

Pembrokeshire company awarded £5.8m contract for new fisheries patrol vessels

The awarding of the contract follows a competitive international bidding process and means the vessels will be built in Wales, by a local company and provide skilled employment in Pembrokeshire.

The new vessels will replace the current ageing boats, to effectively protect from illegal fishing activity in Welsh waters and safeguard Wales' fishing industry and coastal communities in the years ahead.

Since its inception in 2014, Mainstay Marine has safeguarded 30 jobs and created 50 new positions, with 98% of its employees based in Pembrokeshire. The company also employs 10% of its direct workforce as apprentices.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, announced the contracts during a visit to Mainstay Marine Solutions' facilities in Pembroke Dock to see the workshops where the vessels will be built.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

"The Welsh Government takes very seriously its responsibility for managing and protecting Welsh seas and it's important we have the capability to do this. I am pleased we are replacing our ageing fleet and proud a Welsh company has been successful in winning the contract to complete this work.

"Mainstay Marine Solutions has shown a commitment to up-skilling and developing its workforce locally and it is anticipated the continued success of the company will help create further jobs locally, which is excellent news for the local economy."

Philip Hilbert, Sales Director of Marine Specialised Technology Limited, based in Liverpool said:

"We are delighted to be part of this prestigious project supplying the Cabin RIB which is a flagship project for us. Fisheries enforcement is a key market for us and this craft will be the pinnacle of small craft technology."

The awarding of the contract to Mainstay Marine Solutions follows a European-wide competitive procurement exercise.

The replacement vessels are expected to be in service by Autumn 2018. It will include a 26m Mono-hull Patrol Vessel, South Fisheries and a 19m Catamaran Patrol Vessel, North Fisheries.

Mark Drakeford announces details of High Street Rates Relief Scheme

The scheme will support almost 15,000 shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes, including those which have seen their rates increase as a result of the independent Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) revaluation, which comes into effect on April 1.

The high street rates relief scheme will also provide support to other retailers – some of whom have seen their rates decrease as a result of revaluation – who are struggling in the face of economic conditions and competition from online and out-of-town providers.

Eligible retailers will receive up to £1,500 off their non-domestic rates bill if they have a rateable value of £50,000 or less in the 2017/18 financial year.

To maximise the amount of support which can be provided and ensure it is targeted at areas and businesses most in need, there will be two tiers of relief available.

The first tier of relief will apply to high street retailers with a rateable value of between £6,001 and £12,000 who are already receiving either small business rates relief (SBRR) or transitional rates relief. They will receive a reduction in their rates bill of £500 or, if their bill is less than £500, it will be reduced to nil.

The second tier of relief will apply to eligible high street retailers with a rateable value of between £12,001 and £50,000 which are experiencing a rates increase from April 1. These ratepayers will receive a reduction in their rates bill of £1,500.

They will receive a higher level of support to reflect the fact they are not receiving other support, such as SBRR, and may be facing large increases in their rates following the revaluation.

High street rates relief is unique to Wales and will provide crucial support to small and medium businesses at this time – it is estimated that this will benefit almost 15,000 businesses.

The targeted rates relief scheme will be provided through a special grant made to each local authority.

Announcing the details today, Professor Drakeford said:

“Some retailers across Wales are concerned about increases in their rates as a result of the VOA’s revaluation.

“We are therefore providing a further £10m to help businesses in those communities which have been adversely affected.

“This new scheme is in addition to the £10m transitional relief scheme, which will also be available from April 1 and the £100m tax cut for small businesses in Wales provided by small business rates relief. It will provide vital support to ratepayers on high streets across Wales and offer these businesses extra support.

“Work is already underway to develop a new permanent small business rates relief scheme for 2018. We are listening to the feedback we have received so we can make the scheme as fair, reasonable and transparent as possible.”

The Welsh Government has been working closely with local authorities to develop the scheme and prepare for its implementation.

