

Minister celebrates 'special connection' between Welsh agriculture and tourism

The Tourism and Agriculture Working Together event at the Welsh Government Pavilion will be hosted by Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas to acknowledge strong and enduring partnership between farming and tourism and to celebrate the role that farmers, food producers and land managers play in making Wales such a welcoming and top quality holiday and visitor destination. It's a partnership which the Minister was clear would need to be maintained and strengthened if both industries were to remain prosperous.

Speaking ahead of the event, Lord Elis-Thomas said:

"Today's event is an opportunity for me to first and foremost thank our farmers, food producers and land managers for their role in making Wales the destination it is, whilst hopefully opening a few doors to further future collaborations and opportunities.

"Over 10 million people again chose to holiday in Wales last year – over three times the population of Wales.

"Many come to Wales because of the famous 'croeso', which relies on a delicately balanced ecosystem. Individuals, communities and organisations working effectively together to keep our walkways accessible, our beaches clean and our water clear. Suppliers, producers and promoters recognising and championing the benefit of quality, local produce. From star gazing to zip lining, Welsh lamb to local beer and everything in between, it's the quality of the experience that makes people continue to choose Wales in such large numbers, and the agricultural industry is right at the heart of that.

"Whilst Brexit no doubt brings with it uncertainty, challenges and change, particularly within the agricultural sector in Wales, what's beyond question is that the intrinsic link between agriculture and tourism must and will remain."

"Our focus and ambition for a tourism industry for the future here in Wales is all about quality – quality of product, quality of produce and quality of experience.

"There is strong evidence from across Wales that raising the bar on quality breeds further success, and Visit Wales has already shown its willingness to support projects that fulfil the expectations of the most discerning visitors. It is important that our industry is

also market focused and we develop new products that provide experiences and accommodation that satisfy future consumer demands.

“This support is not only financial but also around a collaborative way of marketing Wales, such as through our themed years, and finding innovative ways both to reach new audiences and ensure they have the best possible time here. The Wales Way, for example, will encourage people to discover parts of rural Wales they might otherwise not have considered.

“This is just one example of the hard work going on to make sure Wales is the most forward looking, internationalist, confident country it can be. By ensuring quality is at heart of everything we do I’m confident we will be in the best possible position to overcome the challenges of Brexit, helping us seize future opportunities. A continued and strengthened partnership between tourism and agriculture will be key to achieving this and I look forward to developing this together.”

[Children’s Minister visits Newtown’s new family centre](#)

In 2017, the Welsh Government awarded Powys County Council £257,000 to develop the former Dafydd Llwyd Primary School site in Park Street as the town’s new Integrated Family Centre.

This allowed the former family centre, based at Mochdre Industrial Estate on the edge of the town, and the Skylark Family Centre, to co-locate in one central location, next to Hafren and Ladywell schools, which allows easier access for families.

The new centre will play a vital role in the delivery of Flying Start, the Welsh Government’s flagship early years programme, in the town. It will provide activities such as parent and toddler groups, baby massage, information, parenting training programmes, health advice and health visitor drop in service, family support and counselling.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“It was a real pleasure to visit Newtown today to see for myself how Welsh Government investment is benefiting the town’s children and their families.

“The £257,000 investment we have made has allowed Powys County Council to develop a new, modern facility which will make it far easier for children and their families to access services.

“As a government, we are determined to give all our children the very best start in life. That’s why we’re investing to ensure the continued success of the Flying Start programme and to ensure it meets the changing needs of the families we support across Wales. It continues to make a real difference to the lives of children in some of our most disadvantaged communities.”

Green corridors to improve gateways into Wales

The Green Corridors on the Welsh Government Trunk Road and Motorway Network initiative will deliver against the Economic Action Plan “Prosperity for All”, creating a sustainable economy and promoting the economic, cultural, social and environmental well-being, and enhancing people’s quality of life in Wales.

Over a five year period the initiative will deliver a programme of work and activities such as tree planting to improve structure and age range of the planted area, and introducing wildflower areas or improving the diversity of existing areas.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Wales has the potential to be a world class sustainable tourist destination and I am pleased to announce my decision to approve a ‘Green Corridors on the Welsh Government Trunk Road and Motorway Network’ initiative.

“It will build upon and complement other work already completed or underway to improve the benefits provided by the land associated with the trunk road and motorway network, delivering a range of economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.”

The priorities set will see work beginning during the current financial year along the three routes making up the Wales Way (A487, A470 and A55) as well as entrances into Wales on the M4, M48, A483, A5 and A494 Deeside to identify and carry out measures to achieve the initiative.

