

Economy Secretary opens new life sciences headquarters in Crumlin

Following a £1.8m package of Welsh Government support, the company has chosen the Caerphilly town as the location for its new global headquarters.

It has also centralised its manufacturing and development activities from sites in Blaenavon, Cardiff and Dundee onto one new state of the art facility site in Crumlin.

The move to Crumlin will see over 360 jobs being safeguarded and created in Wales by 2020.

This means that in line with the ambitions of the Welsh Government's high level plan, Our Valleys, Our Future, BBI's move will deliver high quality career opportunities in the South Wales Valleys and provide a significant boost to the local economy.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

As a highly successful company with a turnover of more than £60m and a strategically important player in the global life science sector, BBI Group is already a made-in-Wales success story.

I am delighted that Welsh Government support has enabled the company to establish its global headquarters here and centralise its manufacturing and development activities in Crumlin, bringing new and high quality job opportunities to the South Wales Valleys.

This is absolutely in line with the ambitions of our high level plan Our Valleys Our Future, and with the aspirations of my Economic Action Plan, which aims to ensure that the fruits of economic prosperity fall much more evenly across Wales.

The Economic Action Plan is also clear about the economic growth opportunities of attracting global headquarters to Wales and our ambition to build on our success in this area.

I am delighted to see BBI Group's new state of the art facility in Crumlin first hand and wish the company every success in its new home.

BBI Group Chairman Alan Peterson said:

The opening of our new Global Headquarters is a significant step towards realising our strategic long-term growth plans. It gives us the opportunity to compete more effectively in our key markets in

Europe, USA and China.

The Crumlin site enables BBI to drive our customers' future growth by expanding our capacity to provide key reagents and services for the healthcare diagnostics industry. We're delighted that our Global Headquarters is now open and we are able to contribute to the local economy and offer quality job opportunities to the local community.

Minister sees how Welsh poetry is helping NHS patients on its 70th Birthday

The Minister met staff and patients who are taking part in the Cerddi Byw Nawr project, which is run in conjunction with Literature Wales. The project was overseen by former Chair, Crown and Prose medal winning poet and teacher Mererid Hopwood who has recently undertaken a residency at the palliative care unit of the hospital.

The project encouraged patients, their families and staff to express their thoughts and feelings centred on the themes of life and death in both Welsh and English and has resulted in the development of a digital book entitled "Cerddi Byw Nawr / Live Now Poems".

The minister met patients and staff at the hospital to learn more about how the project is helping patients and their families come to terms with their terminal illnesses and comforting them during a difficult time.

The minister said;

"It was a pleasure to join staff, patients and their families to celebrate the NHS's 70th Birthday and to find out more about Cerddi Byw Nawr. The project is an excellent example of the role literature, particularly in a person's mother tongue, can provide comfort and allow people to express themselves at a difficult time.

"It is also testament to how the NHS and its staff go the extra mile, not only to ensure patients' physical and health needs are met but to ensure their and their families' emotional and mental wellbeing is addressed. All over Britain The NHS is full of people who demonstrate considerable dedication and commitment to their jobs and incredible care and humanity to their patients and I thank them for all they do."

Economy and Transport Secretary appoints Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales

Mr John Lloyd Jones OBE, FRAgS, Hon FLI will take up the post for one year.

Welsh Government established the NICfW to support independent, better informed advice on a longer-term strategy for infrastructure investment, which enshrines the goals and principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

It has been established as a non-statutory, advisory body to provide advice and recommendations to the Welsh Ministers on the economic and environmental infrastructure needs of Wales over five to 30 years. The Commission will also considering the interactions of these needs with 'social infrastructure', such as schools, hospitals and housing.

Economy and Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

"The calibre of candidates that came forward for this role through the public appointments process was high and I want to thank all those that took the time to put their name forward. I have decided to appoint the Chair on an interim basis for one year to focus on establishing the Commission in its initial phase.

