

Basic Payments to remain in 2020 to support transition to new Land Management Programme

Speaking at the Hybu Cig Cymru breakfast, the Cabinet Secretary said the decision to keep BPS for a further year will provide reassurance to the industry and give them more time to prepare for the changes to future farm support post-Brexit.

The Cabinet reiterated her commitment to support farmers through a new Land Management Programme, which will provide support in a smarter way than the current BPS.

At the HCC breakfast, the Cabinet Secretary will also announce over 85% of farmers' BPS 2018 claims will be paid on Monday 3 December. Over £181m will be paid into the bank accounts of over 13,200 Welsh farm businesses. This includes nearly 1,000 farmers who applied for the BPS loan scheme but will now get their BPS on day one.

Farmers who have their BPS claims for 2018 still to be validated for payment are urged to apply before 30 November for an opt-in loan scheme, announced in response to the spell of hot and dry weather earlier this summer.

Cabinet Secretary said:

"We had an overwhelming response to our consultation 'Brexit and our Land' and are now considering all the responses in detail.

"We will continue to support farmers post-Brexit but in a smarter way. Maintaining the status quo is not an option and we now have the opportunity to design a new, better system of farm support.

"The BPS is not linked to outcomes, productivity, farmer effort or need. The proposed schemes in the 'Brexit and our Land' Consultation, our new Economic Resilience and Public Goods schemes will do so through providing targeted support.

"I realise this signals big change for the sector at an uncertain time. The transition period is vitally important and is why I am today announcing BPS will remain unchanged for a further year in 2020 to provide certainty and help farmers transition smoothly to a new Land Management Programme.

"This extension will ensure farmers have enough time to prepare and adapt to this new approach. It will ensure a multi-year, managed transition and fulfils our commitment no existing schemes will be removed until replacing schemes are ready. We will also consult further on our proposals next year."

On the payment of Basic Payment Scheme claims, the Cabinet Secretary added:

“I am delighted to announce that over 85% of farmers will receive their BPS payments on the first day. RPW are continuing to validate the remaining claims as quickly as possible and will be contacting farm businesses directly, if their BPS claims are still to be validated.

“This will give farmers every opportunity, if they wish, to apply for the loan scheme I announced in the summer in response to the hot and dry weather. This loan will help ease the pressures on the claimants not receiving their BPS payments early in the payment window.

“I would urge all farmers who are contacted by RPW this week to submit a BPS Loan Application before the deadline on Friday 30 November. All eligible loan applications received by us will be processed and paid by 10th December.”

£1.5 million funding to support women affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford and the Leader of the House and Chief Whip, Julie James announced £1.2 million of EU funding, alongside £300,000 directly from the Welsh Government for the £1.7 million Limitless programme during a visit to Welsh Women’s Aid in Cardiff.

Led by Threshold DAS, an organisation, which helps people who have been affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence, the Limitless programme will work with women to help them take the next step to build a brighter future.

It will provide tailored support, from confidence building to helping them gain formal and accredited qualifications, developed with the Welsh Government’s Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence team.

Limitless will also help women who are considering setting up a business and becoming self-employed to achieve their goals.

Professor Drakeford said:

“1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence and 1 in 4 women have experienced domestic violence – this cannot be allowed to

continue.

“The Welsh Government, working with partners, is fully committed to tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence and helping women who have been affected by these crimes to build a better future with more economic independence.

“I am pleased that on White Ribbon Day I can announce new funding for Threshold DAS, which will provide invaluable support to help women develop confidence and skills to build their careers.”

Ms James added:

“I am humbled to meet the many brave women here today who have been affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence and have been able to turn their lives around for the better.

“The Limitless programme will build on the excellent work Threshold DAS is already doing, helping women to rebuild their confidence and lead independent lives. This is another step in the right direction – working towards a Wales where everybody can live fear free.”

Victoria Pedicini, chief executive officer of Threshold DAS, said:

“Domestic violence is widespread and deeply ingrained and has a serious impact on the health and wellbeing of women.

“It’s our mission not only to help individuals survive but also to grow and thrive and build a life free from domestic abuse and sexual violence, breaking this devastating cycle.

“We are thrilled to have secured European funding for the Limitless project, which presents an opportunity to build on our educational provision to up skill women currently in employment. It will provide an avenue for a change in career path or pave the way to a brighter future.

