

Welsh team set to compete at Special Olympics, thanks to Welsh Government and Disability Sport Wales funding

The event will take place from 7-12 August and is the country's largest multi-sports event for athletes with intellectual disabilities. The funding will help towards the costs of sending a team from Wales to compete at the Games.

The Special Olympics National Games are held every four years and enable children and adults to compete at a national level. Around 2,600 athletes will come together from across the country to compete in 19 sports.

Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans said:

"I am pleased to be able to provide this funding, which will enable around 200 Welsh athletes to compete at the Special Olympics National Games. Training for, and participating in, events such as this one, can offer enormous benefits – not only in terms of improving people's health and wellbeing, but also in building self-confidence."

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"It's vital that Wales is represented at National Games such as these, building on our rich sporting history and recent success stories. I'm delighted that Welsh Government funding has helped ensure a strong Welsh presence and look forward to us playing a big part in a successful Games."

Pippa Britton, Chair, Disability Sport Wales said:

"I am delighted that Disability Sport Wales is once again able to support Special Olympics Team Wales to attend their National Games. This event is a pinnacle moment for any athlete, providing them with opportunities to compete and engage with competitors from across the UK.

"We are very proud of the efforts of the Team and have no doubt that they will represent Wales with great distinction when they take the stage later this summer.

"We wish them all the very best of luck."

Jeff Savory Chair & Head of Delegation Special Olympics Wales said:

“We would like to thank Disability Sport Wales and The Welsh Government for their support to the Special Olympics Wales Team. The Special Olympics GB National Summer Games are the flagship event in the 4 year cycle of Special Olympics in GB. This event also is the qualifying event for the 2019 World Games which is to be held in Abu Dhabi. “I know that every athlete will do their best to bring the silverware HOME to Wales.”

Appointments to Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse

Richard Ives has been appointed as Chair of the Panel for an interim period of three months, running from 1st March 2017 to 31st May 2017. Meanwhile, Professor Simon Moore has been re-appointed to the Panel, from 24th March 2017 to 23rd March 2020.

The Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse is an independent expert advisory Welsh Government Sponsored Body established under general executive powers of the Welsh Ministers and supported by the Welsh Government.

The remit of the Panel is to advise on measures to prevent or reduce substance misuse, the associated health and social harms and review implementation of the Welsh Government’s Substance Misuse Strategy.

The Panel will consist of not less than eight and not more than 12 Panel Members, all of whom are independent of the Welsh Government.

Members of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse (APoSM), including the Chair, are not paid, but are reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. They have a time commitment of up to 10 days per annum.

Rebecca Evans said:

“We are committed to tackling and reducing the harms associated with substance misuse in Wales. I am pleased that Richard Ives has agreed to the offer of appointment as Chair of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse for this interim period and that Professor Simon Moore has agreed to the offer of re-appointment.. I am confident their continued expertise will be invaluable.”

Superfast birth boosts business for Pwllheli farm

A video of the happy event was seen by an estimated 13,000 people after being published on Facebook. It brought much welcome publicity for the Cefn Cae'r Ferch farm in Pencaenewydd, near Pwllheli, which specialises in pedigree Texel sheep and also has a holiday cottage.

Dafydd Jones, his wife Dona and children Tomos and Carla, have been benefitting from very fast broadband speeds– up to 200 Mbps – since fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) arrived at the farm.

The video of the birth of the lamb is just one of the ways that Dafydd has used superfast broadband to promote the holiday cottage and showcase his Texel sheep to a wider audience using social media platforms, such as Facebook. The uploading of photos of videos is now much easier.

Visitors to the holiday home have been very impressed with the superfast speed of the broadband, with some commenting it is faster than at home. They are also able to access TV on demand services such as Netflix, Amazon and YouTube and, as they can access their work remotely, visitors can also extend their break to spend more time in rural Gwynedd.

