

## £1m to be invested in Wrexham to deliver 100 new businesses and create 260 new jobs

The two year pilot, that aims to help secure at least £1m of private investment for its member entrepreneurs, will provide wrap round support for aspiring entrepreneurs and will be delivered by Business Wales in association with Welsh ICE.

Ken Skates said:

“I am delighted to announce funding for the new incubator in Wrexham to harness, support and encourage the fantastic entrepreneurial talent in the region.

“Innovation and entrepreneurship are vital drivers for the economy and I want to continue to create the best environment for entrepreneurs across Wales and will be using the pilot to inform my future economic priorities.

“The importance of providing space, community and support for aspiring entrepreneurs is key to success and I am keen to build on and complement the existing infrastructure across Wales.”

The Hub will provide a community for entrepreneurs that will link to the wider ecosystem including Glyndwr University, Coleg Cambria, industry and support agencies in the region.

It effectively will roll out the successful business incubator models that are established in Wales and will focus on providing a supportive environment for like minded entrepreneurs to develop their businesses.

Welsh ICE CEO and Founder Gareth I. Jones, said:

“We are excited to start to work more with the community in Wrexham, and partners at Welsh Government and Business Wales, to help anyone with an idea for their own business, no matter how big or small, to make positive steps towards launching their own start-up.”

The Hub will be delivered through the Business Wales consortium – which is backed by EU funding – who will work collaboratively with Caerphilly based Welsh ICE which has four years of experience of running a successful incubation facility.

It will provide a shared work environment, business advice, structured workshops, increased opportunities and challenges designed to inspire potential entrepreneurs to develop resilient and successful companies.

It will also provide entrepreneurs with international trade support, high quality business advice, intercompany and individual networking opportunities, and mentoring and training support.

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## Cabinet Secretary confirms £18m of funding for Glastir Advanced

Glastir Advanced is the flagship component of Glastir, through which the Welsh Government offers financial support to farmers and land owners to improve the environmental management of their land. Glastir pays for the delivery of specific environmental goods and services aimed at combating climate change, improving water management and maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

Glastir Advanced offers targeted financial interventions, aimed at helping farmers and landowners to achieve value for money environmental improvements for habitats, species, soil and water.

The new round of funding for Glastir Advanced is worth £18.36m and is expected to deliver up to 340 Glastir Advanced contracts in 2018 (estimated at £54k per contract). The Expression of Interest window for Glastir Advanced 2018 will open on 28 February 2017 and will close at midnight on 31 March 2017.

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement as she officially opened the new Farmers Union of Wales offices in Newtown. She said:

“I am very pleased to announce, here at these impressive new FUW offices in Newtown, the opening of a new round of Glastir Advanced funding worth over £18million.

“Glastir Advanced is very much at the forefront of delivering the Welsh Government’s objectives for the rural environment. I encourage farmers and landowners across Wales to find out more information on whether they are eligible to apply for a Glastir Advanced contract and, if they are, to submit an expression of interest before 31st March.”

More information on [Glastir Advanced](#), including expression of interest guidance will be available shortly.

Glastir is funded by the [Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-20](#), financed by the Welsh Government and the European Union.

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## £20m to build homes fit for the future

The programme, which will initially be funded by £20m over the next two years, will contribute to the 20,000 affordable homes target the Welsh Government aims to provide over this term of government. The innovative homes, which will help to significantly reduce or eliminate fuel bills, will inform the Welsh Government about the type of homes it should support in the future.

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement at the Innovative Housing Design Conference at the Cardiff City Stadium, jointly hosted by the Welsh Government, The Welsh Local Government Association and Community Housing Cymru.

He said:

“The housing sector in Wales is facing many challenges. We know we need to build more homes, quickly. We know the homes we build have to be cheaper to heat, more environmentally friendly and more capable of responding to the demographic challenges ahead.

“I’m looking for new ideas, new ways of doing things, both in terms of what we build and how we build them. We need to start looking at more innovation, at homes that can be built faster as panels in factories or whole units delivered to site on lorries. We need to look at what homes are made from and what else they offer in terms of fuel bills, carbon emissions, jobs.

“Building homes delivers important benefits beyond simply putting a roof over people’s heads. Alongside the well-documented health and education benefits that good quality housing provides for children and families, building homes of all tenures has a significant positive impact on the Welsh economy and on our communities. We can use the Welsh supply chain to unlock massive opportunities for growth and innovation in housing.

To qualify for support under the programme, homes must:

- be deliverable quickly
- be affordable and meet housing need
- create jobs and training opportunities, supporting Welsh businesses

wherever possible

- significantly reduce or erase fuel bills and carbon emissions
- be healthy and comfortable to live in, reflecting the needs of the occupant
- be certified for quality.