“Many women who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence often want to give back after receiving support and help others in similar positions. Our new qualification is designed to provide learners with the skills to offer safe and effective support, while building their confidence and self-esteem.

“We are looking forward to working with the Welsh Government and other partners in the sector, to develop the qualification and hope that in time the project will be replicated throughout the whole of Wales.”

£1m made available to Welsh SMEs to help navigate Brexit

The pot, part of Welsh Government's £50m EU Transition Fund, will allow small and medium sized enterprises from across Wales to bid for between £10,000 and £100,000 of Welsh Government funding, to a maximum of half the project costs, to support them as the UK prepares to leave the European Union. It will be open for applications from Wednesday 28 November 2018.

To apply, businesses must:

- be registered to trade in Wales.
- register with Business Wales and complete the Brexit Diagnostic Tool on application: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/brexit/>
- be able to demonstrate that the funding will contribute to safeguarding jobs
- have been trading for 12 months or more on the day of application

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"SMEs are the backbone of our economy and my Economic Action Plan makes absolutely clear my commitment to ensuring they are supported as they look to grow and prosper in a post Brexit world.

There are just a matter of months now until the UK leaves the EU. However, the UK Government's approach to Brexit means businesses in Wales are left with many unanswered questions about what the future holds, with SMEs potentially particularly vulnerable to changes in the economic landscape.

The creation of the Development Bank of Wales, our Brexit Portal and the wider support provided by Business Wales have already been very well received, but I understand too that there are businesses who will need that extra bit of support over the coming months and years.

This £1m fund, I hope, will reach those businesses whilst incentivising all SMEs in Wales to register with Business Wales and benefit from the Brexit Portal and the specialist support on offer.

These are uncertain times, but I want to reassure businesses of all sizes from across Wales that Welsh Government will continue to use all the tools at our disposal as we look to safeguard jobs and ensure our economy continues to grow and prosper."

For further information please contact the Business Wales Helpline on **03000 6 03000**.

Welsh Government Childcare Offer benefiting low income families – new research

The research on the offer's first year of operation shows 80% of the lowest earning parents in each household accessing the offer earn less than the average salary in Wales. 88% of surveyed parents reported having more disposable income as a result of accessing the offer, and 67% reported the offer gave them more opportunities to increase their future earnings.

The Welsh Government is committed to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year.

The childcare offer is currently being roll-out across Wales, and is available in at least some areas in half of Wales' 22 local authorities. It will be available across the country by 2020.

More than 3,300 children have benefited from the Welsh Government's ground-breaking childcare offer during its first year.

Arad Research, in partnership with NatCen Social Research, was commissioned by the Welsh Government in August 2017 to undertake an independent evaluation of the first year of early implementation of the Childcare Offer in Wales.

The research shows:

- 60% of all parents accessing the Offer (and 80% of the lowest earners in households) accessing the Offer earned the equivalent or less than the median population earnings in Wales;
- 67% reported having more flexibility in the types of jobs they do and the hours they work; and 60% reported having more opportunities for training;
- Access to the offer had encouraged 40% of parents surveyed to access more hours of formal childcare, and 16% of parents say they now use less informal childcare in favour of more formal childcare

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“It's great to see how well our ground-breaking childcare offer is being received among families right across Wales.

“I’m particularly pleased the offer is benefiting low income families, putting more money back into their pockets and allowing them to take up more work or training.

“That’s not only good for the Welsh economy, but it’s also reducing strain on family incomes.”

Healthy Child Wales programme making progress to give children the best possible start in life

The first official statistics published in relation to the Healthy Child Wales Programme, show a steady increase in the percentage of children receiving contacts from the start of the programme in October 2016 up to June this year.

Vaughan Gething said:

“The Healthy Child Wales Programme sets out what planned contacts children and their families can expect from their health boards, from maternity service handover to the first years of schooling. These universal contacts focus on three main themes: screening; immunisation; and monitoring and supporting child development.

“The steady increase in the percentage of children receiving contact with health professionals demonstrates the good progress being made by the Healthy Child Wales Programme to ensure children get the best possible start in life.”

Jean White, Chief Nursing Officer for Wales, said:

“The publication of the Healthy Child Wales Programme statistics demonstrates the value of a universal set of contacts for children in Wales. The regular contact with Health Visitors allows consistent messages to be given to families to help them make choices that will improve health outcomes for their children.”

The full statistics can be accessed on the [Welsh Government website Statistics and Research page](#).