

North Wales set to welcome the final stage of the OVO Energy Women's Tour

In recent years North Wales has hosted the men's OVO Energy Tour of Britain on four occasions, but this year will mark the first time that the world's top female riders have had the chance to race in the area.

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas, who will attend the stage finish in Porth Eirias for the winners' presentation, said:

"I'm delighted that we're supporting this race for the first time this year. As Britain's only international level stage race for women, the event attracts the best female riders in the world – and is an excellent event to raise the profile of women's sport, the sport of cycling and to encourage participation and healthy lifestyles. The route will showcase Wales' landscapes and will also highlight some of our epic shores which we're celebrating during the Year of the Sea in 2018.

"Spectators in Wales also give our cyclists such a fantastic welcome and I hope that the crowds turn out on Sunday to cheer the cyclists along the finishing stage of this race."

The five-day race will conclude with a tough 122-kilometre stage from Dolgellau to Colwyn Bay, the cyclists will travel along some of the most scenic routes in Wales which make up The Wales Way – the family of three routes around Wales. The Wales Way is the umbrella name for three routes, celebrating key tourism products and experiences along the North Wales Way, the Coastal Way and the Cambrian Way which will encourage visitors to explore more of Wales.

As Wales celebrates the Year of the Sea in 2018, the first part of the stage will track the beautiful Welsh coastline of Tremadog Bay, through Barmouth and Harlech, before heading inland to tackle several climbs as the route crosses Snowdonia, via Beddgelert and Betws-y-Coed to finish on the North Wales coast at Porth Eirias, Colwyn Bay.

In total 17 teams will compete in the 2018 OVO Energy Women's Tour, including four British squads, Wiggle HIGH5, Trek Drops, WNT Rotor and Storey Racing, with the riders set to compete in the race being announced during the early summer.

A one-hour highlights programme of every stage will be broadcast daily on ITV4 and Eurosport and available on demand via the ITV Hub and Eurosport Player. The OVO Energy Women's Tour is a part of the UCI Women's WorldTour, comprising 23 events around the world in 10 different countries.

Letter to Home Secretary – Scottish and Welsh Ministers outline concerns over EU Exit Settlement Scheme

In the letter, the 2 Cabinet Secretaries ask for devolved administrations to be fully consulted on the rules around settled status ahead of their publication. In addition, they also request an urgent meeting to discuss outstanding concerns on the EU Exit Settlement Scheme for EEA citizens.

Full text of the letter below.

Dear Sajid

We are writing to you to relay our very serious concerns about a number of immigration related matters which are causing great uncertainty across Scotland and Wales. While immigration is a reserved issue, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government have a clear interest in the operation of the immigration system given the valuable contribution migrants make to our economies, our public services and our communities.

We have been engaging with EEA citizens across Wales and Scotland extensively since the result of the EU referendum, and a consistent theme in all of those conversations is a desire for clarity on the Settled Status Scheme. There are potentially significant numbers of people who are at risk of missing out on settled status simply due to being unable to, or unaware that they can and need to apply. This continuing lack of detail is not only a serious issue for our two governments, but is clearly of significant concern to EEA citizens, who are understandably anxious about what Brexit means for their future, and the future of their families.

We understand that our officials, together with local government representatives, are taking part in Home Office meetings to ensure that EEA citizens are informed about the Settled Status Scheme, and to make the Scheme accessible for all applicants. However, in the meetings held to date, there has been a severe lack of detail about any overarching communications, engagement or outreach strategy to support the Scheme. Nor have they provided detailed information about any plans which may or may not exist to provide practical support for those in Scotland and Wales who may face difficulties in applying, such as the Assisted Digital Service.

We would also remind you that overall responsibility for policy, strategy and funding of local government in Scotland and Wales is a devolved responsibility. It is wholly unacceptable that your Department should consider imposing additional responsibilities on local government without appropriate inter-governmental consultation and discussion or that engagement with local government on clearly devolved functions should take place without

formally approaching your Ministerial counterparts here in the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government first. As a new burden, our clear expectation is that the UK Government should fully fund the costs of any proposed additional responsibilities and there should be full consultation with us and our local government partners to establish and agree what those costs might be.

We are concerned about the lack of clarity around the expected role of local government with regards to the Settled Status Scheme, both in terms of informing EEA citizens about the scheme, and in terms of supporting individuals through the application process. Local authorities need clear guidance and messaging around what will be expected of them, including clarity on what resources will be made available to local authorities to support any additional responsibilities. We strongly encourage you to improve engagement with local authorities at political and officer level working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association to ensure this lack of clarity is rectified. The Third Sector also needs to be meaningfully engaged in this work and we would like to request that your Department undertakes face to face engagement with these stakeholders in Scotland and Wales.

We understand the UK Government is planning to set out more details about the Scheme before the summer, including draft immigration rules, and we would like to request early sight of these, as well as confirmation that Devolved Administrations will be fully and meaningfully consulted on the content in advance of publication.

If the UK Government is seeking the support of the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government, of Scottish and Welsh local government, and of devolved public services in the Settled Status process, then we need clarity about that process, the ask of local government and devolved public services, and the support which will be provided to EEA citizens resident in both countries.

Finally, we remain deeply troubled that we are yet to see any detail on the long-delayed White Paper or Immigration Bill. This delay prolongs uncertainty over the UK Government's intentions in relation to people coming to the UK after the transition period, which adds not only to the uncertainty for individuals, but also to our concern about the impact on our economies and public services.

Given the lack of meaningful engagement with our governments to date, we hope these concerns and requests are taken seriously and are responded to with urgency.

