

Welsh Government invests £1m to improve border efficiency at Cardiff Airport

A Welsh Government safety and security grant of £1million will enable the purchase and installation of latest-technology e-gates, which allow travellers with biometric passports to move quickly through border checks and avoid long waits for manual document inspections. They will be installed and fully operational by March 2019.

Although Cardiff Airport was one of the first airports in the UK to introduce e-gates, these have since been removed by the UK Border Force as the technology in the original e-gates have been superseded.

And as UK Government policy only allows e-gates to be supplied free of charge by UK Border Force to airports with over 2 million inbound passengers, such as Bristol and Heathrow, UK Border Force required a substantial capital payment to install replacement e-gates at Cardiff Airport.

Economy and Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Since our acquisition of Cardiff Airport in 2013, it has seen year on year growth in passenger numbers with double digit growth projected for this year, not to mention a wealth of new routes and more capacity added on existing services.

However despite these successes, and having welcomed a million passengers already this year, the Airport has not yet reached the UK Government’s 2 million inbound passenger milestone that would enable it to qualify for free e-gates.

We have written to the UK Government on the issue of e-gates a number of times, pointing out the inequity of effectively subsidising larger airports whilst discriminating against smaller ones. However the UK Border Force has ignored these arguments.

There is no doubt that e-gates provide a more efficient method for processing passengers, reducing queues and ensuring an enhanced customer experience and I am pleased the Welsh Government has been able to step in to ensure that Cardiff Airport benefits from the same essential technology that larger and more profitable airports have been given for free. It is another indication of our commitment to support Cardiff Airport’s continuing success and growth.”

Finance Secretary makes case for a more inclusive economy at Cardiff University event

Opening a two-day conference about social innovation in the foundation economy at Cardiff University, he will highlight the need for improvement to drive up wages and job prospects.

But Professor Drakeford will also speak about how many communities in Wales feel marginalised and insecure – feelings which are being heightened by the prospect of a ‘hard’ Brexit.

The foundation economy is the part of the economy which provides essential goods and services to communities and has been highlighted as playing a crucial role in creating a prosperous Wales in the Welsh Government’s Economic Action Plan.

The Welsh Government has identified four foundation sectors where working more effectively across Government will maximise benefits tourism, food, retail and care.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Upwards of 40% of our workforce are employed in the foundation economy. That is a huge number of jobs – jobs which yes, are too often low paid and career prospects poor, but that is an argument for taking the foundation economy seriously and driving improvement.

“There is no escaping the fact that communities feel insecure.

That despite the undoubted economic progress we have made since devolution – parts of Wales still feel marginalised, overlooked even. Of course, those insecurities are only heightened by the prospect of a hard Brexit and the cliff edge of a no deal scenario.

The two-day conference has been organised by the Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) and will feature a series of presentations and panel discussions led by a range of academics, policy-makers and elected representatives.

The event will also highlight examples of international best practice and the second day will feature a panel discussion with a number of AMs taking part.

The Finance Secretary added:

“Now more than ever, it is important that we not only strengthen the foundations of our economy, but also that we build places – places in which people have pride and in which they feel secure. The foundation economy is almost uniquely placed to help us to do just that.”

School Uniform Guidance to become statutory

The new updated and strengthened guidance, which will be issued for a 12 week consultation this autumn, will focus on affordability and will also address a number of different issues that schools need to consider.

The Education Secretary has also once again urged parents/carers of eligible children to speak to their council about applying for the new PDG-Access fund.

PDG-Access offers parents/carers £125 to buy school uniform, equipment, sports kit and kit for activities outside of school for their child.

Looked-after children and learners eligible for free school meals will be eligible for this grant if they are entering reception class in primary school, entering year 7 in secondary school or aged 4 or 11 in special schools, Special Educational Needs (SEN) Units or Pupil Referral Units.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Reducing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is at the heart of our national mission to raise standards.

“Parents and guardians face many different costs when it comes to school uniform as well as activities both in and outside of school.

“Making school uniform guidance statutory is just one of the ways we can help reduce these costs.

“I also want to encourage the parents/carers of eligible children to keep applying to councils for PDG-Access funding. This is money that they are entitled to and could make a real difference to the cost of not just school uniform but equipment, sports kit and kit for activities outside of school too.”

Hong Kong's the plaice for seafood trade mission

The trade mission is supported by the Seafood Market Development project, which recently received over £1 million from the Welsh Government and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

This will be the first time a Welsh seafood delegation has visited Hong Kong. Seafood Expo Asia will enable the delegation to explore exporting opportunities for their lobsters, crabs, oysters, scallops and other quality Welsh seafood products.

