

£10m Welsh Government funding to improve health outcomes

The main focus is to improve the quality of care, to reduce variation and to improve patient outcomes. Investment will be directed towards services which will bring the most wide-ranging benefits to the most people.

As previously announced last year, £3 million will be invested to deliver the single cancer pathway. Wales is the first UK nation to take this step. The single cancer pathway aims to reduce the time that patients have to wait to receive cancer diagnostic tests and for their treatment to start. Once the new pathway is in place, a patient's waiting time will begin from the point of a suspicion of cancer rather than the point of diagnosis.

A further £3m will support diagnosis services including endoscopy and radiology as well as innovative new procedures like gene and cell therapies.

There will also be a focus on rehabilitation services which will receive £3m in funding. This will be used to assess how key services are currently delivered. It will focus on community based prevention and early intervention which will help avoid inappropriate hospital admissions.

The remaining million £1m will be split between supporting 1,000 Lives improvement and the development of value based health care.

Health Minister Vaughan Gething, said:

"The funding I have announced today will ensure that health services in Wales develop innovative solutions and ensure that patients get the most out of health services.

"The investment will help unlock better ways of delivering services, provide consistency of care across Wales, and result in better outcomes for the people of Wales."

Extra £6.6m for research in Welsh universities

The funding will pave the way for a new, longer-term approach to research and innovation in Wales. It is designed to help strengthen the current Welsh research base by enabling Welsh researchers to compete for a greater share of new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding, as suggested by Professor

Graeme Reid's review of research and innovation in Wales.

The funding will be managed by the Higher Education Council for Wales (HEFCW).

Kirsty Williams said:

"Over the past 20 years, Welsh universities have grown the volume, impact and international reach of their research. Wales is now among the most efficient research performers, converting relatively small levels of funding into highly regarded research, and in the process outperforming other parts of the UK and similar sized countries in terms of published research impact.

"In the current uncertain economic climate, it's more important than ever we support our universities in building their research capabilities and responding to both the changing UK research landscape and the potential consequences of Brexit."

Professor Peter Halligan, the Chief Scientific Advisor for Wales, said:

"It's vital we recognise and reinforce research excellence in our universities and this funding is welcome news for those leading research in Wales.

"We must continue to grow Wales's research and innovation capacity and highlight the impactful research work going on here, which contributes to our international profile and boosts our future economic capability."

Dr Alyson Thomas, Director of Policy and Funding at HEFCW, said:

"Strengthening our research base not only brings academic, societal and economic benefits, it also boosts universities' capacity to compete for external grants and encourages investments into Wales. We very much welcome this additional funding from the Welsh Government at this time and look forward to seeing the resulting developments in a valued and sustainable university research sector."

Innovation is at the heart of our Welsh food and drink success story – Lesley Griffiths

With just days to go until Wales' largest international food and drink event BlasCymru / TasteWales returns, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, says innovation lays at the heart of the Welsh food and drink success story.

Latest figures show almost two years since its launch at the inaugural BlasCymru / TasteWales event, an initiative, known as Project Helix, to boost innovation and efficiency in the Welsh food and drink industry has already had an impact of over £82 million.

Using state of the art manufacturing facilities, the scheme has provided technical support and bespoke training that's helped develop hundreds of new products, helped businesses innovate, be more productive, improve skills and reduce waste in the supply chain.

Half way through the scheme, Project HELIX is well on its way to meet its targets early. To date, the scheme has delivered clear benefits to the sector including:

- 225 jobs created and a further 1150 safeguarded
- 234 businesses assisted
- 129 new businesses established
- 203 new markets accessed, and
- 273 new products developed.

The innovation scheme is delivered in partnership with three food centres based in Cardiff, Ceredigion and Anglesey as part of Food Innovation Wales.

The latest figures come as Food Innovation Wales has become a network partner of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Food, Europe's leading food innovation initiative. Supported by Welsh Government funding, this will establish a dedicated EIT Food presence in Wales, linking the Welsh industry to a wider consortium of key industry players, startups, research centres and universities from across Europe.