Work will continue in subsequent years with the addition of other gateway routes and strategic sites such as principal towns and cities. Opportunities will be explored and actions taken that include restoring existing or creating new habitats or providing safe crossing points for protected species.

Ken Skates added:

“We will seek opportunities to investigate and implement Nature Based Solutions such as using vegetated systems for sustainable drainage, or tree and shrub planting for earthworks stabilization, in both the design of new road infrastructure projects and along the existing network.

Applying the principles of Green Corridors will set us as an exemplar of best practice, showing innovation in the sustainable management of green transport infrastructure.”

Economy Secretary visits businesses in mid Wales to discuss local challenges and opportunities

The visits are part of the Economy Secretary’s ongoing commitment to empowering and strengthening Wales’ regions, so the fruits of prosperity are spread much more evenly across Wales.

It is an approach that is set out clearly in the Welsh Government’s Economic Action Plan, which was launched in December.

The Economy Secretary has appointed three Chief Regional Officers , one for Mid and South West Wales, one for South East Wales and one for North Wales as part of his work to empower Welsh regions.

The role of the Chief Regional Officers is to engage with and listen to partners within their region and represent their views and interests back to the Welsh Government.

As part of the day of visits the Economy Secretary and the Chief Regional Officer for Mid and South West Wales, Rhodri Griffiths, went to global healthcare company, PCI Pharma who employ around 360 people in Hay-on-Wye.

They also visited Cellpath, a company that specialises in the manufacture and supply of products and services to the Cellular Pathology sector and employs 85 staff at its base in Newtown, and Wynnstay in Llansantffraid, an

agricultural produce supplier that employs 400 people in mid Wales.

The Economy Secretary also attended a roundtable meeting in Newtown with local businesses who are keen to expand in the area but have concerns around whether their needs can be met by the existing supply of commercial properties.

Ken Skates said:

“I am committed to empowering Wales regions and to building on their individual strengths in order to secure maximum economic growth for Wales.

“My Economic Action Plan, recognises that each region of Wales has its own opportunities and challenges and that a one size fits all approach to Economic development will not go far enough to drive the regional economic growth that Wales needs.

“I have appointed three Chief Regional Officers to provide a regional voice in Government. They will listen to and involve local partners in decision making and feedback local intelligence that will help to tailor our work. Visits and meetings like the ones we have enjoyed today will be absolutely key to making this approach a success.

“One consistent theme that has come out of today’s visits is the concern locally about the supply of good quality commercial property. This is a pressing issue, and one that we have identified in the Economic Plan Action. We will now be working with local authorities, the Mid Wales Manufacturing Group and the Growing Mid Wales Partnership, to address this in order to ensure that we can maximise the economic potential of this area of Wales.”

As part of the ongoing delivery of the Economic Action Plan the Economy Secretary and Chief Regional Officer will be visiting other businesses in Mid and South West Wales in the coming months.

“Loneliness and isolation in rural Wales is a ticking time bomb” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Tackling loneliness and isolation is a national priority for the Welsh Government. According to the 2016-17 National Survey for Wales, around 17% of

the population of Wales, or around 440,000 people, report being lonely.

People living in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to loneliness and isolation. Farming communities by their nature often are isolated from each other and from mainstream public services. Nearly 20% of the Welsh population live in communities of less than 1,500 people.

During the visit, the Minister will discuss with a range of farming and rural organisations what the Welsh Government can do to help tackle loneliness and isolation in farming and rural communities across Wales, as part of its forthcoming strategy on the issue, which will be published for consultation later this year.

Speaking ahead of his visit, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Loneliness and isolation is a growing issue in communities’ right across Wales. It affects everyone – be it a young person or an older person, a farmer or a doctor, a single person or a married couple, and can potentially lead to a range of serious health and social care problems.

“We want to help secure the best possible quality of life for people in all parts of Wales, including in our farming and rural communities. This is why the Welsh Government has made tackling loneliness and isolation a national priority.

“I’m at the Royal Welsh Show today to hear directly from people who live and work in rural Wales about their experiences, and to learn what we as a government can do to tackle what I consider to be a ticking time bomb.”

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

“The farming lifestyle of working long hours every day of every week, very often alone, means any opportunity for interaction with others is often greatly reduced. Added pressures such as running a business, animal disease and the uncertainties Brexit presents, can often lead to increased feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

“Failing to deal with mental health issues can often lead to further issues. There is a wide range of support available to farmers and rural communities and I urge anyone suffering to not suffer alone and access the help available.”

Contact details for organisations able to provide support are available in the Welsh Government summer, winter and spring updates; Gwlad E-news bulletin and the Farming Connect Technical Publication.