

First Minister commemorates the battle of Passchendaele 100 years on

First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, will open the service alongside the Mayor of Langemark-Poelkapelle, Alain Wyffels, and Minister-President of Flanders, Geert Bourgeois. During his address, the First Minister will pay tribute to all those who took part in the Battle and read a passage from the Bible (Micah 4: 1-5) in Welsh.

The Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) was one of the most horrific battles of the First World War, remembered as a remorseless slog through the mud and rain. The 38th (Welsh) Division played a central role in the battle, capturing key positions on the ridge at Pilkem.

The battle is of particular resonance for Wales as it claimed the lives of many Welsh soldiers including the renowned Welsh language poet, who was posthumously awarded the bardic chair at the National Eisteddfod in Birkenhead in 1917. After the National Service, the First Minister will lay a wreath on Hedd Wyn's grave at the Artillery Wood cemetery on behalf of the people of Wales.

First Minister Carwyn Jones will speak in front of the 9ft dragon sculpture, which honours the Welsh men who fought bravely in the conflict. He will say:

“It is a great privilege to be back in Langemark for this important occasion. It has been 3 years since the memorial was unveiled and it offers us a fitting place to pay tribute and reflect on the sacrifices of all those who took part in the Third Battle of Ypres 100 years ago. In this peaceful spot today, it is hard to imagine the horrors of war faced by our soldiers and the agonising wait of families back home who might not know the fate of loved ones for many months. Some of those who lost their lives are remembered for their contribution to Welsh culture – such as poetry and sport – but, it is important we remember all those Welsh men who died during battle. Today we honour them all, for their bravery and courage.”

Today's service, which will be attended by the Prince of Wales, forms part of the events for 2017 in Cymru'n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918 – the official programme for First World War centenary commemorations in Wales.

Earlier in the day, the First Minister will also represent Wales at the UK Government Service of Remembrance at Tyne Cot Cemetery.

Carwyn Connects with Eisteddfod

Visitors to this year's National Eisteddfod in Bodedern, Anglesey, will be able to put questions directly to the First Minister, Carwyn Jones, as he holds a Carwyn Connect event at the festival.

Friday 28 July 2017

The Carwyn Connect events give people the opportunity to ask the First Minister questions, face to face, on any issues which affect them or their local community.

The hour-long session will be at the Welsh Government's stand on the Maes at 2pm on Monday, 7 August. Those interested in attending are encouraged to register on the Eventbrite website. Questions can be submitted in advance via email to cabinetcommunications@gov.wales or at the event itself.

Right to Buy suspended in Cardiff

The move comes as Welsh Government legislation to abolish the Right to Buy across the whole of Wales is proceeding through the Assembly.

The Right to Buy allows eligible social housing tenants to buy their council or housing association property at a discount. The proposed legislation will end these rights, protecting social housing stock from further reduction.

Over the past 30 years, the Right to Buy has resulted in a significant reduction in social housing stock. Between 1981 and 2014, 138,709 council homes were sold – this is a 45% reduction in the social housing available since the policy was first introduced.

Research also indicates that many of these homes end up in the private rented sector and, as a result, cost local people more to rent and, in some cases, the public purse more in housing benefit.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“I have agreed to Cardiff Council's application to suspend the Right to Buy to help them deal with the pressure their social housing is facing and to ensure that homes are available to those who need them.

“While this will help one area for a short period of time, we also need to address this issue for the long term. This is why we are legislating to abolish the Right to Buy in Wales.

“The Right to Buy is depleting our social housing stock. This damaging policy is further increasing the pressure on our social housing supply and is forcing many vulnerable people to wait longer for a home.

“Legislating to end the Right to Buy is the only sure way to prevent this and give social landlords the confidence to invest in building more of the affordable homes Wales needs.”

Cardiff Council Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Cllr Lynda Thorne said:

“I am very pleased that Welsh Government has granted the Council permission to suspend the Right to Buy scheme in Cardiff for five years. Local authorities are able to do this in areas of housing pressure and that is certainly the case in Cardiff.

“Cardiff is one of the UK’s fastest growing cities and with over 8,000 people currently on the waiting list for social housing, we have to do everything we can to ensure we are providing good quality housing for those most in need, both now and into the future.

