due to the fragile state of the ruins the work is all being undertaken by specialist rope access contractors who have cleared a huge amount of heavy vegetation from the walls, revealing this spectacular monument in its full glory for the first time in decades. Work has now begun pinning, propping, shoring and strapping the crumbling walls to stabilise as much masonry as possible.

The future of the 750 year old Castle, which is arguably the most significant medieval castle in Wales not to have been conserved, is now looking brighter. The Ruthin Castle Conservation Trust – which was created last year – is also now looking at taking over the lease of the ancient monument. The Trust's mission is to encourage, engage and inspire the community of Ruthin and beyond to join together in supporting the restoration, and sustainable conservation of Ruthin Castle and its gardens, grounds and associated buildings, using its heritage qualities to create an historic educational, tourism and leisure environment.

County Archaeologist Fiona Gale, said:

“It is wonderful to at last see work happening at Ruthin Castle, the medieval masonry is amazing but has been in a very poor condition for decades, two years ago there was a small collapse. Cadw are putting funding in to kick start this fantastic project and to address the worst areas of damage. It is great to see this happening and great for the town of Ruthin.”

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“I'm delighted that there's so much good will and passion towards the future of Ruthin Castle among the local community and I wish the Trust well in their future work to share the story of Ruthin Castle. Although emergency works at our ancient monuments are rare and are used as a last resort, Cadw's work at the site will prevent further loss of the site and will hopefully attract further funding for the Trust.”

€6.7m EU boost to improve bathing waters in Ireland and Wales

The Acclimatize project will help to improve the quality of sea shores in both countries, helping to boost tourism and supporting marine activities, including shellfish harvesting.

Led by University College Dublin in partnership with Aberystwyth University, the project will identify sources of pollution and their impact on bathing waters as a result of climate change.

The project has been backed by €5.3m from the EU's Ireland-Wales cooperation programme and will use and develop a range of technologies, including smart real-time predictive tools to monitor water quality to protect human health and the marine environment.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Preserving and enhancing the marine and coastal environment in Wales and Ireland for economic prosperity and enjoyment by current and future generations is of vital importance.

“This is another positive example of how EU funds are supporting local economies and communities by helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.”

The Acclimatize project will focus on bathing waters, including Dublin Bay and Cemaes Bay in Anglesey and other beaches. Real-time models will be developed to inform the effects of climate change through altered weather patterns, affecting rainfall, temperature and tides which impact on coastal areas.

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe, T.D said:

“The Acclimatize project represent an important contribution to enhancing the quality and economic sustainability of the shared resource that is the Irish Sea. It is encouraging to see such EU-funded cross-border projects continuing. The Irish Government is committed to the continued implementation of the Ireland Wales programme.”

Professor Wim Meijer, from University College Dublin, said:

“Working in partnership with Aberystwyth University, the Acclimatize project will make a significant contribution to

developing innovative management systems to protect our coastal waters from the impact of climate change.

“This will support economic growth through improved water quality which will lead to a range of benefits, such as increased tourism and shellfish harvesting in Ireland and Wales.”

Promoting Cruise in Wales at a Global event

SeaTrade is the cruise industry’s premier global event and is the only event guaranteed to bring together every facet of the business, including cruise lines, suppliers, travel agents and partners. With 700+ Exhibitors from all over the world, SeaTrade Cruise Global draws in visitors to meet new vendors, and source new products, ideas and solutions.

Cruise is big business for Wales and is worth nearly £3 million to the Welsh economy – 2017 will see 89 cruise calls to Wales with 37,000 passengers and 15,000 crew – an increase in calls of 33% year on year.

Previous attendance at the SeaTrade event has secured further business from new cruise lines who wish to visit Wales.

For the 2017 event, Visit Wales will be promoting the arrival of the Volvo Ocean Race along with Year of the Sea in 2018. Cardiff has been chosen as the destination for the first Volvo Ocean Race transatlantic leg to the United Kingdom in 12 years when the world’s leading offshore race makes its debut visit to Wales in 2018. This around the world yacht race is held every three years and is widely regarded as one of the most challenging endurance events of its kind.

The cruise ship market is big business for Wales – and Cruise Wales and partners are working hard to grow the market. An increasing number of visitors from Germany are coming to south west Wales through cruise ships docking at Swansea, Milford Haven Port, Pembroke and Fishguard. Following Tourism Investment Support Scheme funding for the floating pontoon at Fishguard to allow larger vessels to anchor, Fishguard calls have increased from 5 in 2015 to 31 for 2017.

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates, said:

“The cruise market has been highlighted in the tourism strategy for

Wales as one way of growing the tourism industry in Wales by 10% by 2020 and Cruise is one of the fastest growing sectors year on year. We are working with many outside stakeholders and are looking at various infrastructure developments for cruise. SeaTrade gives us a great opportunity to keep Wales front of mind with cruise liners, travel agents and partners and to promote Wales as a new product.

The arrival of the Volvo Ocean Race also gives a great platform to talk about what Wales has to offer – but also to promote next year's Cardiff stopover to an important US audience.”

[Code of Practice for Ethical Employment launched](#)

At the centre of the Code is a focus on guaranteeing good employment practices for the millions of employees involved in public sector supply chains.

