

Environment Minister opens new section of Wales Coast Path

Hannah Blythyn was in Mostyn to open a new 300 metre long footpath near Warwick Chemicals. The project, a diversion of the Wales Coast Path, was created to remove a railway footbridge from the route which was limiting accessibility in the area.

The diversion will allow further development and improvements to accessibility along this section of the Wales Coast Path. The new path takes in scenic woodland, providing glimpses of the coast, bringing walkers closer to the River Dee and also removes the necessity to walk along a section of road.

Hannah Blythyn said:

“It gives me great pleasure to officially open this new section of the Wales Coast Path. Wales quite literally blazed a trail in 2012 when we became the first country anywhere in the world to build a footpath around our coast.

“This project has continued the practice of partnership working, which has been critical in the development of this now iconic route.

“The Wales Coast Path has been a great success and now walkers will be able to enjoy even more of our stunning coastline and woodland”.

Tim Jones, Natural Resources Wales Director of Operations in North Wales said:

“It’s great to see new improvements to the Wales Coast Path which contributes so much to life in Wales.

“The Path boosts our tourism economy, improves health and wellbeing by getting people out walking, and connects people with nature to be explored along our coastline.

“Walkers on the Welsh coast spent more than £84 million in 2014, supporting 1,000 jobs. And 43 million day visits to the Welsh coast included walking as their activity. The evidence speaks for itself about the value of this national asset.”

Flintshire County Council’s Cabinet Member for Countryside, Councillor Carolyn Thomas, said:

“Flintshire’s Countryside team put the idea of a footpath to Warwick Chemicals who were fully supportive of the plans which allowed us to go ahead and secure funding from Natural Resources Wales. The project has been developed and completed by our coastal ranger, Tim Johnson.

“It was hard work to get started but the results are fantastic. Warwick Chemicals have been amazing, they have supported the idea and project right from the start. Once the work started on the ground it came together really well, this was really helped by the skill and vision of the contractor Arwyn Parry.”

£12m boost for health professionals training and education in Wales

Despite the difficult financial climate this represents an increase of £12m over last year’s package.

The funding will allow more than 3,500 new students to join healthcare education programmes across Wales. Nurse training places will rise by 161 to 1,911, with increases in all four nursing fields, building on the increases delivered in the past three years.

The investment package also includes:

- A10% increase in physiotherapy and occupational therapy training places
- Additional health visitor training places
- Maintenance of all other levels of training places commissioned in 2017 including the 40% increase in midwifery training places.
- A further cohort of physician associate training places available from September 2018, on the same basis as 2017.

In addition as part of the two year budget deal with Plaid Cymru for 2018/19 and 2019/20, £2m per year will be used to support a Welsh Buurtzorg pilot of neighbourhood nursing care, of which £1.4m for each year will be used to support the education and training programmes for district nurses including supporting the release of nurses to train.

The investment is in addition to the extra £500,000 announced earlier this year to support more medical training posts including clinical radiology, ophthalmology, oral medicine dentistry and paediatric dentistry.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

“The austerity policy pursued by the UK Government has

significantly impacted our budget and in those circumstances training is often one of the first casualties. But this is a short-sighted approach. Instead we are actually increasing investment in training, despite the budget cuts, in order to secure the long-term future of the health service.

“I am very proud we are once again increasing training places for nurses, midwives, physiotherapist, occupational health works and health visitors. This package of support will also maintain investment in training places for other key workers including health care scientists, paramedics, dental hygienists, therapists and radiographers.

Together with our successful Train, Work, Live campaign to bring trainee doctors and other health professional to Wales, this demonstrates the Welsh Government’s commitment to ensuring the NHS has the workforce it needs to deliver high quality care now and in the future.”

[Powys agency gets creative with superfast broadband](#)

Welsh Government Leader of the House with responsibility for digital infrastructure, Julie James, called into Motif Creative to find out more about the difference faster broadband has made to the company.

It has already won strategic contracts in the US and Europe after investment in Cloud infrastructure, supported by superfast broadband, has helped it break down geographical barriers and allowed the company to fend off competition from agencies abroad.

The ability to communicate and share large digital files and information remotely, as well as using the latest video conferencing technology, has enabled the firm to not only deliver projects effectively but also reduce the amount of international travel by key executives.

Using its high-speed internet download speed of 73Mbps, Motif Creative now uses Cisco’s online conferencing software, WebEx, to host around four to five ‘virtual’ meetings a week with international clients.

The agency also attended a workshop delivered by Superfast Business Wales, which offered them advice on how to make the most of their high-speed connection.

Stuart Spooner, Motif’s managing director, said:

“It is apparent that technology is becoming more of a factor in driving revenues and sustaining growth, and businesses that are not investing will inevitably be left behind. We already generate 40 per cent of our revenue from international customers, which has also contributed to our forecast of 25 per cent growth in total revenues by 2019.

