

Wales' Year of Legends 2017 campaign goes live

- Building on the success of the Year of Adventure 2016, Visit Wales launches £5m global Year of Legends campaign
- The Legends campaign includes a new television and cinema advert featuring Luke Evans – one of Wales's leading international stars
- Hailed as a 'game-changer' by key industry figures – the legends campaign will run in Wales, UK, Ireland, Germany and the USA.

The ambitious £5m campaign centres on a highly-creative new TV and Cinema advert – with a wide-range of other activity in Wales, the UK, Ireland, Germany and the USA throughout the year. Filmed in Snowdonia, the advert harnesses the best of Wales's creative talent and 21C technology to bring our nation's legends to life to new audiences across the world – inviting audiences to #FindYourEpic in Wales again in 2017.

Fronted by Luke Evans from Pontypool – star of some of 2016 and 2017's biggest films – and directed by Marc Evans, the cinematic advert is a showcase for legendary Welsh storytellers, old and new.

Luke Evans is the latest Welsh celebrity to back the 2017 Year of Legends tourism campaign. Joining a line-up currently comprising Game of Thrones star Iwan Rheon and musician and presenter Cerys Matthews, Luke is supporting Visit Wales to confidently celebrate Wales's unique culture in new ways.

He said of his involvement in Wales' Year of Legends campaign:

"I am excited to get behind Wales as we share some of our most fascinating stories with visitors from all over the world. Growing up, Wales's stories were very much a part of my culture, and their impact can still be seen today if you know where to look. There is so much emerging talent in Wales today, and so many world-class attractions. 2017 really feels like the right time to celebrate and share our heritage and how it impacts us today and into the future."

Cabinet Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

"During these times of great change we are committed to promoting Wales to the world like never before – taking our nation's story out to new audiences with creativity and confidence. The Year of Legends is about bringing our past to life and creating new legends for the future. I'm delighted that an international star like Luke Evans has worked with us on a cutting-edge advert which marks a different approach to tourism advertising, and make Wales stand-out

from other countries. Many people may not be aware of the wealth of myths and legends we have here in Wales and this is an opportunity for us to tell our story in a modern way.”

Filmed at Llyn Llydaw in Snowdonia, this advert is an inspiring, intriguing introduction to Wales’ wealth of stories and characters – some world-famous, others lesser-known. Branwen; Rhiannon; Blodeuwedd; Owain Glyndŵr; Llywelyn; Merlin; Llyn y Fan are mentioned by Luke Evans with the use of CGI adding a magical layer to depict flying slate arrows, rising waters, and the birds of Rhiannon. Further information on the legends in the advert are then found on visitwales.com

The advert will be shown on television, in cinemas, on digital platforms and social media and at events throughout the Year of Legends as part of a multi-media approach that also includes print and online campaigns; outdoor advertising; and partnerships with organisations as wide-ranging as Warner Brothers and P&O Ferries. Forthcoming highlights include a Legendary Media Reception in Manhattan with the First Minister on 2 March; the Explore GB Showcase for buyers from 40 countries on 2-3 March in Brighton; and a presence at the ITB Berlin international tourism trade fair from 7-10 March.

Research shows that Visit Wales marketing has a real impact on the Welsh economy and aims to drive more than £300m of additional spend in Wales.

[Appointments to board of Social Care Wales announced](#)

Social Care Wales will come into effect from 3 April 2017 and will replace the existing Care Council for Wales. This change is being made as part of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans has today announced that the board will be chaired by Arwel Ellis Owen who is the currently the Chair of the Care Council for Wales board.

The other members will be: Abigail Harris, Aled Roberts, Carl Cooper, Damian Bridgeman, Donna Hutton, Emma Britton, Grace Quantock, Joanne Kember, Jane Moore, Kate Hawkins, Peter Max, Rhian Watcyn Jones, and Simon Burch.

Members will serve for a period of four years, from 3 April 2017 until 31 March 2021.

Rebecca Evans said:

“Social Care Wales will be a dynamic and powerful body. It will

take on new responsibilities for driving improvement across our social care sector, as well as retaining existing responsibilities for regulating and developing the workforce.

