

Two EU backed property development funds set to create £40m infrastructure boost for West Wales and the Valleys

The £7m Property for Business Development Grant Fund (PBDG) and the £7m Property Infrastructure Fund (PIF) are each expected to attract £13m of private sector investment and geared to stimulate the market to meet the needs of businesses.

Both Funds aim to bridge the financial viability gap that exists in parts of Wales between the cost of building, expanding or refurbishing properties and the completed market value of the property.

It is expected that together the schemes will deliver around 51,100m² (550,000sq.ft.) of new and refurbished floor space in areas that will provide tangible benefits to local economies, address market needs and support business growth.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“We know that private developers and businesses are reluctant to invest in some geographical areas simply because the cost of building or refurbishing a property is more than the end value of that property.

“These two new schemes, backed by EU funds, are geared to address this specific issue and will provide a significant investment boost. The grant support will stimulate the market, create new high quality industrial space and offices to accommodate jobs and meet the needs of business.”

Both funds are for new build and refurbishments/extensions/adaptions with the Property Infrastructure Fund aimed specifically at advance build developments and the Property for Business Development Grant Fund targeted at supporting businesses with bespoke expansion projects. The overall grant intervention rate for both Funds is 35%.

The successful projects, selected in conjunction with the regional stakeholders across Wales, will be those that achieve best value for money and create the greatest economic impact. The primary focus will be on projects in Enterprise Zones, Local Growth Zones and City Regions.

Stage 1 Applications, providing brief information on the project requiring support, will need to be submitted by the **30 April 2017** in order to be considered for a provisional allocation of funding.

For more information and an application form for businesses interested in the Property for Business Development Grant or developers interested in the Property Infrastructure Fund to support advance build development should email gde.pdg@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

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A report published by YouGov has revealed an increase in disappointment over the SNP's handling of vital issues.

The report includes survey results from numerous polls aimed at gauging how well or badly the public believe the SNP government is doing in handling education, the NHS, justice, the economy and policing issues.

Every question asked about the SNP's governing performance revealed an increase in disappointment over its handlings.

48 per cent of respondents felt the SNP managed the NHS 'fairly badly' or 'very badly' – a five per cent increase from when previously asked in November last year.

The issue of justice also recorded significantly negative results – with 39 per cent of respondents viewing the SNP's performance as not being good enough.

The report shows the need for a Scottish Government that spends its every waking hour improving standards across the country, and the Scottish Conservatives are now calling for the SNP to start focusing its time on tackling the real issues people are worried about.

Scottish Conservative chief whip John Lamont said:

"This report makes the growing scepticism of the SNP's ability to effectively run the country clear.

"The SNP has simply brushed aside so many important issues they've described as a priority in its bid to break up Britain.

“It shows that behind a government whose clear raison d’être is independence, is a government that has done next to nothing to improve the many issues Scotland faces.

“Nicola Sturgeon needs to take a very clear message from this report – people don’t want independence, they want a government that is fully focused on improving issues that clearly need addressed.”

For a copy of the YouGov report click here:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/k39gmatrzb/Times_Scotland_Results_170314_VI_Indy2_Trade_Domestic_Website.pdf

Free advice service for landlords

A new telephone advice service is available for private landlords. The service is free and offers information in confidence

Partnership between Jesus College Oxford and Wales’ brightest students unveiled at major education summit

The partnership between the University of Oxford College and the Welsh Government’s Seren Network will see a selection of Wales’ brightest students attend a bespoke summer school at Jesus College in August this year.

Students from each of the 11 Seren Network hubs across Wales will be given the opportunity to apply for the four-day summer school, where they will sample student life and attend lectures on demography, artificial intelligence, climate, trade, politics and literature.

Unveiled today by Welsh Government Minister for Lifelong Learning and the Welsh Language at the Seren Network’s second annual Beyond the Curriculum conference in mid-Wales, the summer school is thought to be the first aimed at solely Welsh students.

Speaking at the event, Welsh Government Minister for Lifelong Learning and the Welsh Language, Alun Davies, said:

“Raising the aspirations and attainment levels of Welsh school pupils to help them reach their academic potential is an ongoing priority for Welsh Government, and the Seren Network is playing a pivotal role in this ambition.

“Since its inception in 2015, the Network has quickly grown to a recognised and valuable vehicle through which some 2000 of the brightest pupils in Wales are now channelling and honing their academic talents.

“Today’s announcement adds another tangible benefit for students. By enabling Wales’ most academically gifted pupils to sample life at one of the world’s best academic institutions, we are demonstrating that educational excellence is well within their reach, and equipping them with hands-on support and guidance to make sure they reach the top.

Professor Sir Nigel Shadbolt, the Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, said:

“Jesus College is incredibly proud of its enduring connection to Wales, a connection that goes back to the College’s foundation in 1571. This new initiative will help ensure that we continue to welcome future generations of talented Welsh students here in Oxford.

“The Seren Network works in partnership with organisations including the Sutton Trust to identify all opportunities and support Seren students to make informed decisions about their futures. Morgan Cronin, from the Merthyr-RCT Seren hub, attended a Sutton Trust-organised summer school at Yale and now has an unconditional offer to study there.”

[John McDonnell response to the Government’s u-turn on £2 billion NICs rise in the Budget](#)

John

McDonnell MP, Labour’s Shadow Chancellor,

responding to the Government’s u-turn on its £2 billion NICs rise in the Budget

last week, said:

"This is a humiliating reversal for the Chancellor forced upon him by Labour's opposition. His authority is now shredded after just one Budget, and he tore up a manifesto commitment to do it.

"We welcome the Government's decision to finally listen to Labour's calls made in Jeremy Corbyn's Budget response along with those of business groups like the Federation of Small Businesses to not go ahead with an unfair £2bn tax rise on low and middle earners. But they should never have been placed in this position to start with, and now we face yet another Tory Budget only a year on with a blackhole in the billions. In 2015, we had the tax credit shambles. In 2016, we had Personal Independence Payments reversal. Now in 2017 we have the u-turn on National Insurance Contributions.

"There will be millions of working people who are now breathing a sigh of relief, but it is the Chancellor who should be holding his breath as this episode throws up urgent questions that he and the Cabinet must now answer.

"Did the Prime Minister or the rest of the Cabinet, who must have seen the Budget in advance and known this measure was to be implemented, raise their concerns with the Chancellor before he announced it, worrying millions of families? It was in the weekend papers before the Budget so they can't say they were unaware it was to happen.

"This is also the second year we have had a Tory Budget with a black hole in it worth billions. This is not acceptable. What will he do to fill the shortfall in a Budget he delivered less than a week ago without pursuing unfair tax increases or further cuts to public services? As the Budget will still see working people £1,400 worse off under the Government.

"On the day the Brexit Secretary has admitted that he hasn't looked into the costs of the Prime Minister's negotiating strategy, this is yet more proof that there is disarray at the top of a government clearly making things up as they go along.

"We need answers from the Chancellor and accountability at the top of government. In no workplace would such practices be allowed to continue, and it

should not be allowed from those responsible for the public finances.

Labour's

new roundtable on self-employment will bring together business organisations, trade unions and self-employed groups to lay out a serious and realistic strategy to provide a fair deal for the self-employed at a time of major labour

market changes. We are proud to be the party of working people, small businesses, and the self-employed."