

'Our Welsh Princes should be more widely celebrated' says Culture Minister

Speaking at Castell y Bere, the Minister explained why these sites reserved a special place in Welsh history and what more was being done to ensure they were as accessible and informative as possible.

Lord Elis-Thomas said:

"From Caerphilly to Caernarfon, Conwy to Castell Coch, we are a country blessed with some of the most magnificent, imposing castles in the world, attracting record visitor numbers and boosting the economies of many of our towns and cities.

"But there are a whole host of castles on our doorsteps that are, perhaps, less well known but both individually and as a collective serve as precious physical reminders of our history and our heritage.

"These, to me, are the true Welsh castles – those built or inhabited by distinguished Welshmen of the past – by Llywelyn, Lord Rhys and Glyndwr amongst others. Welsh Princes who fought for and over Wales and helped shape the Wales and Welshness we recognise today. I've been determined to better promote and signpost these castles and their significance to our history and culture.

"The booklet gives a general introduction to the castles closely associated with the Welsh Lords and Princes. They include castles in Cadw's care as well as castles owned by local authorities or which are in private hands, but offer public access.

"Cadw have made great strides over recent years to improve accessibility to a number of sites across Wales. This, in conjunction with some fantastic work in making the information at our sites clearer and more interactive means that more people can now enjoy these physical reminders of our past. But there is more to come, starting with here in Castell y Bere, where we will soon be making improvements to the visitor experience to better convey its historical significance.

"Each of these castles has its own history, its own story and its own character. I hope that, through the material launched today as well as through future improvements, we can help encourage as many people as possible to explore and enjoy these Welsh castles and their significance to the Wales we live in today."

The new booklet, which features 24 castles alongside abbeys and other historical sites, will be available for free at all Cadw sites, with further information also available online.

[Want to turn your passion into a successful career? The answer is apprenticeships](#)

Four individuals, who are undertaking apprenticeships in these fields, feature in a new campaign titled The Answer is Apprenticeships which highlights the breadth of apprenticeships on offer to young people in Wales.

Timed to coincide with students receiving exam results over the summer but aimed at all young people, including those who are NEET, the campaign highlights that apprenticeships could be the answer to gaining the qualifications and skills young people might need for their chosen career.

The campaign will signpost people to Apprenticeship Matching Service on the Careers Wales website where details about the levels and subjects are available to them and individuals can search the range of opportunities and apply online for vacancies.

The campaign aimed at young people and the parents who will be guiding them through their decisions will run for the next five weeks on digital channels, social media, radio, buses, trains and TV on demand and features four apprentices that are building successful and rewarding careers through their apprenticeships.

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan said:

“As people await their exam results, this time of year can be uncertain and nerve wracking. Some young people have their future plans firmly in place but others may be less sure of what they want to do.

“We have developed a highly successful Apprenticeship Programme which offers high quality vocational training in hundreds of roles. The wide variety of courses and levels of qualifications on offer mean we are on course to meet the ambitious target of reaching 100,000 apprenticeship starts soon. Though this isn't just about meeting targets; it's about ensuring the right opportunities are being created in the right areas so that individuals, businesses and the economy can thrive. This campaign is contributing to this ambition by highlighting the opportunities that apprenticeships

bring at a time when people need that information most.”

“I urge young people and their parents to take a look at the Apprenticeship Matching Service and see if The Answer is Apprenticeships for them.”

The Apprenticeship Programme is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund.

[More than £10m for new ambulances and passenger transport in Wales](#)

The new ambulances will be more manoeuvrable and meet the latest Euro 6 emissions standards.

The fleet, to be deployed across Wales, includes 25 new ambulances, 33 rapid response vehicles, 33 non-emergency passenger transport vehicles and 9 specialist emergency vehicles for major incidents.

The Welsh Ambulance Service currently has over 700 vehicles in its fleet, which cover an area of more than 8,000 square miles across Wales.

Since 2011, the Welsh Government has invested almost £55m in new ambulance vehicles for the Welsh Ambulance Service.

Mr Gething said: “I am pleased to be able to announce funding of £10.23m to replace some of our ageing ambulances and other passenger transport vehicles with more modern, fuel efficient and greener versions. This investment will enable the Welsh Ambulance Service to upgrade its fleet to ensure it has the most appropriate vehicles to deliver the best care for the people of Wales.”