“Following unprecedented interest and a competitive selection process, I am pleased to announce the membership of the new Social Care Wales board.

“The members, headed up by Arwel Ellis Owen, are passionate about, and committed to, improving social care in Wales. They have a diverse range of skills, experience and perspectives which makes them well-placed to drive improvement in social care.

“I look forward to working with Social Care Wales as it ensures we have a high-quality social care workforce that provides services fully meeting the needs of people in Wales.”

[Have your say on a new Rail Service for Wales](#)

Passengers and interested parties across Wales and the Borders are being invited to give their views on what they want from the next Wales and Borders Rail Service.

The Transport for Wales consultation, which also separately considers the South Wales Metro, invites views on a range of issues including frequency of rail services, mobile charging facilities, live travel information and fares. The current Arriva Train Wales service is due to end in October 2018.

Economy and Infrastructure Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“I’m pleased that Transport for Wales is undertaking this second consultation on the Wales and Borders Rail Service which reflects the importance of the network to passengers. I’d like to thank interested parties for their valuable feedback during the first consultation process and for the enthusiastic participation of so many so far.

“We inherited a franchise which was let on a zero growth basis and no longer fully meets the needs of a modern Wales. Now we have a fantastic opportunity to ensure that the next contract, the Welsh Government’s first, is developed with the passenger at its heart.

“With this in mind, we’re keen to ensure that our new service takes full account of what passengers want, and provides not only for current requirements but also allows for future growth, quality improvements and is able to adapt to ever changing technology.

“Our extensive programme of engagement will also feed directly into the procurement process, with four bidders being expected to demonstrate how they will deliver a service that meets passengers’ needs.”

To ensure as many views as possible are gathered, Transport for Wales will be hosting engagement events across Wales and running a social media campaign. Young people’s and Easy Read versions of the consultation are also be published to encourage feedback from a wide range of partners and service users.

The full consultation documents can be found at:

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/transport-wales-design-wales-and-borders-rail-service-including-metro>.

Minister welcomes latest tranche of international Sêr Cymru scientists to Wales

This is the message from Wales’ Skills and Science Minister, Julie James as she welcomed the latest tranche of international research Fellows and Chairs to Wales at a special reception in Cardiff last night to celebrate Sêr Cymru investments and the start of the second phase of the programme.

Sêr Cymru II aims to build on the success of the original Sêr Cymru programme, which supported the establishment of four Sêr Cymru Chairs and three research networks in Wales across STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine) subject areas.

This latest phase of the programme involves more than £45m investment – £29m from European funding streams – and it will fund more research chairs, ‘Rising Stars’ and research fellowships and include special support for those

returning to work following a career break.

Led by the Welsh Government, Sêr Cymru delivers funding from the European Union (both COFUND via Horizon 2020 and European Regional Development fund via WEFO), the Welsh Higher Education sector and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

The funding deployed through the programme aims to attract and develop some of the world's best scientific research talent in Wales, to deliver economic growth and high quality jobs.

The overall investment in the programme since its launch in 2013 now stands at nearly £100m.

Welcoming the latest tranche of Sêr Cymru II talent, Skills and Science Minister, Julie James said:

“Increasing our already impressive research capabilities by attracting brilliant new talent to Wales helps to drive up our economic prosperity by creating well paid and stimulating jobs.

“Sêr Cymru really is a partnership approach, bringing together Welsh Government, European and academic resources to deliver a programme that places Wales at the cutting edge of research developments aimed at tackling real issues such as human disease, new energy sources and innovative manufacturing and materials technologies.

“Building our research capacity also makes Wales more attractive for further investment and helps to raise our profile on an international stage. Our research discoveries can also be commercialised, creating more and better jobs for Wales which we aim to develop and keep here.”

Wales' Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Julie Williams, added:

“This programme will produce a step change in research capacity and put Wales firmly on the map as a centre of scientific discovery. These young people will be the leaders of tomorrow.”

