

New National Endowment for Music announced

The National Endowment for Music, a joint initiative between Kirsty Williams and Ken Skates, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, is a new and innovative approach to supporting young people to develop their talents in music.

The initial contribution of £1m will be provided to the Arts Council of Wales to cover the set up costs of the Endowment with a further contribution to be made to the seed fund once it is in place. It is our ambition that the fund will eventually generate at least £1m per year, which will be used to fund additional music activities for young people across the country.

Kirsty Williams said,

“The National Endowment for Music will help ensure that all our young people, from whatever background, can develop their talents and skills through music.

“During my time as Cabinet Secretary visiting schools across the country, I continue to be impressed and inspired by the musical talent of our young people and the schools that promote such opportunities. I want to build on this success and extend these opportunities throughout Wales.

“Having experiences outside the classroom is a sure way to help children build confidence and discover what inspires them. In time, this Endowment will provide extra chances for young people to access important education experiences.”

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said,

“If you were to ask people around the world to name things they associate with Wales, their list would undoubtedly involve music. From our traditional choirs to musicians who perform across the globe, Wales punches well above its weight. We need to make sure the next generation can carry on this great tradition.

“Local authority music services have been badly affected by the austerity imposed by the Westminster Government. This £1 million contribution is intended as a catalyst, a demonstration to potential donors of our commitment to the arts and to our musical heritage.”

Phil George, Chair of Arts Council of Wales added,

“Challenging times call for determined action. It’s more important than ever that we provide opportunities for young people to enrich their lives through artistic expression. This new fund is an invitation to private and corporate donors to join the Welsh Government in nurturing young musical talents and helping them delight and amaze us all.”

Karl Napieralla who chaired the Music Services Task and Finish Group, which recommended establishing the fund said,

“I am delighted that one of the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group is coming to fruition. Hopefully the funding will help secure the future opportunities for young people in Wales from whatever background to enjoy and participate in music.”

The National Endowment for Music builds on the £20 million Creative Learning through the Arts Plan to support creative teaching and learning in schools.

The Endowment is our long term, sustainable approach to increasing musical opportunities for the young people of Wales.

“A better and fairer approach” to public access for outdoor recreation

The Welsh Government asked the public for its opinions in 2015. Many of the 5,800 who responded said the current system is too complex and burdensome with some strong, and sometimes polarised, views on how it might be improved.

The [consultation](#) revealed the wide range of outdoor activities taking place across Wales but also exposed challenges faced by land managers and flaws and inconsistencies in the current system.

After reviewing the responses, Lesley Griffiths has announced her intention to develop proposals on how current laws can be improved in order to:

- Achieve consistency in the opportunities available for participation and how activities are restricted and regulated;
- Simplify procedures for designating and recording public access;
- Improve existing advisory forums and better communicate access rights and responsibilities.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Outdoor recreation makes a significant contribution to the economy and provides considerable health and social benefits. This is demonstrated by the huge success of the Wales Coast Path which has increased Wales’ profile at home and abroad. We now have the opportunity to build on this success.

“Wales needs an approach to public access for outdoor recreation that is less burdensome to administer, provides for a wide range of activities, but at the same time, respects the concerns of landowners.

“Whilst we can learn from other countries’ approaches, Wales requires laws which suit its cultural and physical landscape. We are very much aware of the concerns of landowners and the aspirations of access users. I will publish our proposals at the earliest opportunity so people can have their say, so we achieve a system that works in the best interest of all parties”.

Preferred candidate for Welsh Revenue Authority chair confirmed

Before the chair of the WRA is formally appointed, the National Assembly’s Finance Committee will hold a pre-appointment hearing on Thursday February 16 to take evidence from Ms Bishop as the preferred candidate.

Ms Bishop’s announcement as the preferred candidate follows a recommendation by an independently-chaired appointments panel after a fair and open recruitment exercise regulated by the Commission for Public Appointments.

The Tax Collection and Management (Wales) Act, which was passed by the National Assembly in April 2016, established devolved tax arrangements in Wales, including the creation of the WRA to collect and manage devolved Welsh taxes.

The WRA will become operational from April 2018, when stamp duty land tax and landfill tax are devolved to Wales. The WRA will be a non-ministerial department of the Welsh Government, which is accountable to Welsh Ministers, the National Assembly and Welsh taxpayers.

Notes

- A pre-appointment hearing has been arranged for the chair of the WRA as this is the first non-ministerial department to be established by the Welsh Government. Pre-appointment hearings are used elsewhere in the UK to enable committees to take evidence from the government’s preferred

candidate for certain key public appointments prior to the final appointment decision.