"Mr Jones has excellent credentials and offers stability and reliability while I assess the most important skills and knowledge for the Commission in the longer term. He is a seasoned Chair, with wide and varied knowledge of the public and private sectors and, crucially, has the ability and the skills to create a board and get it working quickly. Mr Jones has a track record of leadership and I am confident he will be able to establish a commission capable of successfully assessing infrastructure need and shaping our long-term investment strategy."

£6m St Asaph flood protection scheme

officially opened by Environment Minister

On 27 November 2012, the River Elwy overtopped the existing defences affecting 320 properties, tragically claiming the life of Mrs Margaret Hughes, who lived in a retirement home near Mill Street.

Following the flooding, Natural Resources Wales commissioned an extensive study to fully investigate the flood risk and designed a scheme to reduce future risk.

The new flood scheme will reduce the risk of flooding from the River Elwy to 293 homes and 121 businesses including schools, retirement homes, sheltered accommodation, the local library, doctor's surgery and fire station. The scheme will protect St Asaph from an event equivalent to the floods in 2012.

Infrastructure and recreational benefits will include new and wider footpaths, improvements to the ancient City Bridge and the installation of an "i beacon" Bluetooth transmitter.

The project also includes the installation of bird and bat boxes and the replacement of trees and hedges. Natural Resources Wales are planting more trees than were removed to build the scheme.

After officially opening the new scheme and unveiling a plaque, the Minister for Environment said:

"We all remember the serious flooding here in 2012, so this is an important scheme for St Asaph. Those events remind us of the real threat we face from flooding, which is likely to increase as our climate changes.

"I would like to thank Natural Resources Wales and their contractors for delivering this important scheme which is reducing the flood risk to 414 properties, including 293 homes.

"The scheme has been supported with £6 million from the Welsh Government. Earlier this year I also announced a £56m programme to strengthen Wales' flood and coastal defences, helping build resilience in communities across Wales which face similar risks."

Tim Jones, Natural Resources Wales' Executive Director of Operations for North Wales, said:

"This scheme will make a real difference to people living and working in St Asaph who suffered such devastating flooding in

November 2012 and have lived with the threat of flooding for many years.

“While we can’t always prevent flooding from happening, we have built a robust scheme for St Asaph that will significantly reduce the risk and provide effective, long-term peace of mind for people in the city.

“And the scheme’s environmental improvements and new recreation opportunities are a boost to everyone’s day-to-day life in the city as well.”

£5m Welsh Government funding for Pantycelyn

The funding, which was previously agreed in principle, was confirmed by the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan, as she visited the halls of residence and viewed plans for the project.

Neuadd Pantycelyn has been a dedicated Welsh medium residence since 1974 and is a symbol of Welsh speaking culture within Higher Education. The refurbishment of the building will ensure its historical and cultural significance will live on and will provide opportunities for students to live their everyday lives through the medium of Welsh.

Part of the building will also be used as a centre for Welsh Speakers and Learners and will be open to the community.

Eluned Morgan said:

“The importance of Pantycelyn to the Welsh speaking world cannot be overestimated. It is an iconic building to so many people throughout Wales and beyond so I am delighted to confirm this funding of £5 million to ensure many more Welsh speaking students will be able to call it home and experience its unique linguistic and cultural atmosphere.

“We have set an ambitious target of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050. I have said many times that education is key to achieving this target and this is as true for higher education as it is for primary schools. The students who will be living here will be the teachers, lawyers, scientists and politicians of tomorrow so ensuring they have the opportunities to learn and live through the medium of Welsh and to carry that forward to their

professional lives is a vital part of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy.”

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, said:

“We are very grateful to Welsh Government for their support for our exciting plans to reopen Pantycelyn as a first-class hall of residence for Welsh-speaking students. Aberystwyth offers an unrivalled experience to students who want to learn and live through the medium of Welsh, and the refurbishment of this historic building will further enhance the breadth and depth of our Welsh-medium academic provision.”