

Sustainable drainage regulations come into force

The mandatory regulations introduced by the Welsh Government will help reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

The regulations will also help to ensure that environmental standards are maintained and improved in a post-Brexit world, with the issue of flooding addressed in an environmentally friendly way through sustainable methods.

Further benefits from the regulations include improving the surrounding wildlife and biodiversity and helping to reduce pollution on new housing developments through the use of effectively designed and constructed SuDS.

SuDS work by making use of landscape and natural vegetation to control the flow of surface water and reduce the risk of flooding. Designs can include ponds, permeable paving and swales, which slow down the discharge of surface water more than conventional piped drainage.

Surface runoff water can also be a major source of pollution, both directly and from overwhelmed sewers discharging into rivers. SuDS are designed to reduce surface water runoff and improve water quality while being more resilient and longer lasting than conventional drainage.

Around 163,000 properties in Wales are at risk of surface water flooding and employing sustainable drainage systems is estimated to reduce flood damage by up to 30%.

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

“Flooding can have a devastating impact on home owners and it is important that every effort is made to protect houses and limit the damage caused by surface water flooding.

“Last year saw several instances of severe flooding in Wales highlighting the importance of introducing measures to combat the challenges faced by climate change.

“We hope that these regulations will have a positive impact for future generations and help ensure Wales maintains its high environmental standards post-Brexit.”

Welsh Government pitch in with extra £5m for sports facilities

Money will be allocated to Sport Wales so it can move quickly and contribute to projects across the country that are shovel ready right now. Funding will be allocated to ensure a good geographical spread across Wales, across sports and support collaborative, multi-sport projects wherever possible.

The capital investment will seek to support the “Vision for Sport in Wales” with a focus on collaborative projects that:

- Improve and protect key existing sports facilities that support the needs of local communities.
- Invest in new and different places that meet the needs of local communities.
- Create a more resilient, sustainable sport sector.

This new funding is in addition to the £5 million announced in the summer for the new Healthy and Active Fund – a partnership between Sport Wales, Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government.

The new £5 million investment for sports facilities in Wales demonstrates a firm commitment to boost delivery on facilities that support an active Wales. It is also the first phase of investment following recommendations that emerged from the review of sport facilities undertaken earlier this year.

Minister for Culture and Sport Lord Elis-Thomas said:

“Whether it’s the hall you do classes in or the pitch you play on, having the right facilities in place has a big impact on a person’s experience – and likelihood of them participating on a regular basis.

There is a clear need to increase the spread of top-class facilities across the country, but we must also consider how these would benefit local communities, as well as elite athletes.

Geraint Thomas OBE’s Tour de France win cannot be understated and this is having a strong impact throughout Wales – we’ve already seen bike sales jump and the BBC Sport Personality of the year accolade will cause a further ripple effect – so we stand ready with Sport Wales to act quickly to build upon the momentum that has been gained and promote a cycling, and wider sporting, legacy.”

Sarah Powell, Sport Wales CEO, added:

“We have several existing applications from key partners that could

benefit from this exciting announcement and we will look to progress with these as a priority. Several 3G and ATP pitch projects across Wales (as part of the existing and successful collaboration scheme) will benefit immediately as will some cycling projects.

“Then, in early 2019, we will develop the criteria and application process for the remainder of the fund. Sport has an incredible ability to deliver wide ranging benefits to our society and we are delighted that the Welsh Government and the Minister have given us the opportunity to invest collaboratively in the development of facilities to further this work.”

[New year, new beginnings for iconic Rhyl building](#)

Julie James said:

“The Queen’s Buildings make up a significant part of the town centre, and the site offers a fantastic opportunity to revitalise the town centre, creating new opportunities to attract businesses and investment to the town.

“This site dominates Rhyl town centre, and I am keen for this investment to breathe new life into the centre of town, so that once again people are attracted back to spend money and time here.

“I know that Denbighshire Council is keen to develop the site, to create space for new retail units, renovate the car parking space and to build an exciting new event space for the public. I look forward to seeing the development take shape and come to benefit the town.”

This latest announcement builds on the work currently underway by the Council and its partners in redeveloping the waterfront area, which includes the new SC2 visitor attraction, and through the Rhyl town centre masterplan.

Cllr Hugh Evans OBE, leader of Denbighshire County Council, said:

“I welcome this funding from the Welsh Government which will contribute to the on-going regeneration of Rhyl by bringing partially derelict properties in the town centre back into use.

