

Children and Young people in Wales: “We’re frustrated and concerned about our futures after Brexit”

Earlier this year, the Welsh Government commissioned Children in Wales to identify children and young people’s views on Brexit.

Information was gathered through workshops in primary and secondary schools, youth clubs and forums, alongside online and social media surveys.

Over 700 children and young people aged between 8 and 21 participated in 39 workshops held across Wales, while young people attended a Young Wales Question Time event held in the Senedd on 24th October 2018.

The study found:

- Key issues for children who took part in primary schools were the future of the environment, their community, the Welsh language and the financial impact of Brexit;
- Secondary school students included were concerned about the environment; opportunities to study and travel abroad, the future of human rights and health and well-being;
- In the youth settings involved, the priority issues were education, the NHS, freedom of movement across Europe and engaging young people in political discussions. Support for farmers was a priority for Young Farmers and young people from North Wales.

Brexit has prompted young people to take an increased interest in politics, seeking a better understanding and more opportunities to be engaged. Many of the young people that responded felt frustrated at being denied a say in the Brexit referendum and felt that their votes could have made a difference to the outcome of the referendum.

The study concludes that the children and young people who engaged with the work showed a significant awareness of issues in this area and were keen to be involved in discussions on Brexit.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“In Wales, children and young people have a right to have their say on issues that affect them. Brexit is perhaps the most significant political issue of our time. The outcome of the Brexit process will have a profound impact on the next generation, so it’s only right they have their views known and listened to.

“The message from this important piece of work is very clear. Young people are frustrated they have not been given a say. They’re concerned about their own futures, and the future of the country as

a whole.

“Brexit has prompted young people to take an increased interest in politics, seeking a better understanding and more opportunities to be engaged. The clear message from young people in Wales is that they want to be informed and involved, but they also want to be educated about how decisions are made and how they can use democratic processes to have their voice heard.

“The Welsh Government is firmly committed to ensuring our country’s interests are fully protected as the UK leaves the EU – and that includes the futures of the next generation.”

Funding split change to school building programme could save local authorities millions – Kirsty Williams

Under changes planned for Band B of the programme, the Welsh Government will cover 65% of the capital costs for a new school building or project, with local authorities and colleges covering the remaining 35%.

The Welsh Government will also increase its share of capital funding for facilities for pupils with additional learning needs and those in pupil referral units to 75%, with delivery partners meeting the remaining 25% of the costs.

Previously, the match funding for the capital programme was typically 50-50.

The change in match funding will be introduced for Band B of the programme, which starts in April next year.

Band B will include additional investment with a capital value of around £500m funded through the new, made-in-Wales, Mutual Investment Model.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

“We are all working against a backdrop of austerity but if we can ease the funding pressures on local authorities and colleges, then we will do so.

“This change has the potential to save local authorities and colleges millions of pounds which could be invested elsewhere in our education system.

“I’m not pretending that this is going to solve every issue, but making such a significant change to our flagship school building programme shows we are willing to take a different approach and explore alternative ways of funding.

WLGA Leader, Councillor Debbie Wilcox (Newport), said:

“This is a very welcome announcement from the Welsh Government and will help alleviate some of the pressures faced by our councils.

“WLGA strongly supports the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme. The programme represents the largest investment in our schools and colleges since the 1960s. It is an excellent example of what can be achieved when local government and the Welsh Government work together and has transformed the school estate across the length and breadth of Wales.

“This investment will help take Band B of the programme to a new level and I look forward to seeing the many fantastic school and college buildings that will be delivered as a result of this renewed partnership with the Welsh Government.”

4 new Enterprise hubs to spark Welsh business announced

The Welsh Government, partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund, has invested over £4m in the new Enterprise Hubs, which will provide individuals and companies with the space to network, innovate, establish their enterprises and access a range of support services, such as advice on pitching, work shops and business surgeries. Entrepreneurs at the hubs will have access to the breadth of support available from Business Wales as well as from partners including Colleges, Universities, Local authorities and the Development Bank of Wales, providing a well-connected, simple and visible support system for entrepreneurs, as championed by Be The Spark.

The hubs will complement the already established Wrexham Hub and aim to kick start and sustain increased innovation driven entrepreneurial activity in their areas.

The regional Hubs will be in:

- Wrexham and M-Sparc, Gaerwen with spokes in Conwy Business Centre, Porthmadog, Rhuthin, Llangefni, Rhyl, Botwnnog and Dolgellau.
- Pryce Jones building, Newtown with spokes in Innovation and Enterprise

campus at Aberystwyth University, UWTSO Lampeter and Coleg Ceredigion campuses.

