

Lesley Griffiths high on ambition for clean energy

Electricity generation from renewables in Wales has trebled since 2010, and last year provided 32% of the electricity we use. The Cabinet Secretary said she believes Wales can be at the forefront of global efforts to decarbonise and today announced challenging new targets for renewable energy production.

She told Assembly Members she wanted Wales to generate 70 per cent of its electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Wales must be able to compete in global low carbon markets, particularly now we face a future outside the EU. The ability to meet our needs from clean energy is the foundation for a prosperous low carbon economy.

“This is why I am today announcing targets to focus action across the country and to capture the benefits for Wales.

“Firstly, I am setting a target of Wales generating 70 per cent of its electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030.

“Secondly, I am setting a target for one Gigawatt of renewable electricity capacity in Wales to be locally owned by 2030.

“Finally, by 2020 I expect new renewable energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership.

“I believe these are stretching but realistic targets which will help us to decarbonise our energy system, reduce long-term costs and deliver greater benefits to Wales.”

The Cabinet Secretary said the Welsh Government needed to take action to support delivery of these targets but is also looking to UK Government to deliver on areas not devolved to Wales. The UK needs to support technologies to the point where they can compete in the market.

She said:

“The rapid changes of UK Government policy have decimated large parts of the renewable sector in Wales and developments potentially valuable to Wales have been stopped in their tracks by UK Ministers. The bulk of UK Government renewables investment is now going to offshore wind projects outside Wales. This investment is paid for by Welsh bill payers, amongst others.

“There is a need for the bulk of energy supply to come from the most affordable technologies, if the costs are to be found from energy bills. These technologies therefore need a route to market if we are to meet our ambitious targets and deliver the most benefit to Welsh bill payers. That is why I have called repeatedly on UK Government to stop the ideological exclusion of onshore wind and solar from the Contracts for Difference process.”

Welsh Government is doing its share. We have made around €100m of EU Structural Funds available for investment in marine energy.

[Carwyn Connect heads to Brecon](#)

The Carwyn Connect event will give local people the opportunity to meet the First Minister and ask him questions on any issues which affect them or their local community.

The session will take place between 6pm and 7.30pm at Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon (Canal Wharf, Brecon, LD3 7EW).

People are encouraged to register their interest in attending the free events online at the following link: [Eventbrite](#)

Questions can be asked in a number of ways – they can be submitted when people arrive at the venue when doors open at 5.30pm; in advance via email on cabinetcommunications@wales.gsi.gov.uk or via Twitter using [@fmwales](#) with the hashtag [#carwynconnect](#).

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones said:

“Over the past 2 years, I have travelled the length and breadth of Wales to hear the views of local communities and answer people’s questions.

“I am pleased to announce the next event will take place in Brecon. I would like to see as many people as possible at Theatr Brycheiniog, so if you have a question for me, want to raise issues affecting your community or have a great idea to make your home town a better place to live, please come along.

“A wide variety of topics have come up in previous events. You can ask me anything from questions about local issues such as schools or hospitals, to big issues like Brexit or government policy.

“This is your chance to meet and speak with me in person. I’m really looking forward to meeting you all.”

Minister discovers why there's more to Green Man Festival than meets the eye

During a visit to the Welsh Government supported event last month, the Minister met with event organisers and saw first hand how the festival is supporting science and skills development through the various creative projects it runs.

While there, in addition to exploring Einstein's Garden – an interactive learning environment that aims to promote science and innovation in an engaging way to event-goers – Julie James met with individuals involved with the festival's Merthyr Project.

Established by Green Man seven years ago, the Merthyr Project is a personal growth and development programme supported by the College Merthyr Tydfil to help people from the area develop their skills and enhance their employability opportunities.

Part intervention, part training and part social development, the project is part of a wider range of work experience and training opportunities Green Man supports throughout the year.

The project culminates with those involved having an opportunity to put their new found skills and experience to good use at the annual festival.

During her visit and joined by Green Man's Director and Owner, Fiona Stewart, and Nicola Ebdon who is a Film lecturer from the College Merthyr Tydfil, the Minister met with Ben Willshee (19), Ryan Speck (21), and Rebecca Hopkins (22); three apprentices who took part in this year's project and helped to support the successful delivery of the sell out and award winning festival.

Both Ben and Ryan are currently studying for their foundation degrees in Film at College Merthyr Tydfil and have recently started their second years.

Rebecca studied the same course and has just completed her third year at the Cardiff campus topping-up to a full Bachelor's degree. Her experience over the last three years on the Merthyr Project helped her to secure a place at University of South Wales, where she has just started a post graduate Public Relations Master's degree.

All three have credited the project with helping to build their confidence, understanding of the industry and gain valuable skills and training.

Explaining how the programme works, Fiona said:

"The Merthyr Project consists of two parts, with the first phase focussing on job application skills. It gives those involved a

taster of the sort of production roles and responsibilities available across the creative industries before getting them to complete a CV and go through an application process where mentoring and feedback is provided.

"The second phase focusses on immersive and sometimes challenging experiences, including skills training and equipment handling. Those involved get to experience first hand film production and editing, stage set-up and what it takes to successfully deliver a festival.

"The project's aims are wide ranging but skills training and personal growth sits at the heart of it. Building core and transferable skills such as confidence, resilience and interpersonal skills are as important as the wider industry specific training individuals receive. It is an intense experience, requiring dedication and commitment from everyone involved but the benefits offered can be incredibly rewarding.

