

Housing and Regeneration Minister visits Wrexham homelessness project

The Wrexham Community Care Hub, based at the Salvation Army Centre brings together a number of services including GP services, mental health, substance misuse services, housing and homelessness services under one roof.

Rebecca Evans said:

“It was good to see the team’s approach of ‘everyone in the room,’ with open access services meeting a range of needs in one place.

“The team is focused on meeting the immediate needs of people who are homeless, and doing so in a friendly environment which builds trust between the agencies involved and the people receiving the services. Providing these services from the same location means they can operate more efficiently and cost-effectively too.”

Dr Karen Sankey, Clinical Lead at the Hub, said:

“The success of the model is based on the fact that all service providers attending the Hub share a desire to make a difference and support these people who are often living in crisis. We provide a safe, non-threatening and friendly space where individuals can get access to the most appropriate support for them in a timely fashion, in addition to being a place where positive relationships are formed.”

Rebecca Evans said:

“We want to see more joined-up services being delivered by housing, health, employment and support services, focused on the needs of homeless people and people who are sleeping rough in order to help them move to suitable accommodation.

“Anyone who is concerned about someone they see sleeping rough can use the Streetlink app to inform local authorities and outreach services who can then offer help.”

Adult gender identity services available in Wales this autumn

The new Welsh Gender Team will start seeing patients at the end of October, allowing transgender people to access the care they need closer to home.

Currently, all patients who present with gender dysphoria are referred to the London Gender Identity Clinic, where they are assessed and provided with a treatment plan.

Patients in the Cardiff and Vale area who have experienced difficulty in accessing the medicines that have been recommended for them by the London Clinic will be able to access their prescriptions via a specialist GP from next month. This development is targeted towards the area of most need, with most patients waiting for hormone replacement living in the Cardiff area.

Work is continuing with Health Boards and the General Practitioners Committee to develop a fully integrated gender identity service in Wales.

The Health Secretary said:

“Over the last few years, we have seen an increase in demand for transgender health services in Wales. As part of our commitment to improve health and wellbeing for all, we have invested £500,000 annually to improve gender identity services in Wales.

“Today’s announcement is a positive step towards the fully integrated service I expect to be in place next year. A specialist team in Wales will reduce both the distance of travel and, over time, the waiting times people in Wales currently experience.”

The All Wales Gender Identity Partnership Group has been actively involved in designing the new referral pathway for patients who present with gender dysphoria.

Essential A55 improvement work after no daytime lane closures commitment achieved

During that period, dating back to April 2017, all routine work involving lane closures has taken place overnight. Daytime lane closures have only been

necessary in the immediate aftermath of serious collisions.

Today's announcement comes as essential improvement works are needed on the Kneeshaw Lupton underbridge near Junction 23 Llanddulas.

The works, on the westbound carriageway only, will begin on 17 September which will be 532 days after the last routine daytime lane closures on the A55 between Junction 11 and the English border.

It will see all surfacing removed, waterproofing of the bridge deck and the replacement of bridge joints.

This work requires a full closure of the westbound carriageway in the area with a contraflow in place which will see a single traffic lane in each direction 24/7 for up to five weeks. The waterproofing needs to be laid in reasonable weather conditions which is why it has been programmed to take place during this period. All work will be completed by midday on 18 October at the very latest, which is before the beginning of the half term holidays.

Due to the nature of the engineering works and to ensure safety, 1.5 metre high boards will be installed with work taking place on the other side of these.

Similar works on the eastbound carriageway are set to take place later next year.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

"I have been absolutely committed to ensuring there have been no routine daytime lane closures on the A55 from the English border to Junction 11 from April 2017 until September 2018 and I am delighted we have delivered exactly that.

"During that period, resurfacing long lengths of the A55, repairs and maintenance, including to the route's tunnels, have all been carried out overnight resulting in very little disruption to traffic.

"I want to thank officials, contractors and all those involved in planning these works who continue to work tirelessly to ensure the smooth running of this key route.

"We have also been carrying out night time works on the Kneeshaw Lupton underbridge near Llanddulas to keep in use the temporary repairs we have previously put in place on the structure. We do however need to carry out permanent repairs as the bridge deck itself is now showing signs of distress. I have to reiterate this is essential work which must take place.

"I fully understand that roadworks during the daytime can cause disruption, but they need to be carried out on all major roads to ensure the safety of the travelling public and strengthen a route's

resilience. These are matters on which I will not compromise. We have also taken action to offset the impact for the travelling public by ensuring work on the eastbound carriageway can be delayed until next year.

“I ask the travelling public for their patience whilst this work is carried out and it will be on a 24 hours a day, seven days a week basis at pace so it can be completed as quickly as possible.”

Updates of the essential improvement work will be available on the Traffic Wales website and twitter page (@TrafficWalesN).