All public sector organisations in Wales, businesses and third sector organisations in receipt of Welsh public sector funding will be expected to sign up to the code. Other organisations and businesses based in Wales are encouraged to sign up to the code.

The new code covers six key subjects, containing 12 commitments, ranging from unlawful and unethical practices to good and best practice. It has been developed with the support of the Workforce Partnership Council and social partners including Unions.

The first subject is Modern Slavery, estimated to affect fifty million people worldwide including in the UK and Wales. The Code of Practice, and accompanying guidance, will enable staff to spot and deal with allegations and to identify and assess spend areas at higher risk of modern slavery and human right abuses.

The second area in the Code is Blacklisting, when workers are discriminated against if they join a Union or raise Health and Safety concerns. The Code of Practice, and accompanying guidance, contains a commitment to ensure suppliers are not using blacklists and sets out how to avoid companies that have not taken the issue seriously.

The next three areas relate to terms and conditions of employment, including Zero hours contracts, Umbrella Schemes and False Self-Employment. The Code of Practice, and accompanying guidance, will help staff to differentiate between fair and unfair practices. The Guide also includes a Fair Work Practices tender question to deal with these issues through procurement.

The final area relates to the Living Wage and contains a commitment to consider paying all staff a Living Wage as a minimum.

In signing up to the Code, organisations will agree to comply with the 12 commitments designed to eliminate modern slavery and support ethical employment practices.

Mark Drakeford said:

“I am very pleased to be launching our Ethical Code in Supply Chains at the Workforce Partnership Council today. This is a ground-breaking piece of work – and an excellent example of what working in social partnership across Wales can deliver.

“The Welsh public sector spends around £6bn every year on goods, services and works involving international supply chains. The uniting factor is the people involved in each stage of these supply chains.

“It is therefore vital that good employment practices are at centre of all public sector projects here in Wales. This new code will play an important role in helping achieve this and in turn tackle unfair employment practices and contribute to improved conditions for workers.

“I expect all public sector bodies in Wales, Welsh businesses and suppliers to the Welsh public sector to sign up to this code. It is only by working together that we can help deliver a better, and crucially, a fairer deal for workers in our supply chains in Wales and throughout the world.”

Martin Mansfield, Wales TUC General Secretary said:

“This new code of practice is a very welcome step on the way to ensuring that Wales becomes a ‘fair work nation’.

“Welsh government has a strong commitment to address exploitative and unethical employment practices and is taking action to enforce that. The Wales TUC wants to see all the powers and influence available to government used to ensure people are treated fairly at work.

“Wales has many great employers who provide career opportunities and development for staff and work in partnership with unions. However there are still too many bad bosses who seek to exploit workers and undermine decent standards in order to enrich themselves.

“This code is an indication that Wales will not tolerate exploitation. Now we need similar action to ensure decent work and

fair treatment are the only way in Wales.”

Alison Ward, Chief Executive, Torfaen County Borough Council said:

“Public sector employers in Wales are strongly committed to the wellbeing of all those who deliver services to the public, whether they are employed directly or through contractual arrangements. We welcome the principles set out in the Code of Practice in Ethical Employment in the Supply Chain, and we hope to see it ensure fair treatment for everyone involved in the demanding job of providing good public services in times of austerity.”

[Mark Drakeford responds to the UK Government's Spring Budget](#)

The Spring Budget included £149m of additional revenue funding between 2017-18 and 2019-20 and an extra £52m of capital funding for Wales between 2017-18 and 2020-21.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford:

“Ahead of the Budget, I wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to outline my concerns about the UK Government's intention to press ahead with £3.5bn cuts to public spending in 2019-20. We still have no clarity about these looming cuts, which could result in our Budget being reduced by £175m.

“The UK Government's efficiency review will not report until the autumn. I am not prepared to wait until then to find out the impact of more cuts to our Budget. I am seeking urgent assurances from the UK Government that we will discuss early findings well before the autumn.

“In these uncertain times, we have been clear about the need to end austerity and invest in our valued public services and the economy.

“Additional revenue funding is always needed against the backdrop of continued cuts to our Budget as a result of the UK Government's pursuit of the damaging policy of austerity.

“Since 2010, our Budget has been cut by 8% in real terms. Today's Spring Budget was yet another missed opportunity to end austerity.

“Despite the ongoing cuts to our funding, we have prioritised funding for social care in Wales and spending health and social care is 6% higher in Wales than in England. I’m pleased the Chancellor has followed the Welsh Government’s lead and recognised the importance of social care to the health service.

“In Wales, we have also acted to support those small businesses which have been disproportionately affected by the independent Valuation Office Agency’s revaluation. We have put in place £20m of targeted support for 2017-18, on top of our Small Business Rates Relief scheme.

“The Welsh Government’s Cabinet will now decide how we maximise the additional revenue funding and the very modest increase to our capital budget to support our investment priorities.”

“We have said for some time that the Swansea Bay Region city deal is ready to be signed – we fully recognise the importance of the deal and the positive long-term economic benefits it will bring across the region. It is disappointing the Chancellor didn’t use this Budget to bring the deal to its conclusion immediately.”