As part of the trade mission, Welsh companies will also have the opportunity to visit local shellfish markets and meet with wholesalers and retailers to better understand the expanding Chinese seafood industry.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said:

“Brexit presents both challenges and opportunities for our fishing industry. We are doing all we can to help the industry prepare for these challenges and adapt to a post-Brexit world.

“Since the EU referendum, there has been increased interest from Welsh producers to export to China and other Asian markets. We are keen to help them explore the opportunities these markets can offer. The Seafood Development Project has an important role to play in supporting the sector as the UK prepares to leave the European Union helping to market Welsh seafood domestically and internationally.”

Welsh participant companies:

The Lobster Pot – Based in Church Bay, Anglesey, it supplies fresh live European blue Lobster and brown crab to wholesalers and retailers worldwide.

WM Shellfish – Based in Holyhead, the company supplies king and queen scallops, lobster, brown crab, spider crab, whelks and blue mussels to the wholesale, retail and catering trade.

Tethys Oysters – Based in Pembrokeshire, the company produces high-quality native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) for the export markets.

Ross Shellfish – Based in Caernarfon, it supplies periwinkles as well as other shellfish products including mussels, clams and scallops.

CamNesa – Seafood consultancy based in Ceredigion, providing advice and support to the seafood industry. In particular, brown crab, lobster and whelk's trade.

Carmarthenshire and Newport to host opening stage of Tour of Britain

It will mark the first time that the race has visited Carmarthenshire with the county set to welcome the strongest ever line-up in race history, with reigning Tour de France and Giro d'Italia champions Geraint Thomas and Chris Froome competing for Team Sky.

The city of Newport last hosted the Tour of Britain in 2004, while the final stage of the 2017 race passed through the city on its way to the overall finish in Cardiff.

The first stage of Britain's biggest professional cycle race will be put under starter's orders by Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford. Speaking ahead of the race, Professor Drakeford said:

"I am delighted to be opening the first stage of this iconic race. Pembrey Country Park is an impressive venue for the Grand Depart, not only because it is a very popular visitor attraction but also because it has recently invested in cycling facilities, including the first national closed road circuit in south Wales.

"The Tour of Britain has become a key event in the Welsh sporting calendar and I am pleased that the Welsh Government has been able to support this event once again this year.

"The Welsh public has always given the cyclists a really warm Welsh welcome and I'm sure that with Geraint Thomas amongst the starting line-up, people from across south Wales will come out to support the cyclists as they travel from Carmarthenshire to Newport on the first day of the race."

Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council, Cllr Emlyn Dole, said:

"We are delighted to be hosting Stage One of the Tour of Britain in Carmarthenshire for the very first time. We have made no secret of our ambition to become the Cycling Hub of Wales and this prestigious event coincides with a huge investment to cycling infrastructure in Carmarthenshire, including off road tracks and circuits, active travel routes and cycling trails.

"This event seals Carmarthenshire's reputation not only as a growing visitor destination, but also as a first-class location for major events.

"We are overwhelmed by the huge support we have had in recent weeks and especially grateful to our communities who have worked together to give riders and visitors the warmest of welcomes."

Councillor Debbie Wilcox, Leader of Newport City Council, said:

"We are looking forward to welcoming the Tour to Newport and cheering them across the finish line of stage one on the first day.

"Newport boasts such a diverse landscape which lends itself perfectly to events such as the Tour – from flat, urban routes to challenging climbs and descents through beautiful countryside. I'm sure the cyclists, supporters and spectators alike will enjoy the leg and their time in our city."

Race Director Mick Bennett said:

"Following the fantastic victory of Geraint Thomas in the Tour de France this Summer it is fitting that we can welcome him, along with the reigning Giro d'Italia champion Chris Froome, to the opening stage of this year's OVO Energy Tour of Britain in Wales. We are looking forward to our first every visit to Carmarthenshire and think it will be a very special occasion for everyone involved with activities planned across the route to celebrate the occasion.

"In this of all years it is fitting that we finish our opening stage in Newport, the home of Welsh Cycling, and are looking forward to an exciting finish on Usk Way in the city."

Welsh Cycling CEO, Anne Adams-King said:

"Welsh Cycling is pleased that Wales is hosting the Grand Depart for the 2018 OVO Energy Tour of Britain profiling our beautiful countryside and showcasing the City of Newport town centre.

"It's fantastic for people to see 4 welsh riders in the peloton alongside some of the best riders in pro-cycling. An exciting start to the tour that will inspire a generation of youngsters to experience cycling."

The OVO Energy Tour of Britain is British Cycling's premier road cycling event, giving cycling fans the opportunity to see the world's best teams and riders competing on their door step, taking place between Sunday 2 and Sunday

9 September 2018.