Retailers can find out whether they are eligible for the high street rates relief scheme in 2017-18 by contacting their local authority. Accompanying guidance will be provided to local authorities to support the effective administration of the relief.

Ben Cottam, Head of External Affairs for FSB Wales, said:

“We welcome that the Welsh Government has made good on its commitment to easing the pressure on high street businesses affected by the introduction of new levels of business rates. We also welcome the Government’s engagement with FSB on this issue in recent months. We would now encourage local authorities to engage quickly with businesses to ensure that all those who are entitled to this relief receive it as quickly and simply as possible.

“This will go some way to providing breathing space for many businesses whom we know have been concerned about the impact of new rates bills on their business.”

Cabinet Secretary gets Priory pre-

school off to a flying start

The pre-school at Priory Church in Wales Primary School is one of five new Flying Start childcare settings across Powys.

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's targeted early years programme for families with children under four years of age living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

It provides free part time childcare for 2-3 year olds; and enhanced health visiting service; access to parenting support, and support for speech language and communication.

Carl Sargeant said:

"I am delighted to officially open Priory pre-school and to meet some of the staff, parents and children. It has been particularly pleasing to hear details of the real difference Flying Start and other programmes are making to the lives of children and their families living in Brecon.

"Powys received a revenue grant of over £1.8 million this year and I have protected funding levels for next year to enable us to maintain the service. Since 2012, Powys has also benefited from almost £200,000 capital funding which has helped to create five new childcare settings across its Flying Start areas.

"My congratulations and thanks go to everyone involved in making this a success and for ensuring families and children continued to receive services during this challenging period."

Bakery's superfast boost for Aberdaron

Minister for Skills and Science Julie James today saw how, since the arrival of superfast broadband, the Becws Islyn bakery has been used as a hub to provide a wi-fi network for the centre of the village.

The pilot project was undertaken by Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig with members of the local community. As a result, locals and visitors to the village at the western tip of Gwynedd can now access a wi-fi network.

The system is analytics-enabled, which helps promote Aberdaron and its attractions to new and existing visitors. Five thousand email addresses used by people logging into the wi-fi have been collected. These visitors now

receive regular information about Aberdaron, encouraging them to return to the village and helping to build relationships.

More premises in the village are due to get access to superfast broadband when further engineering work is carried out by engineers from Openreach, BT's local network business, on behalf of the Superfast Cymru 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.

Many parts of Wales, including the whole of Gwynedd, would not have had access to superfast broadband without the intervention of Superfast Cymru.

As a result of the programme, 49,941 premises in the county now have access to superfast broadband, with more gaining access every day as the rollout continues.

Eight out of ten premises in Wales can now access superfast broadband compared with just over half two years ago. Wales has the highest availability of superfast broadband among the devolved nations.

The Minister said:

"It's been great to see how the community here in Aberdaron have taken advantage of the superfast broadband connection to Becws Islwyn to create a wi-fi network.

"Superfast Cymru is about bringing faster broadband to areas which would not receive it, such as Aberdaron. Fast and reliable broadband is of increasing importance to all of us – businesses and households.

"We know there is more to do before Superfast Cymru comes to an end this year, and we're already looking at how to reach the final few premises in Wales once the project is over. It's encouraging to hear the positive impact of this kind of project as we look at those next stages."

Geraint Jones of Becws Islwyn said:

"Everyone expects access to wi-fi now, even when you're on holiday in a rural area like Aberdaron. It's great that the bakery has access to superfast broadband, which in turn has been a hub for the community wi-fi.

"The feedback from visitors has been very positive and it has been a boost for the business encouraging more people to come to the bakery's café."

Becws Islwyn has increased its number of full time employees from one to four,

with part time employees totalling 14.