One of the latest Sêr Cymru II intakes to benefit from the programme is Dr. Catrin Williams; a multidisciplinary researcher attached to Cardiff University whose Fellowship spans the STEM subjects. One of the key areas her research aims to address is how electromagnetic fields interact with biological systems.

Explaining what this means and why she was keen to get involved with Sêr Cymru II, Catrin said:

“My area of work – examining how electromagnetic fields interact with biological systems – put simply is about looking at the impact microwaves (found in common devices such as mobile phones, Wi-Fi and microwave ovens to more advanced equipment such as those used in hospitals for treating cancers and heart diseases) have on living things.

“Some of the current impacts these appliances have on us are quite obvious, for example improved communications, faster cooking times and more effective medical treatments. What are less obvious are the hidden or longer term impacts these microwaves might be having on us, such as potential molecular changes in our cellular make-up.”

Dr. Williams continued:

“These potential changes may be positive or negative, leading to therapeutic or destructive outcomes. Even destructive changes may lead to positive results, for example a better understanding of the risks associated with microwaves and how these can be minimised or avoided. Additionally, we can also look at how potential destructive outcomes can be used to our advantage, such as in the development of new technologies and treatments that lead to the more efficient and effective removal or avoidance of cancers and some cardiac diseases.

“At this point we simply don’t know what opportunities and challenges microwaves present and this is why this area of research is so exciting and important.”

Cabinet Secretary to celebrate the best of Wales in Dubai

In addition to a number of engagements to promote Welsh culture and increase business links between Wales, Dubai and the wider United Arab Emirates, the Cabinet Secretary will join a record twenty five of Wales’ finest food and drink producers at the Gulfood Trade Show, one of the world’s largest annual food and beverage exhibitions.

The Trade Show is an opportunity to promote Wales’ food and drink sector on the international stage and help Welsh producers’ efforts to establish new business relationships and expand their sales into potentially lucrative new markets.

During the visit, the Cabinet Secretary will announce she is making £2.4million available to ensure Wales remains well-represented at high profile food and drink trade events and visits around the world over the next two years, providing further opportunities to showcase Wales and world class Welsh produce.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“St David’s Day presents us with a fantastic opportunity to celebrate our people, our history, our culture, and, of course, our high quality larder of food and drink produce.

“Wales’ food and drinks sector is a success story. We are already more than half way towards achieving our target of 30% growth in the sector by 2020, generating over £260 million from exports.

Almost 90% of these are going to the EU, which is why we strongly advocate, on behalf of Welsh businesses, continued full and unfettered access to the European Single Market.

“It is important we remain an outward focused and welcoming nation. The challenges presented by a “Hard Brexit” are obvious but I am encouraged by the fact Wales’ food and drink sector is well placed to tackle the challenges we now face and grasp new opportunities.

“International exhibitions are vital in raising Wales’ international profile as they present the opportunity for Welsh businesses to prosper by entering new overseas markets. I am delighted, therefore, to confirm we are investing £2.4m over the next two years to have a strong presence at a series of important food and drink exhibitions and trade visits both in the UK and overseas including a continuation of our ongoing presence at Gulfood.”

Lesley Griffiths will also support an additional Welsh Government-led trade delegation involving twelve small and medium sized enterprises from Wales aiming to grow their business in Dubai and the wider region. The delegation will visit the site of the next World Expo, taking place in Dubai in 2020.

Expo 2020 offers significant commercial opportunities for Welsh businesses of all sizes and in many sectors.

Wales’ cultural excellence will be showcased in Dubai by the presence of the Welsh National Opera who will be performing Puccini’s Madame Butterfly and La bohème over the first two weeks of March. In addition, during the evening of St David’s Day itself, Lesley Griffiths will attend a special performance by a trio of Welsh National Opera performers at a ‘Wales – Business and Culture’ reception at the British Embassy in Dubai. The event will also provide a high profile opportunity to show Wales’ strengths as a place to visit, study and do business.

To end her visit, the Cabinet Secretary will speak at a celebratory St. David’s Day Ball organised by the local Welsh Club.