- ICE, Caerphilly with satellites to be confirmed with the Valleys Task Force in Merthyr, Blaenau-Gwent, Bridgend, Torfaen and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Yr Egin, Carmarthenshire with spokes in Bridge Innovation Centre Pembrokeshire, The Beacon Llanelli, and Coleg Sir Gar.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“My Economic Action Plan is clear that supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship across Wales is absolutely crucial if we are to succeed in growing Wales’ economy.

“And I expect my decision to deliver these business hubs in North West Wales, Mid Wales, the South West Valleys and the South East Valleys to provide a real boost to our regional economies.

“Alongside the satellite locations, these five hubs will ensure that budding entrepreneurs in all parts of Wales can access the space and help they need to get their ideas off the ground, creating at least 700 new enterprises and 1160 new quality jobs in the process.

“The evidence is clear that by working collaboratively and bringing academia, industry and local partners closer together in the right environment we can deliver a host of wider benefits to areas surrounding the hubs. This can only be good news for our economic regions, and for delivering my ambition of ensuring the fruits of prosperity fall much more evenly across Wales. I look forward to seeing entrepreneurs from all parts of Wales benefit at the earliest opportunity.”

The Wrexham Hub officially opened in May 2018 and already houses 40 members. It is anticipated that the remaining 4 Hubs will be fully operational by January 2019.

£8m extra funding to support Further Education pay

The £8m additional money will also contribute to an increase in pay for support staff in FE colleges, many of whom are on the living wage.

The announcement was made in the Senedd today, during a debate on Further

Education in Wales.

Kirsty Williams the Education Secretary said:

“I am delighted that the Welsh Government has been able to provide this additional help to the FE sector for pay over the next two years. We recognise that Colleges are dealing with exceptional circumstances and this additional injection of money will allow the colleges time to budget to cover their own pay costs in future.”

The ‘exceptional circumstances’ relate to UK Government’s award of a pay rise of up to 3.5% to teachers in September. While the Welsh Government fully supports this decision, it was made without consulting the Welsh Government and without providing Wales with the funding to cover the additional costs.

Following negotiations, the UK Government was persuaded to allocate £23.5m over the next two years to address the issue but this does not include those teaching in FE which could potentially create disparity between teachers in sixth forms and teachers delivering the same course in FE Colleges. The Welsh Government has therefore stepped in to make up the difference on this occasion.

£3.2m has been allocated for the 2018-19 financial year, with £4.8m to follow in 2019-20 subject to approval of the final budget for 2019-2020. This will allow the sector 18 months to plan with its trade union partners for the next pay round.

Eluned Morgan, the Minister for Lifelong Learning, who has responsibility for FE said:

“FE plays a valuable role in our educational system and FE Colleges are crucial to our task of creating a generation of people equipped with the skills our economy needs to flourish. We are keen to ensure that those teaching in FE receive a pay rise in line with teachers in our schools. We are particularly pleased that we have also managed to find additional support to pay for the crucial support staff who work in our FE colleges.”

All Wales regulation to tackle agricultural pollution: “a measured

and necessary response”’ – Lesley Griffiths

The new Regulations will replicate good practice measures adopted already by many farmers across Wales.

It follows claims by the FUW the announcement on regulations to be introduced next spring is simply a knee-jerk reaction to recent media coverage. The FUW further claimed the Welsh Government is not committed to partnership working.

In response, the Cabinet Secretary has written to the FUW robustly dismissing these claims, which divert attention from the real issue; ongoing pollution from agriculture.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“The issue of agricultural pollution is not new. Despite recent efforts to tackle the issue via voluntary action, we are seeing ever increasing incidents, with in excess of 100 incidents having been recorded annually for a number of years.

“I receive images and correspondence from concerned members of the public on almost a weekly basis during the autumn and winter periods.

“This cannot continue. I have given careful and measured consideration to this matter and concluded a voluntary approach alone is not the answer. To ignore the images and incidents reported would be irresponsible of me as Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs.

“I am clear all organisations with a leadership role in agriculture have a role to play and must do so.

“The FUW’s questioning of the Welsh Government’s commitment to partnership working merely, and perhaps knowingly, diverts attention from the real issue. Agricultural pollution is an industry problem and ultimately a problem only the agriculture industry, with the support from Government and others, can fix.

“My decision has been informed by the analysis of a number of consultations, the Wales Land Management Forum sub-group report and work from other key stakeholders.

“The sub-group’s report, as well as the continued work of the group since the report, has been fully considered as part of my decision to introduce regulations. I will continue to work in partnership with all who wish to work with me to help address the problem of

agricultural pollution.

“Without exception, everyone involved in Welsh agriculture must robustly hold to account the minority who, through their unacceptable behaviour, have such a destructive impact on our environment, the reputation of the agriculture sector and, potentially, as we head towards Brexit, on our brand values.”