"Green Man is a genuine community and we all work together to help each other. Ultimately, this project aims to provide an opportunity to those in greatest need of support to access the industry and develop their social skills so they can adapt and be more resilient and successful. We are forward looking about the skills we want to develop with our apprentices to make sure that they will still be relevant in a few years time. There is no point teaching people things that won't help them or be relevant in the real world."

Explaining how the project has helped him, Ben said:

"It is an amazing opportunity on a different scale. We all work together like a team, helping and supporting each other to learn and develop because we want to bring the talent out in each other. Sometimes all it takes is a simple comment like 'you've done a good job', that can be very validating. The project has helped to build my confidence."

Commenting on her visit, Julie James said:

"From its interactive areas to encourage more people to explore science, to its skills and training projects which provide young people with an opportunity to develop their core skills, Green Man is not your average festival and this visit certainly showed why there is more to it than meets the eye.

"It was great to hear more about the Merthyr Project, especially from those who have benefitted from it directly. Listening to Ben, Ryan and Rebecca speak so passionately and confidently about their time on the project and then demonstrating to me some of the

practical skills they have learnt was really inspiring.

“As the largest contemporary music and arts festival in Wales, I am pleased the Welsh Government has been able to support Green Man’s growth and I look forward to seeing what 2018’s event has to offer, both on and off the stage.”

Welsh Government support drives increased exports

Laser Wise Solutions in Treforest, OsteoPlus and Energist in Swansea and Airbond in Pontypool have all seen significant increases in their export business after receiving support from the Welsh Government’s EU supported Export Assist programme.

Speaking about their success the Economy Secretary said:

“Exporting really does have the potential to transform a business and take it to the next level. Companies such as Laser Wise Solutions, Osteoplus, Airbond and Energist are all great examples of just what can be achieved when companies looking to increase their exports have access to the right advice, guidance and support.

“And increasing the value of exports and the number of exporters in Wales is even more important than ever as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

“The Welsh Government is keen to work with companies looking to build up the exports arm of their operations and offer them the right support for wherever they may be in their business development.

“I want to help them replicate the sort of increase in exports already experienced by companies like Laser Wise Solutions and would urge companies interested in growing their exports to get in touch for more information on the programme of tailored support on offer.”

Laser Wise Solutions design and manufacture laser stripping systems from their base in Treforest. Following support from the Export Assist programme, including participating in Welsh Government led trade missions to the US, they have seen their businesses grow from a £1.5m turnover in 2016 to 2.2m in 2017.

Since accessing Welsh Government support the company has won £791.5k worth of business in the USA, £31.2k in Mexico, £71k in China and £84k in the Philippines.

In Swansea OsteoPlus, a company that designs and develops surgical instruments, has secured an additional £130k of business from the USA, while Energist, the UK's leading developer and manufacturer of advanced light and laser technology systems for use in medical and cosmetic procedures, has picked up £725,000 of business from the Far East.

In Pontypool, Airbond, a manufacture of composite materials for the aerospace and automotive industries has won £11,000 worth of additional business from the Far East.

OsteoPlus, Energist and Airbond all received support from the Welsh Government and EU funded Export Assist programme which ran between 2009 and 2015.

The programme supported companies looking to export through a mixture of mentoring and training, advice on trade and choosing the right market, trade missions, exhibitions and overseas business development visits.

[Red route gets green light as part of major Deeside infrastructure investment](#)

The scheme, which aims to modernise and relieve pressure on the stretch, will see increased capacity on the existing A548, with a new road linking the A55 and A548 just after the Flintshire Bridge. It forms part of over £650m of Welsh Government infrastructure improvements in North Wales, with Deeside in particular benefiting from unprecedented Welsh Government investment.

Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I’m delighted to announce the red route as my preferred option to address the congestion problem in the Deeside Corridor, A55/A494/A548, area.

“Having taken full account of the technical, social, economic and environmental aspects of the scheme and listened to the consultation responses, I’m confident that this significant investment will address the existing problems and compliment improvements across the Deeside area.

“The next steps will be to develop a preliminary design, which considers the environmental and engineering issues in more detail and looks to address some of the issues raised during the consultation.

“I’m hopeful that this can all be completed quickly, with businesses and commuters feeling the benefit of this project at the earliest opportunity, strengthening the social and economic links across North Wales, the Deeside Industrial Estate, Chester and beyond in the process.”

The Economy Secretary also announced he would be progressing the delivery of the A494 River Dee Bridge Improvement scheme to investigate options to resolve the existing traffic bottleneck and overcome issues with the existing bridge.

On rail connectivity he said he would be commissioning further work with Network Rail on a new Deeside Parkway and the co-location of Shotton High at Shotton Low at a new integrated station. This would enable a seamless interchange for passengers wanting to change between the Wrexham – Bidston line and the North Wales Coast mainline.

In conjunction with Flintshire Council and Network Rail we will develop a scheme for a new Deeside Parkway station to improve access to the business park, including the introduction of park and ride provision. Facilities for road freight traffic will also be considered.

This builds on the over £1m awarded to Flintshire Council in March to improve bus services and encourage walking and cycling in Deeside. Part of this money will be spent on developing bus interchanges, bus priority measures on the B5129 Shotton Corridor and bus infrastructure on Deeside Business Park, while the remainder will support the introduction of active travel routes within the Deeside Business Park.

This is all in addition further investment of £4.7m to support the Northern Gateway and continue with building additional road infrastructure to open land for development and attract further businesses to locate at the site.

He said

“The investment and initiatives I have outlined will go a long way to address the barriers to accessing jobs in the Deeside Hub. They will also form one of the building blocks that will deliver a North East Wales Metro vision of a well-connected and high quality integrated transport system, which maximises active travel opportunities, something which will provide huge benefits for the region.”