Ed Hunt, director for next generation broadband in Wales, said:

“It was a significant engineering challenge to make our fibre network available in Aberdaron due to its isolated location. We’ve worked hard to make this happen and we’re pleased to be part of such an innovative and forward thinking programme. It’s great to see villagers making full use of the technology. Fibre broadband is such an important part of everyday life nowadays and people expect to be able to access it even when they’re away from home. I’m sure visitors to the local area will be delighted to find they have access to a superfast connection and it’ll be a boost to local attractions now that people can easily look them up online.”

Jonathan Jenkin, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Stakeholder Relations and Socio Economics Manager said

“Supporting this project has given a huge boost to the local businesses helping to mitigate the socio-economic impact of decommissioning Trawsfynydd and ensuring sustainability within rural communities. Expanding provision of free wi-fi will further strengthen rural infrastructure as well as attracting more visitors to the area.”

The wi-fi project was funded through the Welsh Government’s Rural Communities – Rural Development Plan 2014 – 2020, which includes Welsh Government and European funding for rural Development. It is also part funded by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Gwynedd Council.

[First Minister announces St David Awards finalists](#)

The St David Awards are the national awards of Wales. They acknowledge the extraordinary achievements of people in or from Wales and recognise the great deeds and contributions made by people from all walks of life.

Announcing the finalists, First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“The St David Awards, now in their 4th year, are all about celebrating people who have gone the extra mile to make a difference to someone else’s life, overcome adversity or achieved

something truly inspirational.

“Once again, the St David Awards finalists are an exceptional group of people. Every single one is a credit to Wales – it is going to be tough to choose the winners! I look forward to celebrating their outstanding achievements at the awards ceremony on 23 March.”

The finalists in the award categories: Bravery; Citizenship; Culture; Enterprise; Innovation, Science and Technology; International; Sport; and Young Person are as follows.

Bravery

Firefighters Gary Slack and Billy Connor. In August 2016, on-call firefighters Gary Slack and Billy Connor braved strong currents at Castle Beach, Tenby, to save 2 children from drowning.

PC Christopher Bluck and PC Rhys Edwards, South Wales Police. In March 2016, police constables Christopher Bluck and Rhys Edwards risked their own safety to save the life of a woman who had set herself on fire and was armed with a handgun.

Pontardawe Fire Crew. In July 2016, the fire crew were called to a house which was on fire with 2 young boys trapped inside. The crew battled dangerous conditions and 800 degree heat to save one of the children, a 3 year old boy, from the fire. The second child was also recovered from the property but tragically died.

Citizenship

Special Constable Cairn Newton-Evans, Dyfed-Powys Police. Having been a victim of a violent homophobic hate crime, Cairn joined the police to try to stop such attacks happening to others. Cairn is a regular volunteer and a passionate advocate for LGBT rights.

21 Plus, Down's syndrome support charity. Run by 3 mothers who each have children with Down's syndrome, the charity has gone from strength to strength over the past 10 years.

Anthony Evans, education campaigner for disabled students. Spurred on while looking to further improve his severely disabled son's education, Anthony has campaigned for post-19 education for severely disabled adults. Thanks to Anthony's efforts, a day college for disabled young adults in Wales was established in September 2016.

Culture

Elfed Roberts, Chief Executive of the National Eisteddfod. Having been at the festival's helm for nearly 25 years, Elfed has ensured the Eisteddfod continues to grow and develop, while remaining contemporary and welcoming to all.

Professor Jen Wilson, jazz musician and archivist. For more than 50 years, Jen has played a central role in promoting jazz music in Wales and in documenting its history and social impact – and in particular the role of women in jazz.

The Cory Band. Established in Treorchy in 1884, the brass band has a reputation for excellence. They made history in 2016 by becoming the first band to be quadruple champions; simultaneously holding the National, Open, European and Brass in Concert titles.

Enterprise

Llaeth y Llan – The Village Dairy, yogurt producers. A family run business, developed through diversification of a farm in Conwy, Llaeth y Llan produces yogurts sold across Wales and the UK. They believe their business is only as good as their 43 staff and put an emphasis on training and investing in the community.

