

[Ken Skates announces £2.8m local transport network funding to help boost bus travel](#)

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Flintshire, Neath Port Talbot, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea and Torfaen will all see funding through this year's Local Transport Network Fund, Economy Secretary Ken Skates has announced today.

Friday 25 August 2017

This year's funding primarily focuses on improving bus reliability and reducing journey times by improving accessibility, congestion and integration between modes of transport.

Economy and Infrastructure Secretary, Ken Skates said:

"I'm delighted that we've been able to support these schemes, which will see improvements to bus journeys on strategic Welsh Government and local authority routes across Wales.

"Today's announcement includes funding for a range of proposed interventions including bus priority measures, junction improvements and technical based solutions to further support the bus industry and widen the appeal of buses as an attractive, reliable mode of transport.

"I look forward to seeing these projects underway at the earliest possible opportunity, with communities able to soon feel the benefits of the improvements."

The projects which will receive 2017-18 Local Transport Network Fund:

- £100,000 for Developments for Passenger Growth on the B5129 strategic bus corridor
- £617,000 for an Integrated Transport Package in Neath Port Talbot
- £425,000 for TrawsCymru Corridor Passenger Enhancements through improved Accessibility in Powys
- £600,000 for A4119 and A4059 Bus Corridor Improvements in Rhondda Cynon Taf
- £1,000,000 for Strategic Bus Corridors and Public Transport Hubs in Swansea
- £15,500 for junction improvements at Union Street / Broad Street,

Abersychan

The funds will be made available immediately to the local authorities.

Make the most of every opportunity to operate in a more efficient and environmentally-friendly way

The Farm Business Grant (FBG) helps farmers to improve the economic and environmental performance of their holdings by providing a 40% contribution towards capital investments in 70 items of equipment and machinery. These items, pre-identified with the input of the industry, offer clear and quantifiable benefits to farm enterprises. A full list of items is available on the [Farm Business Grant page on the Welsh Government's website](#).

The second application window for the FBG recently opened and will remain open until 29 September. It follows the success of the first window, which attracted over 500 applications, requesting a total of £3.4m of grant support.

To be eligible for a one-off grant of between £3,000 and £12,000, farmers must attend a Farming Connect 'Farming for the future' roadshow, held in locations across Wales. These evening events are targeted at all farm businesses eligible to benefit from Farming Connect services. The roadshows aim to prepare farm businesses for the future and provide information on the many ways Farming Connect can offer advice and support.

This includes the Farming Connect Advisory Service, which can provide eligible businesses with up to four instances of business or technical advice over a four year period.

The first series of regional roadshows attracted more than 4,000 farmers and the next round of events will get under way from the beginning of September. Presentations during each event will concentrate on sustainable business development aimed at improving economic and environmental performance.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

"The funding we are making available through the FBG will enable our farmers to invest in their business so they can operate in a more efficient, competitive and environmentally-friendly way.

This, in turn, will improve their resilience as we prepare for an uncertain future outside the EU.

“Regardless of whether or not they intend to apply for FBG funding, I would encourage farmers across Wales to attend a ‘Farming for the Future’ roadshow and find out more information on the wide range of advice and support available to them.”

For information on dates and locations for the roadshows and to reserve a place, visit [Farming Connect](#) or call the Farming Connect Service Centre on 08456 000 813.

[‘Fair Shares for Wales’ – Economy Secretary issues call for new UK investment in Welsh industry](#)

Releasing the Welsh Government’s response to the UK Industrial Strategy, the Economy Secretary said there were a host of world class projects for the UK Government to get behind and called for the Welsh Government to receive its rightful share of UK Government funding for industrial support.

The Economy Secretary also set out a number of areas where the UK Government could work with the Welsh Government to make early progress but expressed continued disappointment over the UK Government’s recent decision to renege on its promise of electrification of the mainline to Swansea. He stressed that a fair share of funding was crucial if Welsh industry was to maximise its potential.

Ken Skates said:

“I’ve always been a huge champion of Welsh industry and the fantastic potential that it has to drive economic growth in Wales.

“From world class aerospace manufacturing on Deeside, to the international nuclear expertise on Anglesey and the fantastic potential of the new semiconductor cluster in South East Wales, there is cutting edge industry, technology and skills in Wales that could be the powerhouse of UK growth going forward.

“But maximising that opportunity requires investment and support – and whilst the Welsh Government has done its part by helping to support 150,000 jobs in the last Assembly term, too often Wales has been marginalised and forgotten by the UK Government. The recent cancellation of rail electrification to Swansea was one of the most short sighted and damaging decisions we have seen in recent times.

“As we have made clear in the detail of our response, the UK Industrial Strategy, with fair shares of the funding associated with it, provides an opportunity for the UK Government to begin to undo that damage and work with us to support some of our truly world class projects and people.

“From a decision on Swansea Tidal Lagoon to devolution of Air Passenger Duty, there are a range of immediate measures that the UK Government could take to support growth in Wales.

“There are also other measures UK Government could take to support our key strategic industries to modernise and thrive. On steel for example, jobs have been protected through fast action by the Welsh Government, but the UK Government needs to do its bit too. Their support for lower energy prices and backing for a National Steel Innovation Centre located in Wales would put the industry on a stronger footing for the future.

“And on automotive, UK Government support for next generation low-emission and connected vehicles or investment in R&D for new battery technology located in Wales could open up huge opportunities for new, productive growth.”

“Our response clearly shows that we are keen to work productively with the UK Government on this Industrial Strategy but for our part we need a UK partner that can bring its weight to the table, while respecting the devolution settlement and providing the fair share of funding we need.”

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[Over £100,000 to support the childcare sector in Wales](#)

The additional money will be used to increase the number of childcare places available across Wales, including in Blaenau Gwent, Flintshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Caerphilly and Gwynedd and Anglesey – the seven local authorities chosen to work with the Welsh Government to pilot the new childcare offer from September 2017.

The funding will also help childcare businesses to manage their finances and will ensure they are able to access more targeted support and advice from the Welsh Government’s business support service, Business Wales.

Speaking about the funding, the Economy Secretary said:

“Developing a flexible childcare offer is a top priority for the Welsh Government, and one vital element of the challenge is ensuring the necessary childcare places are available to families

right across the country.

“The additional funding I am announcing today will help to secure up to an additional 450 child care places across Wales over the next two years. It will also be used to improve the business support available to the sector including child minders and to help businesses improve how they manage their finances and grow sustainably.

“Ultimately it will be used to strengthen and develop the resilience of Wales’ childcare sector so it is well placed to deliver the flexible childcare offer that we know families right across Wales want and need.”

The Communities and Children Secretary, Carl Sargeant, said:

“Access to affordable, high quality childcare enables parents to work, thereby increasing economic growth and helping to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities. It also provides opportunities and long term benefits for our children and improves their life chances.

“I welcome this additional funding for childcare in Wales, and am looking forward to working with the Economy Secretary and the sector to increase the number of child care places available.”

Business Wales will begin offering proactive support to childcare sector businesses later this Autumn.