Superfast take-off for Gwynedd business

Leader of the House with responsibility for digital, Julie James visited Jim Ellis who co-runs When it Rains Creative, based at Llwyndyrus Farm, to see how accessing superfast speeds had made a real difference.

The farm has been enabled to access superfast broadband under the Superfast Cymru programme and is benefiting from Fibre-to-the-premises technology. This means the property has access to Ultrafast speeds of up to 330Mbps which is also enabling the farm to market the holiday cottages ‘Llwyndyrus Farm Spa’ and efficiently deal with bookings.

When it Rains Creative offers videography, photography and 3D visualisation services and a faster connection is playing a vital role in the business’ future ambitions.

Jim Ellis recently won the Dr Emrys Award at the Royal Welsh Show for Embracing Innovation and Communications Skills. The award is for a person under 35 years of age, who lives and works in Wales and has contributed in an exceptional way to embracing innovation and skills.

Following the visit, Julie James said:

“I’ve been very pleased to visit Llwyndyrus Farm, where the benefits of a superfast broadband connection are being realised.

“It’s been great to hear how Jim has been using faster connection speeds as part of When it Rains Creative. His passion for using technology to achieve his goals is evidently clear and I’m very pleased Superfast Cymru has delivered for him and the business.

“The programme has undoubtedly been a success by bringing superfast

broadband access to almost 733,000 premises throughout Wales which would otherwise not have received it, largely in rural areas.

"It's also important to remember no premises in Gwynedd would have had access to superfast broadband without the intervention of Superfast Cymru, but now more than 58,400 in the county have thanks to our programme.

"While the programme has been a great success, there is more to do in reaching the remaining premises without access and we are now working on how to do this.

"Our Access Broadband Cymru and Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher Schemes are also available for those currently without access to superfast broadband."

Jim Ellis of When it Rains Creative said:

"Accessing superfast broadband has been absolutely essential for my personal growth as an aspiring entrepreneur and videographer as well as for the business and will be as we continue to grow.

"It is playing a vital role in helping us deal with customers, transferring data and working more efficiently.

"Superfast broadband has made a real and tangible difference and I'm delighted with the positive impact it continues to have."

Ed Hunt, programme director for Openreach, said:

"Superfast Cymru was an enormous engineering project with a complex set of challenges, but our engineers have risen to the task, delivering one of the outstanding digital network roll-outs in Europe.

"Wales now has the largest full fibre to the home footprint in Britain as a result of the work our engineers carried out during Superfast Cymru. I'm delighted to see companies such as 'When it Rains Creative' reaping the benefits of this new infrastructure from their base on Llwyndyrus Farm near Pwllheli and accessing some of the fastest broadband speeds available in the UK.

"Our new digital infrastructure is bringing a wealth of new growth opportunities to businesses across Wales and we'll continue to extend our full fibre network even further throughout the country."

A level and Welsh Baccalaureate students congratulated by Kirsty Williams

The A level provisional results for Wales show an improvement overall with 8.7% of grades awarded at A*, the best outcome in Wales since this grade was introduced, in 2010, 0.4 percentage point higher than the previous best figure in 2017.

In the other figures from today's results:

- 76.3% gained A* to C, the highest since 2009 and the second highest recorded with 26.3% achieving A*-A, a historic high.
- Maths has the highest pass rate of any key subject with 42.2% gaining A* to A.
- There have been increases at A* in Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Arts and Design, Psychology, Geography, Religious Studies and English Language.
- At A* to C the results have gone up in English Literature, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Art and Design, Sociology and Business Studies.
- The overall average for all Subjects shows the performance of both male and females learners has improved across most grades.

The Welsh Baccalaureate results show:

- 97.7% of candidates achieved the Skills Challenge Certificate, an increase of 3.7 percentage points from 2017.
- 80.9% of candidates passed the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate, an increase of 2.2 percentage points from 2017.

On a visit to Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf in Llandaff, Kirsty Williams said:

"Today is the culmination of a lot of hard work from our students and I want to congratulate them, as well as our fantastic teachers and lecturers, on these results.

"We're seeing a very positive and stable set of results, with some very encouraging signs of progress as we continue on our journey of education reform.

"I'm very pleased that the number of students achieving A*-A has reached 26.3% – this is a 1.3% increase from last year and is an historic high for Wales.

"It's also particularly pleasing to see an increase in the number

of students taking STEM subjects. This is the continuation of a trend we've seen in recent years.

"Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Level pass rates are also up which is excellent news – this is a valued qualification accepted by a growing number of prestigious universities across the UK.

"These are all very good reasons why we should remain confident in our reformed system of qualifications. We are providing students with the skills and knowledge they need for the modern world and our challenge now is to build on the results as we continue our national mission to raise standards for all our young people."