

100 jobs boost for Swansea with Welsh Government support

The company is creating the new roles in order to meet its commitment to answering 90 per cent of its customers' calls in the UK by spring 2017.

The new recruits will work at BT Tower in Swansea where an additional floor will be refurbished and refitted to accommodate the new business that could have been housed at other BT centres in the UK which have available capacity. BT already employs around 500 people at BT Tower in Swansea.

The move is backed by business finance from the Welsh Government to support the capital investment and new jobs and helped ensure the expansion went ahead in Swansea.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"BT's importance to the Welsh economy is reflected in its anchor company status. It has a significant presence in Wales employing more than 3,890 people here and spends around £284m with suppliers in Wales every year.

"BT has already created a significant number of new jobs across Wales recently and I am delighted to support this significant expansion that will now go ahead in Swansea. It builds on their highly successful existing operation in the city and will create a range of new jobs and employment opportunities."

Alwen Williams, regional director for BT Cymru Wales, said "We are completely changing the way we serve our customers in order to boost our service levels."

"We are going to answer 90 per cent of our customers' calls in the UK by Spring 2017, and that means we need to take on great people to fill these extra roles.

"BT is already a major employer in Swansea and these new roles reflect our commitment to the city and the skills and quality of our workforce.

"We're also rolling-out our new ultrafast broadband technology in Swansea that will see the city enjoying some of the very fastest fibre broadband speeds available in the UK."

Successful applicants will be answering calls and helping customers from across the UK, providing them with technical and billing advice and top class

customer service.

The company has added around 500 UK and Ireland contact centre roles in BT Consumer, with around 900 to be filled by April 2017

Details of the new roles and how to apply can be found at <http://btcareers.manpower.co.uk/> (external link). The interview process will include online tests, assessment centres and interviews so the best possible candidates can be matched to the roles.

A recent employee satisfaction survey showed the Swansea centre had the distinction of being the BT Consumer site with the most engaged workforce in Wales and the South West England region.

£10 million for regeneration of town centres

The third phase of the Vibrant and Viable Places Town Centre Loans Fund will support town centre regeneration in 12 areas of Wales.

The fund works on a recyclable loan basis which means that once the money is repaid, it is used again to fund new loans.

The Local Authorities who have been allocated the loan funding are Denbighshire, Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Cardiff, Pembrokeshire, Wrexham, Conwy, Powys, Gwynedd, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Ceredigion and Anglesey.

Communities and Children Secretary, Carl Sargeant said:

“This funding will help Local Authorities regenerate their town centres by helping them find sustainable uses for empty sites and premises such as affordable town centre homes or tourist and leisure attractions.

“As well as making town centres more attractive places to live this loan scheme will help encourage investment into these areas as well as support the local economy.”

Overnight resurfacing work to begin on A483

The original proposal from the North Wales Trunk Road Agency, scheduled to begin next week, was to run 24/7 contraflow between J5 (Mold Road) and J6 (Gresford), with associated slip road closures, over a 6 to 8 week period – allowing for much needed resurfacing work to protect the road in the longer term. Having considered the concerns of the local community and the local authority, however, the Economy Secretary has determined that disruption would be too great and that a less disruptive, medium term solution should be pursued.

Seven day-a-week work on overnight resurfacing, which will protect the road in the medium term whilst allowing traffic to flow as normal during the day, will now take place. Local residents should be aware that both the work and diversion will see an increase in the usual noise levels. Affected residents will be provided with details and every effort will be made to keep the impact to a minimum.

Ken Skates said:

“Closing roads for long periods at peak times is never ideal for the economy but is often the only option in terms of delivering the quality infrastructure we need and expect.

“On this occasion, however, I’ve taken the decision to deliver more medium term improvements to the road, having considered a full closure of this road during working hours to be too detrimental local communities and the economy.

“Night work has its limitations and is not without its issues however, in this instance, I think it offers the best solution for both making the necessary improvements to the road whilst allowing road users to continue their daily routine as usual.”

The Welsh Government motorway and trunk road resurfacing programme will see over £17m spent on some 43 much needed resurfacing schemes across Wales by April. Of that over £10m is being invested in 36 schemes in North and Mid Wales.

Advance notification of road closures and diversions will be well signposted and scheme details/updates will be posted on www.traffic-wales.com (external link).

Proposed changes to supply teaching in Wales published

The Welsh Government established the Ministerial Supply Model Taskforce in June 2016 to consider issues around supply teachers. They considered the complexities and variations in how supply teachers are employed.

Their report offers a range of recommendations, including considering cost efficiencies, highlighting safeguarding responsibilities, accurate data collection, proposals for pay and conditions, and supporting newly qualified teachers and professional learning opportunities.

Recommendations include:

- Improving the data collected on supply teachers so it is more accurate.
- Undertake a full cost analysis to measure the true cost of supply teaching.
- Consider the terms and conditions of supply teachers as part of broader proposals to devolve teachers' pay and conditions to Wales.
- Raise awareness with employers to the responsibilities placed upon them in relation to safeguarding and update workforce guidance.
- Consider regulating the quality of commercial supply agencies by introducing a set of accredited minimum quality standards that all commercial agencies providing teachers to maintained schools should meet.

The Welsh Government has accepted the majority of the report's recommendations. However, further detailed policy and legal work will be carried out to establish whether all of the recommendations can be delivered, including the recommendations around quality standards and regional collaborative working.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

"Supply teachers are an important part of the teacher workforce and I want to make sure they have the opportunity for professional development and are able to support our wider education reforms.

"As the report concludes, there is clear room for improvement in the way we currently employ, manage and support the delivery of supply teachers. While I accept the report's recommendations at this time, some of them raise complex legal issues which we will need to look into further. We will now begin this process, working closely with councils, schools, the teaching workforce, unions and others.

"Any changes must fit with our national mission to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people."

Improving access to critical care key – Vaughan Gething

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething today outlined how the NHS is working to improve care for critically ill people in Wales. The delivery plan for the critically ill to 2020 is published today [Thursday 2 February].

Thursday 02 February 2017

Mr Gething said:

“This plan, developed by critical care specialists, sets out how the NHS will meet the needs of people who are critically ill, or are at risk of becoming critically ill. It also outlines plans to improve the early identification of patients, which is key to preventing unnecessary transfers to busy critical care units.

“We know that there is work to do to improve access to critical care in Wales and we are seeing progress; the group has identified areas where bed numbers could be increased without significant staffing increases.

“This plan has been developed by The Critical Care Trauma Network and Critically Ill Implementation Group and outlines the actions we need to take over the next three years.

“Wales faces the same challenges we see elsewhere in the UK in terms of recruitment and rising demand for critical care, and we expect health boards to collaborate and plan services on a regional basis to deliver high-quality care.

“We have seen an improvement in survival rates in recent years and also reductions in the numbers of patients who are re-admitted to critical care soon after leaving it, which is encouraging. This plan outlines how health boards can work together to build on this progress for the future.”

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