“My ambition is to start changing the type of homes built in Wales. Homes that are capable of being delivered at speed and cost and recycled, not just reused, if needs change. Homes that help to meet the challenges of climate change, fuel poverty and changing demographics with the huge pressures that puts on our health and social care budgets.”

Community Housing Cymru’s (CHC) Chief Executive Stuart Ropke said:

“CHC welcomes this latest investment by Welsh Government into innovative solutions for the housing crisis in Wales. Housing solutions need to be adaptable and flexible so that the sector can continue to provide a wide range of options for more people, and funding from this programme to turn aspiration into delivery will be key to this. The sector is up for the challenges set out in the Housing Supply Pact announced last December and we will continue to work with Welsh Government and WLGA to meet the 20,000 target.”

The WLGA’s spokesperson for housing, Councillor Dyfed Edwards, said:

“Local authorities have a full role to play in enabling and delivering the homes we need across Wales, and it is important that with this increased focus and investment in housing we do not miss the opportunity to explore new models of housing that deliver more efficient and affordable homes.”

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## [Mark Drakeford meets European Investment Bank to discuss infrastructure investment opportunities in Wales](#)

The Welsh Government has worked closely with the EIB to identify financing options for priority Welsh schemes; including investment in sections five and

six of the A465, the redevelopment of Velindre Cancer Centre; band B of the 21st Century Schools and Education programme and the Housing Finance Grant 2 (HFG2).

Professor Drakeford and EIB Vice President Jonathan Taylor will explore options for investment through the Investment Plan for Europe (IPE), including the €315bn European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI). The Finance Secretary will also discuss the Welsh Government's future relationship with the EIB when the UK leaves the European Union.

During his visit to Wales, Mr Taylor will meet Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children Carl Sargeant to discuss the potential for investment in social and affordable housing.

The HFG2 programme will play a key role in delivering the Welsh Government's target of 20,000 new affordable homes this Assembly term.

And the Finance Secretary, Health Secretary Vaughan Gething and Mr Taylor will visit Velindre NHS Trust to see the plans for the new Velindre Cancer Centre – the centre is at the heart of a £230m scheme to transform the delivery of cancer care services across South Wales and is one of the schemes identified by the EIB as a investment priority in Wales.

The EIB is an active investor in the Welsh economy and has invested almost £2bn over the last 20 years in a range of public and private sector projects, including water, aviation, the motor industry and housing stock.

Professor Drakeford said:

"I'm pleased to welcome Jonathan Taylor to Cardiff to discuss the progress made with these schemes, which are being developed across Wales. It is also an opportunity to discuss the Welsh Government's view about what our future relationship with the bank should look like once the UK leaves the EU.

"We are facing unprecedented challenges in terms of public finances so it is vitally important that we unlock all opportunities to boost investment in Welsh infrastructure. As a government we are focused on attracting investment from the EIB for our £2.5bn innovative finance schemes, including projects for affordable housing, transport, health and green growth.

"Wales already benefits significantly from our long relationship with the EIB and we want to see this continue post-Brexit. Our White Paper, Securing the Future, sets out a credible plan for the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and calls for the UK to continue as a subscribing partner of the bank."

Jonathan Taylor, European Investment Bank Vice President said:

“The European Investment Bank has a strong track record supporting long-term investment across Wales that has included transformational education, water, energy, transport and social housing schemes.

“Close cooperation with the Welsh government and business partners across Wales is crucial to maximise the impact of EIB engagement.”

Steve Ham, Chief Executive of Velindre NHS Trust said:

“We are delighted to be able to welcome both Cabinet Secretaries and Jonathan Taylor to the Trust.

“The visit will provide an excellent opportunity to highlight the progress we have made, in conjunction with our Health Board colleagues, in developing plans for Non Surgical Cancer Services across South East Wales, and the key role the new Cancer Centre will play in the future delivery of our services.”

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## **Carl Sargeant announces £4.4 million for advice services**

£2.2 million will support the delivery of services which can offer direct advice relating to welfare benefits, housing, debt, money management and discrimination.

A further £2.2 million will be awarded to Citizens Advice Cymru to deliver the Better Advice, Better Lives Scheme. The scheme encourages benefit take-up for families with disabled children, for those living in deprived areas whose health is likely to be affected by poverty, and for council tax and housing benefits.

Carl Sargeant said:

“Advice services are an important part of our efforts to tackle poverty. They provide practical support to people who are struggling financially or need help regarding their benefits or housing. I am pleased to guarantee this funding for the next financial year. During the first half of 2016-17 advice organisations responded to over 33,150 requests for information and advice which illustrates how beneficial these services are.

“I am also pleased to secure funding for Citizens Advice Cymru to deliver the Better Advice, Better Lives Scheme for 2017-18. A key feature of the project is that it is referral based and delivered in community settings which means it reaches disadvantaged groups and people who are less likely to seek advice themselves. Since the start of this project in 2012, the scheme has helped over 171,000 people.”