David Banner, video games director. As well as being a multi-award winning games director and managing director of Wales Interactive, Dai has been instrumental in the growth of Wales' games industry. He founded the annual Wales Games Show in 2012 and created the GamesLab project, a digital development initiative for the University of South Wales, which has nurtured hundreds of students and provides a global platform for Welsh digital companies.

Halen Môn – Anglesey Sea Salt. Owners Alison and David Lea-Wilson have succeeded in starting a sustainable, successful business which employs local people with environmental and educational principles whilst also attracting tourists to Anglesey.

Innovation, Science and Technology

Jessica Leigh Jones, astrophysicist and engineer. The astrophysics graduate and former UK Young Engineer of the Year received the Intel Inspiration Award for Entrepreneurship for developing a series of novel fibre optic transducers. An advocate for technical sciences, she is also director of the Engineering Education Scheme Wales and patron of Science and Engineering at Alton Convent School.

Professor Meena Upadhyaya OBE, geneticist. Britain's first female British-Indian professor in medical genetics within the UK, Meena's career focused on identifying genetic disorders. Meena has made a difference to people's lives either through her medical research or community and charity work and received an OBE in 2016 for services to medical genetics and the Welsh Asian community.

Genesis Biosciences. In a market dominated by harsh and sometimes dangerous chemical cleaners, Genesis develops products that put customers' safety and the environment first. This approach has been recognised through a number of industry awards, including the EDIE Sustainability Leaders Awards 2015 and the Technology and Innovation Business of the Year category at the 2015

Cardiff Business Awards.

International

Dr David Nott OBE, warzone surgeon. Each year, for the past 23 years, David has taken unpaid leave from his job as consultant surgeon at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital to work for aid agencies and provide surgical treatment to the victims of conflict and catastrophe. David and his wife, Elly, have also established the David Nott Foundation, raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charity and providing surgical training to front line medics.

Nizar Dahan, international volunteer. Nizar works for the Human Relief Foundation and is nominated for his extensive international humanitarian work in response to the refugee crisis and for establishing the Swansea Humanitarian Aid Response Project, which supports displaced and vulnerable people.

Professor Carl G. Jones MBE, conservation biologist. Professor Jones has dedicated his life to restoring endangered animal populations and habitats, and is regarded as one of the most accomplished conservationists on earth. He is responsible for saving from extinction the Mauritius kestrel, 3 species of reptiles, a fruit bat and several plants.

Sport

Wales International Football Squad, UEFA Euro 2016. The Wales National football team, led by Chris Coleman, reached the semi-final of the Euros 2016. The squad were first class ambassadors for Wales, both on and off the pitch, and their strapline of "Together Stronger" has inspired the nation and captured worldwide interest.

The Welsh Members of TeamGB Olympics and Paralympic, Rio 2016. The 24 Welsh athletes selected by TeamGB was the largest ever overseas contingent of Welsh athletes at an Olympic Games, while the 26 Welsh Paralympics athletes accounted for 10% of the Great Britain team. 2016 was a very successful year for the Welsh athletes, while they also represented the country with dignity and courage.

Anne Ellis OBE, Sport Ambassador. In July 2016, Anne Ellis stepped down as President of Hockey Wales, after 20 years at the helm. During the past 2 decades, Welsh Hockey has seen significant changes and Anne has been involved in it all.

Young Person

Brittany Davies, volunteer for looked after children. Brittany became looked after at the age of 16 and, despite many significant and harrowing challenges, she is now studying for her A Levels and volunteers regularly to help others in similar situations.

Savannah Lloyd, mental health volunteer. Having battled mental health problems since she was 11 years old, Savannah uses her experiences to reach

out and help others in similar situations.

Elan Môn Gilford, sport volunteer. Despite 18 year old Elan's hearing loss, she volunteers 8 to 10 hours a week to coach sport sessions, children's karate and netball. Elan also runs a community sign language course.