“Having effective IT systems is crucial for our industry and access to a consultant, through Superfast Business Wales, who understood our business, as well as the intricacies of superfast broadband-enabled and file sharing technologies, was invaluable.

“The ability to provide creative solutions for our clients, backed up by a high level of customer service, will always be the main ingredients for success in our sector, but embracing modern technology is becoming more and more important, especially when competing in an increasingly global marketplace.

“Having superfast broadband has made a real difference to us, and in fact the service is better here in Newtown than in our other office in Nottingham.”

Julie James said:

“It’s great to see how superfast broadband is making a difference to companies across Wales, including here in Newtown. Superfast Cymru is about bringing superfast broadband to areas which would otherwise not receive it. No premises in Powys were due to receive it through commercial companies, but now almost 50,000 premises in the county are able to access it thanks to our programme.

“Motif Creative have also benefited from consultancy advice from Superfast Business Wales so they can maximise the impact of their faster internet speed. I would urge businesses, who haven’t followed suit, to do so and find out how making the most of online technology can help boost the business.”

Ed Hunt, regional director for Openreach, the business responsible for Britain’s largest phone and broadband network, said:

“Superfast Cymru has played a significant part in making Wales among the European leaders in digital performance and connectivity.

“It’s a fantastic digital leveller that businesses in towns like Newtown can now order the same fibre-based services and speeds at the same cost as those living and working in central London.

“It’s great to see companies like Motif Creative taking advantage of these new speeds.

“While there’s still more to do in terms of roll-out, I would encourage every business which already has access to make the most of this new superfast network that our engineers have built across the country.”

Superfast Cymru is the partnership between the Welsh Government, BT Group, UK Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), bringing faster broadband to areas which would otherwise not receive it.

The Welsh Government also runs the Access Broadband Cymru scheme, which can offer assistance to those not able to access superfast broadband by providing grant aid to help them receive faster broadband through other technologies.

Superfast Business Wales, which is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), can help businesses to improve finances, reach more customers and simplify their work processes with a programme of free support designed to help make the most of online technology and so keep their business growing.

[First Minister’s Christmas card competition winner announced](#)

Nearly 800 entries were received for this year’s competition, from Year 3 and 4 pupils across Wales.

Luca Tahanha, a pupil at Llanyrafon Primary, won the competition with his hand-drawn design featuring Father Christmas flying over the Senedd in Cardiff Bay, home of the National Assembly for Wales.

The winning design was chosen by the First Minister and will be used as his official Christmas card for 2017. The card will be sent to people across Wales and around the world.

During his visit to the school, the First Minister presented Luca with a signed, framed copy of his winning design. The First Minister was also treated to a special Christmas assembly and presentation.

The First Minister said:

“I was thoroughly impressed with the hundreds of entries received and the high quality of the designs for this year’s competition. Luca’s design particularly stood out for me as it features Father Christmas soaring through the sky above the Senedd. With The Senedd’s recognisable features, I’m sure it will stand out to all those who see it this Christmas.

“I would like to thank all those who entered this year’s competition and wish them all a very Merry Christmas.”

Llanyrafon Primary Head Teacher, Mr Wayne Jones said:

“I was ecstatic to find out Luca had won the Christmas card competition and I know all our pupils had great fun taking part. We were honoured to welcome the First Minister to our school.”

Finance Secretary will share his views on Brexit and new tax-raising powers at the CBI Wales annual dinner

He will outline his priorities for maintaining a strong Welsh economy when the UK leaves Europe, including continued access to the Single Market; the replacement for EU funding to support businesses, communities, research and investment and the need to maintain international relationships.

Professor Drakeford will say:

“From the beginning of the Brexit process, we have consistently argued that the needs of the economy should be the core consideration in the UK’s approach to the challenge of leaving the EU.

“In particular we have argued for continued full access to the EU Single Market, robust transitional arrangements, retention of the European social model and continuation of our participation in a range of EU programmes post-Brexit, such as Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+.”

The Finance Secretary will highlight the forthcoming introduction of the first Welsh taxes for almost 800 years – land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax, which replace stamp duty land tax and landfill tax, respectively, in April.

He will say,

“These new taxes include the highest starting threshold for residential rates in the UK, and the lowest starting rate of tax

for the purchase of business premises in the UK – helping lower-income households and smaller businesses,”

And he will highlight the importance of developing Wales’ infrastructure,

“The Welsh Government continues to prioritise investment in infrastructure and our business-friendly policies create the right conditions to support the economy and attract new investments to Wales.

“Over the last year we supported 85 new inward investment projects in Wales with the potential to create or safeguard more than 11,000 jobs. Wales secured 11% of the total jobs associated with inward investment projects across the UK.

“Wales is going through a period of major economic change and I am pleased that the Welsh Government can support businesses through these changing times.”