

Welsh innovation receives global recognition for helping to save and improve lives

Backed by over £3m Welsh Government funding and run in collaboration with Innovate UK, the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) has gained interest from other UK devolved nations as well as attracting attention from Ireland, Sweden and Australia.

Launched in Wales in 2013, the SBRI offers businesses – many of which are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) – the opportunity to bid for research and development (R&D) funding to develop technology-driven solutions for specific challenges facing the public sector.

Run as competitions each challenge focusses on an area of public service where solutions either do not yet exist or where partial solutions might be improved.

Areas where solutions are already being progressed include the improvement of health and patient care, medical treatments, road safety, renewable energy generation and environmental management.

To date, 14 SBRI competitions have been run in Wales, resulting in 66 contracts valued at approximately £5m being awarded to companies to develop Welsh public sector solutions: 44 contracts at Phase 1 (developing the proposal) and 22 contracts at Phase 2 (creating a prototype with a view to bringing it to market).

One of the first SBRI challenges run in Wales was by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (UHB) which wanted to develop a solution to improve patient care by helping nurses and carers reduce administration duties so they could spend more time with patients.

The target of this challenge was for nurses to spend 10% more time with patients. After two years of practical collaboration between the UHB's nurses and a small Bangor start up company, Elidir Health, a software solution has been developed which promises to increase nurses' time with patients not just by 10% but potentially up to 23%. Indeed this challenge has been so successful that Elidir Health is now working with Cwm Taf UHB as well as Betsi Cadwaladr UHB to explore how this software can be adopted across both health boards' paediatric units.

The Welsh Government's own Transport department has also made use of SBRI challenges to develop solutions to identified issues, for example improving road safety and reducing the number of motorcyclists killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads.

Of the bids submitted to this challenge two projects were selected, with the

first example already complete.

Armourgel Ltd has developed a motorcycle helmet liner that will significantly reduce the impact to a rider's head during a collision. This can make the difference between a serious brain injury and a minor one.

The second project has developed a junction alert system which will soon be trialed on Welsh roads. The project will be able to test the system in peak motorcycling season and by September the company will have fully tested the system in all weather conditions and will report on its market potential.

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James is keen to point out that both these projects have the potential to save the lives of motorcyclists not just on Welsh roads but across the world, saying:

"The Small Business Research Initiative is a great example of how the public and private sector can work together to tackle societal challenges in innovative ways and deliver benefits to both public sector bodies and industry as well as the people they serve.

"My aim now is for our SBRI programme to become a mainstream tool in the Welsh public sector, promoting innovation and driving forward out technological potential.

"SBRI can open up huge opportunities for Welsh businesses and help solve some of the toughest challenges we will all face in the future and we plan to use it."

[5 ways we would use Scotland's social security powers](#)

The Scottish Parliament has major new powers over tax and social security. Labour doesn't want these powers to gather dust on the shelf. But that is exactly what is happening while the SNP obsesses about another divisive independence referendum.

We want to use Holyrood's powers to make Scotland a fairer place to live.

So here are 5 ways we would use the new powers over social security to boost incomes and build a fairer nation.

1. Boot the private sector out of Scotland's social security system:

The private sector has profited from delivering cruel and inhumane disability benefit assessments. Labour wants to use our powers to see them booted out of

the Scottish social security system. That's why we will amend the forthcoming Social Security Bill to ensure, in law, that the private contractors are removed from the system.

2. Boost Child Benefit by £240 per year by the end of the decade:

The best way to make Scotland fairer is to stay in the UK and use the powers of the Scottish Parliament. That's why last month Kezia Dugdale set out our plan to use the new powers of our Parliament to boost Child Benefit by an extra £240 per year by 2021. This move will lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty, and put money back into the pockets of families who have seen incomes flat-line under the SNP.

3. Set a legal duty to ensure everyone gets what they are entitled to:

Rather than the system working against Scots, we want to see it work for people. That's why we want a legal duty on the government which ensures that everyone gets the benefits they are entitled to. Scots miss out on £2 billion worth of social security payments a year. Getting that cash to families could make a huge difference to thousands.

4. Protect WASPI women from State Pension changes:

At both Holyrood and Westminster, it is only Labour that has a real plan to reverse the Tories' punitive pension reform which has left thousands of women worse off each simply because of their age. We'd use the new top-up powers to reverse the £6 a week cut women born between April 1951 and 1953 face compared to men, and UK Labour would extend Pension Credit to WASPI women affected by George Osborne's pension cuts.

5. Give carers the support they deserve:

Every party at Holyrood has backed plans to boost Carer's Allowance by £600 a year. More than 6 months after SNP Ministers got the power to just that, all they have done is commission a feasibility study. While carers are left in the dark, the Nationalists can't and won't say when it will be paid. Not a single MSP would stand in the way of this increase. Labour wants thousands of carers who have been promised the increase to get more than just warm words.

Like our plans? Then [join today](#) and let's fight for a fairer Scotland in the UK.

[News story: Data released on appeals for 2016 GCSE and AS and A level exams](#)

The report shows that there were 355 appeals against results made in 2016,

compared to 466 in 2015 – a decrease of 24%.

