

Support announced for Ystalyfera landslip

Following a series of landslides in Pantteg, the local authority approached the Welsh Government for financial assistance to help them deal with managing the effects.

The council has been working hard to protect lives and property, and to manage and mitigate the ongoing risk. The Welsh Government recognises the associated costs are substantial and above what the authority could have reasonably planned for and has agreed to provide some additional financial support.

The grant offered this week will support the range of costs incurred including making the area safe, supporting the affected community, analysing and mitigating the potential for further landslips.

Alun Davies said:

“It’s clear that the challenges the council face in dealing with the incident are unique, and the costs incurred are higher than any budgets could reasonably anticipate.

“This grant will help the local authority continue to protect lives and property as well as support it to address the longer term resilience and sustainability of the area.”

A warm welcome home to Team Wales

The ‘Welcome Home’ event was held at the Norwegian Church in Cardiff to celebrate the triumphant return of the four Welsh competitors who represented the UK at WorldSkills; the world’s largest skills competition, hosted in Abu Dhabi.

Having excelled on a national level at Skills Competition Wales and the WorldSkills UK finals, these young competitors represented the nation as part of Team UK, competing against the most highly skilled young people from 77 different countries across the globe.

The event recognised the incredible talent of the four competitors: Joseph Massey, 23, from Coleg Cambria, who competed in the Aeronautical Engineering category, Alfie Hopkin, 18, Llanelli, who competed in the Web Design category, Elizabeth Forkuoh, 20, from Llanelli, who competed in the

Restaurant Service competition, and Ethan Davies, 21, from Mynydd Isa who competed in the CNC Milling competition.

Recognition was also given to their families, colleges and employers for supporting the competitors at every stage throughout their journeys to success.

Eluned Morgan, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, said: "I'm proud to welcome home these talented Welsh youngsters and celebrate their achievements as representatives of the nation. Elizabeth, Alfie, Joseph and Ethan are a credit both to Wales and their industries.

"The return of these young people to Wales highlights the importance of nurturing and supporting skilled people in Wales, for the benefit of the Welsh economy. Events like these showcase the talent that Wales and Welsh industries have to offer.

"These world-class individuals serve as an inspiration to Wales and demonstrate how we are a nation of high industry standards with a highly skilled workforce. We hope these success stories will serve as inspiration to other individuals to follow their examples and become experts in their fields."

Backed by the Welsh Government through the European Social Fund, these competitions promote the importance of developing a highly skilled workforce and world-class individuals.

For more information visit www.worldskillswales.org

[Kirsty Williams visits north Wales to open two 21 Century Schools](#)

Ysgol Nant y Groes and Ysgol Swn y Don have been refurbished and extended to provide state-of-the-art teaching environments, with all the facilities expected in a 21st Century School, including the latest in IT equipment.

The overall cost of these two projects was £4.2 million, funded by Welsh Government 21st Century Schools and Education Programme (50%) and Conwy County Borough Council Education Capital Programme (50%).

During her visits, the Education Secretary toured both sites to see their newly improved facilities and enjoyed performances by pupils, before unveiling plaques in front of the gathered guests.

Kirsty Williams said:

“It is a pleasure to be in Conwy today to officially open the newly refurbished Ysgol Nant y Groes and Ysgol Swyn y Don, and see first-hand how the Welsh Government’s investment is having a positive impact on education and learning in the area.

“Our national mission is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence. Our 21st Century Schools and Education Programme plays a key part in this and is the largest investment in our schools and colleges since the 1960s.”

The new Ysgol Nant y Groes is the amalgamation of infants school Ysgol Glan y Môr and junior school Ysgol Pendorlan, which were housed in separate buildings on the same site in Colwyn Bay.

This £2.25 million investment project focussed on improving the school environment through refurbishment of the existing site in addition to developing a physical link connecting the two existing buildings.

In addition to the single storey glazed link area, internal improvements have included room remodelling and construction of a new platform lift and lift shaft, providing access for all pupils to the second storey KS2 area.

Alterations and extensions have also been made to all internal and external services including much needed boiler replacement and improved IT facilities.

Externally, investment has improved playground areas and school frontage, providing playground equipment, and a new 3G MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) facility.

The Ysgol Swyn y Don project involved the amalgamation of the existing infants and junior schools, Ysgol Babanod Penmaenrhos and Ysgol Iau Tan y Marian, with a new Primary School established on the Ysgol Tan y Marian site.

As part of this £1.97million refurbishment, the building has been extensively renovated, with a new school entrance and reception, extension of two new classrooms (nursery and reception), a redecoration throughout, renovation of the school kitchen, and new electronic whiteboards for each classroom and the hall.

A soft play area for Nursery and Reception Classes has also been established, and a new boiler and heating system installed. The school has also benefited from an extended tarmac play area, nature trail, benches, garden sheds and flower beds.

Leader, Conwy County Borough Council, Councillor Gareth Jones added:

“It’s very important to the Council that we are able to invest in our schools, to allow the governors and staff to provide high quality education and support in buildings that are fit for purpose. I wish the staff and pupils of Ysgol Nant y Groes and

Ysgol Sw'n y Don all the very best, and I thank the Cabinet Secretary for taking the time to visit both schools today."

[Finance Secretary discusses regional investment in South Wales after Brexit](#)

The 'Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit' event follows the publication of the Welsh Government paper of the same name published in December.

The paper proposes a new, simplified and less bureaucratic way of supporting Welsh communities and driving economic development. It calls for every penny of the £370m that Wales currently receives from the EU each year in structural funds to be replaced by the UK government and added to the Welsh Government's annual budget.

The paper rejects the idea of a Westminster-controlled UK Prosperity Fund and calls for regional investment decisions to continue to be made in Wales. The proposals include:

- simplifying the rules, administration and systems for regional investment funds
- developing plans for the regions of Wales led by partnerships involving local authorities, businesses and communities in those areas
- regional investment focussed on places where it is needed

The event will be an opportunity to discuss the proposals about the future approach to regional investment once our current European Structural and Investment programmes come to an end.

Mark Drakeford said:

"The publication of the 'Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit' paper was very much the beginning of a process where we want to work with as many people, organisations and businesses as possible in this process to help inform a new approach to regional investment policy that will maximise the potential of every part of Wales."

This event is the second of 2 public engagement events on regional investment after Brexit. The first event took place in Bangor University last week (18 January) where Lesley Griffiths AM, the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, addressed a forum of business and council leaders based in North Wales.

Mark Drakeford added,

“Our intention is not simply to replace existing EU programmes by other means. This is an opportunity to think differently and work differently in ways which link policies together across portfolios and organisations.

“This will mean even closer alignment to approaches for local government reform, the regionalisation of economic development policy, and other Welsh Government priorities identified in ‘Prosperity for All’.”

EU funding boost for £2.5m scheme to help people in South Wales into work

Led by Newport Council and supported by £1.3m of EU funding, the Journey2Work initiative will provide specialist support to long-term unemployed people over 25 in Newport, Monmouthshire and Cardiff.

The project will provide mentoring, training and financial support for travel costs and work clothes as well as volunteering opportunities to people who face significant barriers to securing work.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“Supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable people to gain new skills will help them to take the next steps into employment. I am pleased EU funds are being invested to increase learning, tackle poverty and support a more inclusive society in Wales.”

Councillor Gail Giles, Newport Council’s cabinet member for education and skills added:

“Providing the right support to people to help them into work is so important – not just for individuals but for our wider communities. I am delighted money is being invested in this project and that Newport is able to lead on this initiative.”

The project is being delivered in partnership with Monmouthshire Housing Association and Cardiff Council and will work with people living in social housing.