- The National Assembly's Finance Committee will publish a report setting out its views about the preferred candidate's suitability for the post. A final decision about the appointment will be made by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government.

Kathryn Bishop

- Kathryn has more than 30 years' experience working with organisations undergoing major change – at Accenture, Allied Dunbar, Eagle Star, Zurich and the University of the West of England. Her background includes IT and HR.
- She has a portfolio of commitments and is an associate fellow of Saïd Business School (University of Oxford), where she directs and teaches on leadership programmes for professional service firms and other multinational corporations.
- Kathryn was appointed a civil service commissioner in April 2012 and acted as the interim First Civil Service Commissioner from April to September 2016.
- She is a director of a consulting business, managing projects for clients, including assistance with strategic planning for private sector organisations, executive agencies and NHS trusts.
- She has held a number of non-executive directorships within government, including the UK Border Agency, the UK Intellectual Property Office and the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA)

The WRA will have comparable powers to other UK tax authorities so its functions can be undertaken consistently and comprehensively.

As well as collecting tax, the WRA will:

- Provide information, advice and help about taxes to taxpayers
- Resolve complaints and disputes
- Promote tax compliance
- Reduce tax evasion and tax avoidance
- Support the development of Welsh Government tax policy

[Lesley Griffiths: Have your say on fly-tipping](#)

Currently, Local Authorities can issue fixed penalty notices for a number of offences, such as littering and dog fouling. The only way to penalise those who undertake small scale fly-tipping though is to prosecute through the

Magistrate Courts. Many consider this to be expensive, time consuming and disproportionate for small scale offences.

The majority of respondents to a previous consultation felt introducing fixed penalty notices offered a relatively simple, quick and cheap way of dealing with offenders, which would remove existing financial and resource burdens on enforcing authorities and on the Court system.

The [12 week consultation](#) launched today proposes Local Authorities should have the ability to set the fixed penalty amount at between £150 and £400, depending on their local circumstances. If no amount is specified then the default would be £200. Local Authorities could then use the money raised to help contribute to the costs of enforcement and the clear-up of fly-tipping.

Larger fly-tipping incidents such as a van tipping a load of building waste would still be prosecuted through the courts.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs welcomed the launch of the consultation. Lesley Griffiths said:

“Fly-tipping is undoubtedly one of those lower-level offences that generates much discussion and discontent among the public. It is unsightly, environmentally unfriendly and it creates extra work for the people who have to clear it up.

“The purpose of the consultation we are launching today is to gain the views of all interested parties on our proposal to give local authorities the power to introduce fixed penalty notices. The conversations we’ve had so far indicates this is a measure that would prove to be popular among the public but we need to ensure if we are going to pursue this option that it is proportionate and workable.

“I hope as many people as possible take the opportunity to respond to the consultation and play their part in developing a system that helps to reduce waste crime and improve the appearance of communities across Wales”.

Chetwood Financial Ltd comes to Wrexham with Welsh Government support

The new startup, led by a management team who have operated at senior executive levels in UK retail banks and overseas, is supported by £750,000 business finance from the Welsh Government.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates has welcomed the news. He said:

“This is a strategically important project for the professional and financial services sector and great news for Wales.

“The investment will create well paid skilled jobs offering significant employment opportunities in North East Wales, and will also help establish the region as a key location for financial services companies.”

Chetwood is using state of the art technology to make better financial services products. It already has a consumer credit licence and FCA authorisation, and will initially offer innovative loan products through digital channels aimed at prime and near prime customers in the UK.

The company plan to submit their banking licence application in the first half of 2017, with a view to launching savings products in early 2017.

Chetwood will be based on Wrexham Technology Park in one of the offices acquired by the Welsh Government from Moneypenny.

The business will benefit from the growing trend to purchase financial services products online using a bespoke technology platform developed by Yobota, a related company, that will provide the company with the flexibility and agility to innovative.

Andy Mielczarek, CEO of Chetwood said:

“We’re really pleased to be basing our business in Wrexham, and it’s personally exciting for me to be setting up the business in my home town.

“We are grateful to the Welsh government for their support so far and look forward to working with them over the coming years. We are already hiring into Wrexham, and we are starting to work with Coleg Cambria and the Welsh universities to create a pathway for us to bring in the best talent in to our business.”

This week the Welsh Government has announced that 696 new jobs have been created and an additional 787 have been safeguarded as a direct result of Government support.