This reduction is in the context of a drop in the number of GCSE, AS and A level unit entries and drop in the number of requests for reviews of marking in 2016 compare to 2015.

In 2016 211 (3.2%) of all grades challenged at appeal led to a grade change. This compares to 2015 where 49 (0.7%) of grades challenged under appeal were changed. An appeal can relate to more than one student.

This increase in successful appeals, from 31 in 2015 to 46 in 2016, follows a pilot run in 2016 to test new grounds for appeal in 3 subjects. For AS and A level geography, physics and religious studies the grounds for appeal following a review were extended to allow an appeal on the grounds of a marking error that was not corrected during the review. Traditionally, exam boards have only accepted appeals on the grounds of a procedural error.

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, said: “The appeals pilot in three subjects is part of a set of wider changes we are making to the marking reviews and appeals system. The changes aim to make the system as fair as it can be for all students and to make sure students get the grade their performance deserved.

“We are evaluating the pilot before deciding whether to extend the additional grounds to other subjects.”

An appeal can be requested once a school or college has gone through the review of marking and moderation process if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

The full statistical release, [Appeals for GCSE and GCE: summer 2016 exam series, can be read here](#)

The BBC is one of the world's finest news broadcasters and we should all value its impartiality, integrity and balanced coverage – Tom Watson

Tom

Watson MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, commenting on a letter accusing the BBC of “pessimism” and “bias” in its coverage of Brexit, said:

“The

BBC is one of the world's finest news broadcasters and we should all value its impartiality, integrity and balanced coverage. It is the BBC's job to report the facts, not to be a cheerleader for any cause or party.

"All politicians sometimes dislike the way some stories are covered, but we should never seek to interfere with the independence of the BBC by publicly accusing it of bias and making implicit threats about its future.

"Theresa May and Karen Bradley must make clear their commitment to the independence of the BBC and distance themselves from attacks on it by politicians who have an agenda the BBC does not and should not share."

[Press release: UK House Price Index \(HPI\) for January 2017](#)

The January data shows an annual price increase of 6.2% which takes the average property value in the UK to £218,255. Monthly house prices have risen by 0.8% since December 2016. The monthly index figure for the UK was 114.5.

In England, the January data shows an annual price increase of 6.5% which takes the average property value to £234,794. Monthly house prices have risen by 0.7% since December 2016.

Wales shows an annual price increase of 4.2% which takes the average property value to £145,933. Monthly house prices have fallen by 0.6% since December 2016.

London shows an annual price increase of 7.3% which takes the average property value to £490,718. Monthly house prices have risen by 3% since December 2016.

Sales during November 2016, the most up-to-date Land Registry figures available, show that:

1. The UK House Price Index (HPI) is published on the second or third Tuesday of each month with Northern Ireland figures updated quarterly. The February 2017 UK HPI will be published at 9.30am on 11 April 2017. A [calendar of release dates](#) is available.
2. Data for the UK HPI is provided by Land Registry, Registers of Scotland, Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the

Valuation Office Agency.

3. The UK HPI is calculated by the Office for National Statistics and Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. It applies a hedonic regression model that uses the various sources of data on property price, in particular Land Registry's Price Paid Dataset, and attributes to produce estimates of the change in house prices each month. Find out more about the methodology used from [ONS](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency](#).
4. The first estimate for new build average price (April 2016 report) was based on a small sample which can cause volatility. A three month moving average has been applied to the latest estimate to remove some of this volatility.
5. Work has been taking place since 2014 to develop a single, official HPI that reflects the final transaction price for sales of residential property in the UK. Using the geometric mean, it covers purchases at market value for owner-occupation and buy-to-let, excluding those purchases not at market value (such as re-mortgages), where the 'price' represents a valuation.
6. Information on residential property transactions for England and Wales, collected as part of the official registration process, is provided by Land Registry for properties that are sold for full market value.
7. The Land Registry dataset contains the sale price of the property, the date when the sale was completed, full address details, the type of property (detached, semi-detached, terraced or flat), if it is a newly built property or an established residential building and a variable to indicate if the property has been purchased as a financed transaction (using a mortgage) or as a non-financed transaction (cash purchase).
8. Repossession data is based on the number of transactions lodged with Land Registry by lenders exercising their power of sale.
9. For England this is shown as volumes of repossessions recorded by Government Office Region. For Wales there is a headline figure for the number of repossessions recorded in Wales.
10. The data can be downloaded as a .csv file. Repossession data prior to April 2016 is not available. Find out more information about [repossessions](#).
11. Background tables of the raw and cleansed aggregated data, in Excel and CSV formats, are also published monthly although Northern Ireland is on a quarterly basis. They are available for free use and re-use under the Open Government Licence.

12. As a government department established in 1862, executive agency and trading fund responsible to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Land Registry keeps and maintains the Land Register for England and Wales. The Land Register has been open to public inspection since 1990.
13. With the largest transactional database of its kind detailing more than 24 million titles, Land Registry underpins the economy by safeguarding ownership of many billions of pounds worth of property.
14. For further information about Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
15. Follow us on Twitter [@LandRegGov](https://twitter.com/LandRegGov), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#)