

Hospital grounds, school grounds and playgrounds to be smoke-free in Wales by summer 2019

Strengthening the laws around smoking in public in Wales will further protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke and de-normalise smoking for children and young people.

While most hospitals already have no smoking policies in their grounds, it is currently difficult for staff to enforce this.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, has visited the maternity unit at Glan Clwyd Hospital, where staff told him they had received complaints from mothers about people smoking outside the hospital when they enter and leave with their young babies.

The Hospital Management Team has also received complaints about people smoking at the newly refurbished main entrance and at other entrances across the site.

The changes will make it illegal to smoke in the hospital grounds, with legal backing for fines to be issued to smokers breaking the rules, therefore improving the environment for patients, visitors and staff.

Vaughan Gething said:

“I am proud that Wales continues to be at the forefront of UK action to reduce smoking and prevent young people from taking it up in the first place.

“We have seen significant changes to the attitudes to smoking since 2007. Back then we received some resistance to change, but we have seen a remarkable culture-change and I am pleased our plan to extend smoke-free areas to outdoor public spaces has received overwhelming public support.

“This is another step in the right direction to de-normalise smoking in Wales.”

Smoking contributes most to the current burden of disease in Wales, causing approximately 5,450 deaths each year and costing the NHS an estimated £302m annually.

Support is at hand for people who wish to give up smoking. The Welsh Government's Tobacco Control Delivery Plan commits to helping more people to quit by encouraging the use of integrated smoking cessation services, and strengthening the referrals to these services, particularly for groups with

high-smoking prevalence.

The NHS offers free help and advice to people wanting to give up smoking through Help Me Quit.

Teresa Owen, Executive Director of Public Health at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, said:

“A hospital is no place for smoking and the Health Board is determined to create a smoke-free environment. We receive numerous complaints about people smoking around the hospital, particularly near the main entrance. We need to find a way of ensuring our site is smoke free, while also supporting more patients, visitors and staff to quit.”

The changes to the smoke-free legislation will be introduced under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, which was passed by Assembly Members last year.

[Business are missing out on the skills people like Nath have to offer – Eluned Morgan](#)

The Minister told them about Nath, from Rhondda Cynon Taf, who is on the autistic spectrum and has been diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome. He has found work that suits his skills with help from the Welsh Government’s EU funded Communities for Work programme. He is a fluent Welsh speaker and has the ability to translate documents quite easily but struggles in social situations. His Communities for Work adviser helped him to pursue a Welsh translation job and, after some intensive cooperation, he secured work with the *Autism Directory Society*.

With the help of the Society and his adviser, he secured financial help from the DWP’s Access to Work programme, as well as the support of an Access to Work Coach for 3 years, which consequently is helping him retain the role he is in. With the vital support of Access to Work, he is trying different approaches and keeping positive, hoping to overcome the frustrations he has had with social communications.

The Minister was addressing the Launch of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development’s Public Policy Forum where she told delegates:

“There are not enough disabled people in work. Figures released just last week show that the proportion of disabled people who are

able to work but who are unemployed in Great Britain is 9.2% – more than twice the proportion of those who are not disabled, which is currently 3.6%.

“Meanwhile, in Wales, just 45% of working-age disabled people are currently in employment, compared to 79% of those who are not disabled. This is not acceptable. It is something I want to see change and I need your help to achieve it.

“This isn’t a purely altruistic process. If you aren’t employing a wide cross section of society, you’re missing out on the untapped potential of our highly skilled workforce.”

Earlier this year the Welsh Government’s Employability Plan was launched. It recognises that some people experience barriers which prevent them entering work.

One of the main actions in the plan is to provide an individualised approach to employability support that is responsive to an individual’s needs and takes account of personal circumstances, barriers, aptitudes and ambitions. Ensuring there are opportunities for disabled people to find and stay in work is a key element of this. The plan calls on businesses to address barriers to work by adapting job descriptions and using innovative recruitment processes.

The Minister added:

“We don’t expect you to do this without guidance and support. Employability is not just about jobs and skills. It is about getting every aspect of Government policy – education, health, housing and communities – working together to support people into sustainable jobs. But Government cannot, and should not, do this alone. We need employers, businesses and professionals like you, to support us.”

Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass given go-ahead

The £135 million project is a significant development in North West Wales and will be vital in alleviating current traffic congestion and reducing journey times in the area.

After considering in detail the inspector’s report, which recommends the scheme should proceed, and following a local public inquiry and all evidence, the Welsh Government will now press ahead with making the orders for the

bypass.

The 9.7km bypass will be built from the Goat roundabout on the A499/A487 junction to the Plas Menai roundabout, around Llanwnda, Dinas, Bontnewydd and Caernarfon avoiding the town centres. This route will be made up of three sections separated by new roundabouts at Meifod and Cibyn.

The next steps will see a Design and Construct contract awarded with detailed scheme design commencing in June. Construction could then start in November 2018, and be completed by spring 2021.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

It's great news we will be pressing ahead with the Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass.

The bypass will not only help connect communities in the area through sustainable and resilient infrastructure, but also provide a vital link to the A55 and beyond to Ireland, England and Europe.

It also presents a big opportunity for local employment, workforce training and apprenticeships, especially during the construction phase.