“In 1985, the Council had 23,000 properties but largely through the right to buy, that figure has reduced to our current stock in the region of 13,400 properties. This decision enables us to safeguard our much needed housing provision for current and future generations.”

[Researchers given ‘a sporting chance’ to access unique archive](#)

Gwent Archives will receive over £14,000 of Welsh Government funding to help conserve fragile and damaged items in the club’s collections, thanks to a partnership with the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust.

The conservation work will open up access to the fascinating history of one of Wales’ first integrated sports clubs, whose origins date back to 1875.

Conservation work will be undertaken on a series of minute books, 28

postcards and 148 letters and telegrams sent to the club by members fighting during the First World War.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This unique archive not only provides an insight into Newport’s sporting heritage, it also shines a light on the influence of the club on the development of Welsh rugby. The collection will appeal to sporting historians, anyone associated with distinguished former club members, and all those with an interest in the experiences of soldiers during the First World War.

“I am pleased that we, along side the NMCT have supported this project and I hope to see it enjoyed by researchers and sports enthusiasts from Newport and beyond.”

Since 2008 the NMCT, in partnership with the Welsh Government, has supported 39 projects and has conserved items and collections of national and international importance held by archives across Wales.

Lord Egremont, Chairman of the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, said:

“We are delighted that NMCT’s collaboration with Welsh Government has once again enabled the preservation of an outstanding collection of material. We were pleased to support an archive that is so important to the history of sport in Wales”.

Tony Hopkins, Gwent county archivist said:

“This is a truly exciting project. Newport is a club not only famed for its rugby but one that has had an immense influence on the development of sport in Wales. We are grateful to the NMCT for helping us preserve this unique archive.”

Newport Cricket, Athletic and Football Club was formed as the first integrated sports club in Wales. It became Newport Athletic Club in 1895/6, by which time it ran a wide range of sports and many individuals connected with the club had earned distinction in various sports. Richard Mullock represented the club at the formation of the Amateur Athletic Association in 1880. Wyatt Gould hurdled for Great Britain in the 1908 Olympics and played rugby for Newport and two of his brothers captained the Welsh rugby team, one of them being Arthur, the first rugby ‘superstar’.

Welsh and Scottish Ministers to discuss Brexit – Changes must be made to the EU Withdrawal Bill

Welsh Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford and Scotland's Brexit Minister Michael Russell will meet to discuss the UK Government's recently-published EU Withdrawal Bill.

The Scottish Government's Lord Advocate James Wolffe QC and the Welsh Government's Counsel General Mick Antoniw will also attend the meeting.

The meeting will focus on the need to amend the Bill so relevant powers remain with devolved administrations, rather than being taken back by UK Government, as the Bill currently proposes.

Speaking in advance of the meeting, Professor Drakeford said:

“The Welsh Government's position has always been that we agree there is a need for an orderly exit from the EU, but that it needs to be based a set of arrangements that gives certainty to businesses; to our communities and respects the devolution settlement.

“The EU Withdrawal Bill does absolutely none of those things as it is currently drafted and the UK Government cannot expect the support of the devolved administrations on that basis.

“We want to help the UK Government to find a way out of the mess in which it finds itself and we will come to the table constructively to discuss UK frameworks which may be necessary when the UK leaves the EU. This must be done by agreement and not through imposition.

“We are talking about responsibilities which have rested in Cardiff Bay and Edinburgh since 1999. Our model of devolution has drawn public support through various elections and referenda and therefore cannot simply be reversed with the stroke of a pen in Whitehall.

“I look forward to discussing with Mr Russell today how we can work together to ensure the UK Government respects devolution across the United Kingdom.”

Mr Russell said:

“The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is quite simply an attack on

the hard-won powers of the Scottish Parliament and on the principles of devolution.

“We cannot and will not stand by and let powers in devolved areas be taken by the UK Government. The Bill must be changed to respect devolution and our parliament.

“The Bill does not return powers to the devolved administrations as promised. Instead it imposes new restrictions on the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

“I look forward to discussing how we can protect devolution with Professor Drakeford and our priorities for amending the Bill.

“I hope the UK Government will also enter into negotiations on the Bill on the basis that we are equal partners on an issue that will have a hugely significant impact on the future of our economy and society.”