“It will provide opportunities for new jobs and business growth, as well as stimulating the private sector to undertake further investment in the town. “This project will form a significant project in the overall masterplan for Rhyl and will complement the works going on in Rhyl including private sector investment, in new hotels and restaurants.”

OECD to lead new project to support regional economic development in Wales

The Paris-based experts will use their extensive international experience of regional economic development to provide rigorous challenge and advice to the Welsh Government as it implements its new Economic Action Plan and develops new plans for Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit.

As world leaders in their field, the OECD’s input will help ensure that Wales’ future regional economic development model embeds international best practice.

The internationally-renowned body has provided advice to Welsh Government before, when in 2014 it produced a major report to help improve schools in Wales. In subsequent years it has also supported Welsh Government work on schools reform.

This new project will see international experts visit Wales and discuss regional economic challenges and opportunities with partners. This in turn will help the Welsh Government to develop a new toolkit for action as well as clear international benchmarks to monitor performance.

Minister for Economy and Transport Ken Skates said:

“Our new Economic Action Plan is a major public policy reform and I want to ensure we receive the very best advice and strongest international challenge to help us achieve our economic ambitions.

“The changes we have outlined through the Economic Action Plan to boost regional economies across Wales are profound, as is our ambition for stronger regional partnership working in Wales to boost inclusive and sustainable growth. There is no-one better to help us deliver this than the OECD.

“We have asked the OECD to advise us on ways to strengthen regional

economic governance, build capacity, and support more joined up economic policy making, including through developing a practical toolkit for both us and our partners to use to support those changes.

“We must ensure Wales remains competitive and that we benchmark ourselves against the best and learn from great ideas and new innovation across the world.”

Minister for Brexit Jeremy Miles said:

“EU regional investment has helped improve our economy, but Wales needs further investment to address the structural economic challenges we continue to face. We continue to press the UK Government for the £370m annually we receive for our European Structural and Investment funds in Wales in keeping with promises made during the referendum campaign that Wales would not be worse off and for regional economic development in Wales to remain with the Welsh Government after we leave the EU.

“Our project with the OECD will play an important part in Wales’ development of the right policy and structures for a successor regional investment approach to replace EU regional funds, closely aligned to our Economic Action Plan. We are not looking to simply replicate the EU model in Wales, and are committed to creating a new, made in Wales approach that reflects international best practice, builds on Wales’ distinctive legislative and policy landscape, and delivers for our people, businesses and communities.

“This partnership with the OECD will help strengthen that work and give confidence to our partners that new and dynamic partnerships can be formed to innovate and link policies in fresh and imaginative ways.”

[Funding for projects supporting people out of homelessness](#)

The funding is part of the £30m being invested this year and next year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

The investment includes:

- £240,000 to extend the Conwy and Denbighshire Housing First pilot for the 2019-20 year;

- Over £52,000 for Rhondda Cynon Taf council to extend their successful Housing First project supporting ex-offenders;
- £68,000 for the Salvation Army to run a Housing First project in Merthyr Tydfil;
- Over £548,000 for two projects to work closely in Cardiff. Funding will be used to continue a Housing First pilot run by the Salvation Army and for Cardiff Council to establish a new Housing First pilot, meeting demand locally.

Housing First is designed to support people who need significant levels of help to move away from homelessness. People receiving support are offered a place to live and then offered tailored, long term support to help enable them to manage a tenancy independently.

Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government said:

“Housing First can help people who are homeless and who often have complex needs including severe mental illness or mental health problems, problems with drug and alcohol abuse, poor physical health and a lack of a wider support network.

“Housing First is not the right approach for everyone who is homeless – there is still a need for supported housing and temporary accommodation, but it can play an important role in supporting people, particularly those who have been sleeping rough for a long time, to be able to sustain a tenancy.”

Housing First is designed to provide flexible support for as long as it is required. It focuses on what the individual needs to recover and be able to sustain a tenancy themselves.

Housing First Projects are designed to ensure that the individual has choice and control – they are actively encouraged to engage with support services such as mental health or substance abuse, but they are not required to do so in return for support.

She added:

“The cost, in terms of health, emergency services and police budgets, of supporting people while they are on the streets far outweighs the cost of addressing their homelessness. We aim to support the most vulnerable people in Wales, and Housing First is a sound investment that can save money, as well as lives, in the long term.”