We are copying this letter to David Sterling, the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, the Secretary of State for Wales, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association.

Fiona Hyslop MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Culture,

Tourism and External Affairs

Mark Drakeford AM/AC
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid
Cabinet Secretary for Finance

Over £3m to help meat and fisheries sectors prepare for Brexit

Through the Welsh Government's £50million EU Transition Fund, £2.15 million will be provided to support the development of the red meat sector in Wales. The investment will support farmers to identify improvements to their businesses to help them become more competitive and in a better position to trade profitably following Brexit.

Funding will also be given to an import substitution project to help identify and secure supply chains within the UK and encourage companies based in the EU to set up operations in Wales.

Over the next two years, the fishing and aquaculture industries will receive financial support to help that sector find new markets and prepare for future trading outside the EU.

Speaking ahead of his address to the Farmer's Union of Wales AGM in Aberystwyth this morning, the First Minister said,

"Brexit presents a series of challenges and opportunities for our agriculture and fisheries industries. The funding I am announcing today from our EU Transition Fund will provide vitally needed support. As a Government we will do all we can to help these important industries prepare for a post-Brexit world."

Speed restrictions to come into force to improve air quality and save lives in Wales

The measures are aimed at reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide where emissions

have been found to exceed legal limits.

Poor air quality contributes to an estimated 2,000 deaths per year in Wales, with exposure affecting vulnerable population groups in particular. Gases such as nitrogen dioxide can increase the symptoms of people with lung diseases, while short-term exposure is associated with increased cardiovascular and respiratory morbidity.

The temporary 50 mph speed limits will be introduced at short stretches of road, between 1.4km to 5.9km in length, at the following five locations:

- A494 at Deeside
- A483 at Wrexham
- M4 between Junctions 41 & 42 (Port Talbot)
- M4 between junctions 25 & 26 (Newport)
- A470 between Upper Boat & Pontypridd

Other measures include increased signage to promote smooth traffic flow. The measures are expected to deliver immediate improvements to air quality, with emissions estimated to potentially reduce by up to 18% at the five locations.

Evidence shows that nitrogen dioxide emissions are at their lowest when light vehicles, the main contributors to emissions, travel at speeds between 40 and 50 mph. The speed limits are also expected to have a smoothing effect, with vehicles travelling at more constant speeds.

The temporary speed restrictions are part of a range of actions being introduced by the Welsh Government to improve air quality in Wales, including a new £20m Air Quality Fund, a Clean Air Zone Framework and a new Air Quality website providing local data on air pollution levels.

Minister for Environment Hannah Blythyn said:

“I am committed to taking action to reduce air pollution in Wales to support a healthier future for our communities and protect our natural environment. Current levels of nitrogen dioxide exceed the legal limit at the five road locations, so we need to act as soon as possible.

“We have been carrying out investigations into all potential measures for reducing nitrogen dioxide levels. Our initial studies tell us that 50 mph speed limits should have the greatest potential to improve air quality at each location. The actions we take to improve air quality in Wales have a key role in supporting the right conditions for better health and well-being.”

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates, said:

“I want to see concrete measures put in place by the UK Government which focus on removing the source of the problem. They have prevented us from taking our preferred course of action – it is now time for them to step up and use the powers which they have so closely guarded for the benefit of the people of Wales.”

“The root cause is the emissions from vehicles, but legislative competence for vehicle standards and fiscal measures, such as the Vehicle Excise Duty and Company Car Tax, remain with the UK Government. Despite repeated calls, the UK Government has consistently refused to devolve powers which allow us to improve standards and incentivise improved emissions through the tax regime.”

A consultation is open until 19 June on plans to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide, as part of the wider UK plan to tackle roadside NO2 concentrations.

“While caring for their loved one, it’s crucial carers ensure they care for themselves” – Huw Irranca-Davies

To mark carers’ awareness week 2018, the Minister visited a carer’s centre in Swansea today to thank carers for their dedicated care to their loved ones and to urge carers to ensure they use their legal right to a carers’ assessment.

Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, carers have an equal right to an assessment to see whether they need support to carry out their caring role and, if they do, to have that support provided.

A carer is anyone, of any age, who provides unpaid care and support to a relative, friend or neighbour who needs care and support.

There are estimated to be more than 370,000 carers in Wales, contributing more than £8.1bn to the Welsh economy every year. 96% of the care provided to people in communities across Wales is given freely by family and friends.

To support the delivery of enhanced rights for carers under the Act the Welsh Government in partnership with stakeholders established three National Priorities for Carers in Wales:

- Supporting life alongside caring;

- Identifying and recognising carers; and
- Providing information, advice and assistance to carers.

In 2018/19 a budget of £1.095m has been allocated to the delivery of progress against the national priorities and £3m has been specifically allocated to local authorities to enable them to provide additional respite support for carers

To oversee the delivery of outcomes for carers against these priorities, a Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) is being established to provide a national forum to steer the delivery of improvements for carers and provide a cross sector response to the challenges they face.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“It is not surprising that as carers dedicate their time to caring for loved ones within families and their wider community, sometimes they can neglect their own health and well-being.

“Our commitment to carers’ rights is reflected through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.. We are now two years into the implementation of the Act and with the support of the newly established Ministerial Advisory Group for Carers I want to ensure these enhanced rights for carers are realised.

“If carers have eligible needs, their local authority must meet those needs through a carers support plan.

“I want to urge every carer to ensure they have their needs assessed. While caring for their loved one, it’s crucial they ensure they care for themselves.”