Dafydd is also able to carry out much of the farming business online. This includes managing the farm's finances online and using the BCMS animal movement services quickly and with no delays. He also registers his pedigree Texel lambs online on the Basco sheep service and uses Rural Payments Wales' online service.

Dafydd said:

"We never expected to see fibre optic cable come all the way down to our farm, and it has definitely been worth the wait.

"It has made a huge difference to what we can do on the farm, and to our holiday let. Superfast broadband has brought with it new technology and capabilities for us to exploit.

"It's also helped with the mobile phone signal, which has been poor before now. With wi-fi calling available on modern handsets we can now make and receive mobile calls, and our visitors can too. It's reassuring as people know they can be reached or make calls in an emergency. It also means we make savings on outbound business and family calls to mobiles.

"People like to get away from it all when they're on holiday, but they do want to stay connected too. The superfast broadband is allowing them to do just that when they're staying with us."

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, said:

“It’s great to see how a rural farm business such as Cefn Cae’r Ferch Farm has benefited from the Superfast Cymru programme.

This is what the programme is all about. Bringing faster internet speeds to areas which would otherwise not receive it. It’s good to see how the farm is making the most of the fast speeds they now have so it benefits the farm and the visitors they welcome here.

“Superfast Cymru is making an impact, with over 8 out of 10 premises in Wales now able to access superfast broadband compared with just over half 2 years ago. Wales also has the best superfast broadband coverage among the devolved nations.

“We know there is more to do, and work is continuing to reach more premises every day.”

Alwen Williams, regional director for BT Cymru Wales, said:

“Having grown up on a farm I understand how important good connectivity is for our rural farms.

“Throughout society, we’re doing more and more online and farming is no different. Cefn Cae’r Ferch Farm in Gwynedd is just one example of how access to superfast broadband is making a difference and our Openreach engineers continue to work hard to roll-out coverage even further and faster across the country.”

Superfast Cymru is the partnership between the Welsh Government, BT, UK government and European Regional Development Fund, bringing faster broadband to areas which would otherwise not receive it.

The Welsh Government also runs the Access Broadband Cymru scheme, which can offer assistance to those not able to access superfast broadband by providing grant aid to help them receive it through other technologies. Further details are available on gov.wales/broadband.

New funding for musical instruments in schools – Kirsty Williams

The funding of £220,000 will help local authority music services to purchase instruments that can be shared across Wales and be targeted at those most in

need.

Kirsty Williams said:

“A young person’s love and talent for music cannot be developed unless they have access to the instrument of their choice, especially for those who want to progress to the next level with individual music tuition. That is why I am announcing an extra £220,000 of funding, meaning £10,000 will be available to each local authority, through the Welsh Local Government Association, to buy new musical instruments.

“We are also working with councils to establish a mechanism for sharing instruments nationally to ensure that local authorities can make better use of their existing stock of instruments and identify gaps, which this new funding can help them address”.

The Welsh Government recently announced £1 million to establish a National Endowment for Music, which will enable more young people to access musical opportunities. The aim is for the fund to eventually generate at least £1m per year, which will be used to fund additional music activities for young people across the country.

Supporting People budget protected

The Supporting People programme provides housing-related support to help vulnerable people to keep their homes and live as independently as possible. £124.4m will be allocated amongst the twenty two local authorities in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement ahead of making the opening address at the Cymorth Cymru Conference in Cardiff where he told delegates:

“I am very proud that Wales continues to have a ring-fenced Supporting People programme and that we have protected this funding for another year. The support work undertaken by teams funded through Supporting People helps some of the most vulnerable people in Wales to remain in their own homes.

“But as I have said on many occasions, that doesn’t mean things should just stay the same. In a time of shrinking budgets it is essential we work together to make grant programmes more efficient and effective and where possible protect front line services. We must challenge the way in which we do things and ask questions

“I would like to thank all those housing support workers who make a

real difference to the lives of people in need and at risk of homelessness”.