EIT Food aims to collaborate closely with consumers to develop new knowledge and technology-based products and services, ultimately delivering a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle for all European citizens. Being a member of EIT Food will enable Food Innovation Wales to be at the forefront of technology and research and build international partnerships to further bolster the Welsh food and drink industry and beyond.

Next week, BlasCymru / TasteWales will also return to the Celtic Manor bringing together over 100 Welsh food and drink producers and 200 buyers – a

third of whom are international. As the UK prepares to leave the European Union, the event will provide a fantastic opportunity to showcase Wales' quality food and drink and open new potential global markets.

Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

"The success of Project HELIX shows how collaboration between academia, industry experts and producers on the ground can make such a big difference.

"Supported by Rural Development Programme funding, the scheme is already delivering and boosting the sector. An £82 million boost, new jobs created and others safeguarded, new products, new businesses launched, a more skilled workforce – all helping build Wales's great and growing reputation in the international food and drink industry.

"As we prepare for the challenges Brexit will bring, innovation is making the food and drink more resilient and plays a key role in our Welsh success story. I am therefore delighted that Food Innovation Wales has become a member of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Food.

"To support this, Welsh Government funding support will create a new Welsh base to further strengthen vital European collaborative links through EIT Food. It will put us at the forefront of cutting edge research and crucially enable us to forge new partnerships especially during these challenging times. It is more important than ever that we strengthen our partnerships with nations and regions across Europe and next week's Blas Cymru / Taste Wales provides the perfect opportunity to demonstrate our ambition to co-operate internationally is stronger than ever."

[Ken Skates and automotive industry meet to discuss Welsh future](#)

With Honda's decision to close its Swindon facility affecting some 2,000 supply jobs in Wales, and other manufacturers such as Nissan and Ford expressing a desire to look again at how they choose to operate in future, the Economy Minister was keen to ensure Welsh Government continues to do everything possible to ensure the automotive industry in Wales remains prosperous.

Speaking after the meeting, Ken Skates said:

"Today's round table meeting was part of a week of intense activity

concerning Brexit and the automotive industry, which included a visit to Geneva and in-depth discussions with Aston Martin Lagonda. It provided a welcome opportunity to discuss with the Welsh Automotive Forum and others, their concerns and hopes for the future of the automotive industry in Wales.

“There’s no question that the automotive industry is experiencing a period of rapid change at present, with major technological advancement and stronger environmental standards bringing with it both challenges and opportunities.

“Add to that the potential for new tariff and non-tariff barriers and frictions and costs if the UK leaves the EU without access to the Single European Market and it’s clear that this is a time of uncertainty and adjustment for the sector.

“The Welsh Government and I have been relentless supporters of the automotive industry over recent years, and today’s meeting reinforces that we stand ready to support the sector as it manages the challenges ahead. Wales has the skills, the supply chain, the expertise and the appetite for innovation that can help the industry flourish here.

“What we need to see now is some direction and clarity from UK Government on the most fundamental of these issues – Brexit, and ensuring it takes a form which does not adversely affect an industry which has long been a vital part of the Welsh economy. In the meantime, however, we cannot stand still as we look to ensure Wales plays a full and active part in the automotive industry of tomorrow.”

The industry in Wales comprises of around 150 companies employing nearly 19,000 people – 13% of the Welsh manufacturing workforce, generating over £3 billion worth of revenue and manufacturing around 30% of the 2.7 million engines produced in the UK.

[Finance Minister calls for transparency and clarity ahead of UK government’s Spring Statement](#)

Finance Minister, Rebecca Evans, said:

“Today is another opportunity for the Chancellor to confirm, once

and for all, that austerity is over for good. We have weathered 9 long years of austerity and it's now time to see some clear evidence that this statement is true.

"Last month I pressed the Chief Secretary of the Treasury for clarity on a number of financial issues relating to Brexit, particularly with the threat of a no-deal Brexit still on the horizon. It is absolutely vital that Wales is at the heart of decision-making and is able to prepare for the impact of Brexit.

"I want reassurances from the Chancellor that more funding will come to Wales in the event of a no-deal Brexit and a commitment for meaningful dialogue between the UK government and devolved nations about these challenges.

"I will also be looking for the Chancellor to use the Spring Statement as an opportunity to provide more details about the forthcoming spending review."