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport Ken Skates said:

I am pleased to announce the go-ahead for the Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass. This is a major scheme and one which will bring many benefits to the area. It will be a real boost to the region and foster conditions for sustainable economic development and employment opportunities.

The bypass will help remove traffic congestion, improve air quality and reduce noise emissions in Caernarfon, Bontnewydd and the surrounding villages resulting in healthier communities and environments. It will also provide improved links to tourist destinations in the Llŷn Peninsula and Snowdonia as well as great opportunities for active travel within and around Caernarfon by linking with surrounding communities.

'We will continue to fight for a good

deal for Wales' – Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford

A week on from Welsh ministers giving consent to the UK government's EU Withdrawal Bill, the Finance Secretary will set out Wales' priorities for the future, in an address to senior figures from local government.

Brexit will have an impact on all aspects of public services in Wales although the nature of this impact on local government is still unclear and will depend greatly on the form that Brexit takes. A Brexit which does serious damage to the economy will make it even more difficult to provide adequate funding for public services, while changes to migration policy could accentuate staffing problems in front-line services.

With the ending of Wales' access to EU Structural Funds, the EU could also bring significant changes to investment, development and funding for councils. The event will be an opportunity to encourage discussion about these issues before we leave the EU next year.

Speaking ahead of the event, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“As we progress through the EU negotiations, and prepare for a post-EU Wales, we need strong, collaborative leadership with Welsh Government, local government, business and civil society all working together. I'm greatly encouraged by the excellent work which has already gone on, not least through the European Advisory Group, and by events such as today's which really focus on attention on what needs to be done to prepare for Brexit.

“We appreciate the WLGA's strong support for our approach to future regional funding and the call for existing levels of funding to be retained and managed within Wales.

“I know that Local Authorities up and down Wales have played a major role in ensuring the efficient use of Structural Funds to improve infrastructure, develop skills and combat social exclusion. Projects such as Inspire 2 Achieve, Bridges to Work, the Holyhead Strategic Employment Site or Kingsway Swansea are prime examples of this.

“So it's vital, particularly in an age when our capacity to address issues from our own resources continues to be blighted by the unnecessary austerity policies of the Westminster Government, that this source of funding does not just disappear when the UK exits the EU. We will continue pursuing every avenue to ensure that Wales does not lose a penny of funding due to Brexit, as promised during the referendum.”

Cllr Rob Stewart (Leader of the City & County of Swansea Council), WLGA Europe Spokesperson and Chair of the event said:

“Local authorities in Wales are preparing for Brexit, including the possibility of ‘no deal’, in a number of different ways. The WLGA’s event is an important opportunity to come together, to share our Brexit planning and the intelligence we are gathering on how local services could be affected by different outcomes.”

[Kirsty Williams sets five new tests at Wales’s first social mobility summit](#)

Speaking in Cardiff at The Open University in Wales’ ‘Bridging the Gap: A Social Mobility Summit’, where she was joined by the former chair of the UK Social Mobility Commission, the Rt Hon Alan Milburn, the Education Secretary outlined ‘tests’ in the following key areas:

1. An increase of at least 10% in the number of students studying at Masters level;
2. Doubling the number of students benefiting from the experience of studying or working abroad;
3. An expectation that nearly every pupil will be entered for a Science GCSE;
4. A 10% increase in Welsh students attending Sutton Trust universities;
5. The elimination of the gap between Wales and the rest of the UK at all qualification levels in ten years, and ensure in future as a minimum, we maintain our performance relative to the rest of the UK.

Kirsty Williams said:

“We are taking direct action to open up opportunities and improve the life chances of all learners, particularly those from the poorest backgrounds. But there’s always more to do. The tests I am announcing today are some examples where I am demanding improvement.

“It is clear to me that progression into postgraduate study is our next challenge in widening participation. By introducing equivalent living costs support for master’s students, we will address this challenge. Therefore I can give a commitment that over the lifetime of this government we will see an increase of at least 10% in the number of Wales domiciled students studying at Master’s level.

“Next year we will launch – starting with a pilot scheme – a funded programme to ensure many more Welsh students have international study and work experience opportunities. This will play a part in meeting our ambition to see the number of Welsh students who spend time abroad as part of their studies double by the end of this government

“It is with regret that until recently we had some schools where the majority of 16 year olds were studying for BTEC science – particularly in more disadvantaged areas. That is a culture of lowered expectations that we must, and will, reject. We are already seeing an increase in the numbers being entered for Science GCSE.

I expect that momentum to continue so that by the end of this Assembly term nearly every pupil in our system will be entered for a Science GCSE.

“Our Seren Network is already doing a fantastic job and raising ambition and aspiration all across the nation. We cannot put a limit on the ambitions of our young people – from all backgrounds. I am setting an aspiration that the percentage of all Welsh domiciled undergraduate first years going to Sutton Trust institutions will increase by 10% over the next five years.

“It is essential that people are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to ensure they can exploit the opportunities an evolving labour market presents. Working across departments and sectors, we will eliminate the gap between Wales and the rest of the UK at all qualification levels in ten years, and ensure in future as a minimum, we maintain our performance relative to the rest of the UK.”