Richard Lee, the Welsh Ambulance Service’s Director of Operations said: “Our ambulances and response cars in Wales are some of the most modern and well equipped in the UK and this funding will allow us to continue to replace our vehicles and crucially the clinical equipment that they carry as they reach the end of their working life.

“Modern ambulances and equipment are essential in order that we can continue to provide the best treatment and patient experience possible. It is also key for our staff who spend the majority of their working day out and about in the community.

“We are very grateful to the Welsh Government for their continued support.”

Preparing the social care sector in Wales for Brexit

£200,000 has been allocated from the Welsh Government’s EU Transition Fund to fund research into how the Brexit process could impact on the social care workforce in Wales, and to help the sector plan for any eventualities.

The £50m EU Transition Fund was set up to help business, public services and others prepare for the impacts of Brexit.

The research will collect data on the make-up of the social care workforce and determine whether there are any geographic regions or particular roles within social care that are particularly dependent on EU nationals, which could be adversely affected, depending on the transitional arrangements and migration policy agreed by the UK Government and the European Union.

Having a clear understanding of the make-up of the social care workforce and the extent of EU nationals currently employed will allow stakeholders across local government, the independent and third sectors to identify whether there are any areas of particular vulnerability and to support them plan accordingly to ensure continuity of care.

It will allow stakeholders to ensure any contingency planning and preparations are proportionate to the level of potential risk. It will also provide reassurance both to the sector and to people receiving care and their families.

Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Social care is a significant employer and contributor to the economy in Wales, with the adult social care sector employing more than 80,000 staff across Wales. The care and support provided by the workforce protects and supports some of the most vulnerable members of our society. This is why it is a cross-cutting priority within our national strategy, Prosperity for All.

“The sector is already facing a range of pressures, including recruitment and retention difficulties and increasing demand for care. The potential uncertainty Brexit could cause the workforce, especially for EU nationals and nationals who are from outside the EU, exacerbate these challenges. It is also important everyone

working in social care feels welcome and valued for the role they play in delivering care to the people of Wales. This is why it's essential the UK negotiates a sensible Brexit, which puts people, jobs and the economy first.

"Having robust and complete nationality data which covers all aspects of the market, as well as other workforce data which could effectively be collected at the same time, will enable the Welsh Government to support the sector in identifying and planning for its workforce requirements post-Brexit."

Gerry Evans, Director of Regulation and Intelligence and Deputy CEO at Social Care Wales said:

"Having a skilled workforce with the right values is at the core of delivering high quality social care in Wales. Ensuring we have such a workforce to meet the growing demand for care and support is one of the main challenges the sector faces over the next decade.

"We know that individuals from the EU have made an important contribution to delivering quality care in Wales and this research will help us to understand approaches that need to be adopted to maintain and extend the social care workforce into the future. Social Care Wales looks forward to working with Welsh Government on this important work over the coming months."

The data gathered will also be integral to the development of a targeted workforce strategy which will contribute to the delivery of A Healthier Wales, the Welsh Government's long Term Plan for Health and Social Care in Wales.

Environment Minister announces National Park funding to continue at same level

To mark National Parks Week, the Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn, has today announced that Welsh Government funding for Wales' three National Parks will continue at the same level as last year.

Friday 27 July 2018

The confirmation of the funding will provide financial security for the

National Park Authorities through an additional £1.5million over the next two years.

The Minister has also published Valued and Resilient: the Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

The document outlines the Minister's priority areas and provides clarity for the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), following a period of review and in preparation for the UK's exit from the EU. It calls on the managing bodies to deliver on a number of priorities, including the Nature Recovery Plan, a refreshed woodland strategy for Wales and Cymraeg 2050.

Earlier this year, the Minister confirmed all of Wales' National Parks and AONBs will be retained and their role will not be weakened. The Minister has also allocated £3.4million to support a wide range of additional projects, including improving access, promoting conservation and regenerating some of their most fragile areas.

The Minister said:

"I want to provide security for National Parks during these uncertain times. I'm therefore reversing the cuts the Park Authorities were facing in their budgets, which means an additional £1.5million over the next two years.

Our stunning Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks play a vital role in delivering rich ecosystems, vibrant and resilient communities and provide a wide range of recreational opportunities. This announcement is proof of my continued commitment to ensure the designated landscapes and their communities prosper and flourish."