

91% of GP training places in Wales filled

The Welsh Government and NHS Wales launched the “This is Wales: Train, Work, Live” campaign in October 2016, in order to promote Wales as an excellent place for doctors, including GPs, and their families, to train, work and live.

In April, the Health Secretary announced the fill rate for GP training places at the end of round one was 84%, which compared to 68% at the same stage in 2016.

Following the round one re-advert, the fill rate has increased to 91% for 2017 (124 out of 136 posts filled). This compares to a 75% fill rate in 2016.

The new financial incentive scheme in targeted areas of Wales has resulted in 100% fill rates in the following GP training schemes:

- Ceredigion
- North Wales West
- Pembrokeshire
- North Wales East

Trainees will begin their training in August 2017.

Round two, which aims to recruit GP trainees to take up post in February 2018, will open in August 2017.

Vaughan Gething said:

“Improving access to GP and other local health services is one of my top priorities. Ensuring we have the right staff in place in the right places is crucial.

“So I’m really pleased our This is Wales: Train, Work, Live campaign has resulted in a significant increase in the number of trainee GPs coming to Wales – with 91% of training places filled already after round one. I’m particularly pleased our financial incentives have resulted in all training places being filled in some of the areas that have traditionally found it difficult to recruit.”

The Health Secretary added:

“We’re continuing to reform our primary care services – with GPs working with pharmacists, nurses, therapists and other

professionals as part of a wider team to ensure people receive the right care, at the right time, by the right person, as locally as possible. We are committed to working with our staff to develop the local healthcare team for the future.

“People’s access to these services will increasingly improve as we recruit more GPs and other healthcare professionals to fill roles across Wales.”

Last month, the Welsh Government and NHS Wales launched the second phase of the This is Wales: Train, Work, Live campaign, targeted at nurses in primary care, secondary care and the care home sector. Future phases of the campaign will target pharmacists and allied health professionals.

Wales developing new business events approach

Following on from Wales’ success in attracting and hosting global events like the UEFA Champion’s League Final, and the NATO Wales Summit 2014, Economy Secretary, Ken Skates has announced the Welsh Government is planning a new approach to attract leading business events to Wales, further showcasing the destination on an international stage.

The Wales stand at The Meetings Show at Olympia (13-15 June) is the first initiative in the development of a dedicated national approach. The Wales stand will include – ICC Wales, Celtic Manor Resort, Visit Cardiff, Vale Resort, Venue Cymru, Cambria DMC, Call of the Wild, Surf Snowdonia and Fforest.

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Transport, Ken Skates, said:

“Wales has built an enviable track record of successfully hosting many of the world’s biggest events and following last weekend’s UEFA Champions League Final – the single biggest sporting event of 2017 – we’re now looking at building on our experience to attract leading business events to Wales.

“Wales currently attracts under 2% of the value of business conferences and meetings for the UK as a whole but there is significant potential to draw events from UK and international associations, public & third sector meetings, corporate meetings and team building events to Wales’s award-winning venues and business destinations.

“A small dedicated team will be set up with their main goal to attract events aligned with Wales’ key sectors and growth regions being targeted for inward investment, FDI and economic development plus academic, scientific or medical excellence. Wales will be showcased as an agile and innovative nation with a truly global outlook. Synergy with target growth sectors such as Advanced Materials & Manufacturing, Financial & Professional Services and Energy provide real opportunities to attract business events to Wales.

“As a compact connected country, Wales can open doors to innovators, industry experts, professors and scientists with genuine insight into their individual field.”

This is a pan-Wales initiative, spreading the business event impact across Wales’ economy whilst also benefitting from the momentum provided by ICC Wales and follows VisitBritain’s return to the international business events market, providing further opportunities for Wales.

341 schools set to get superfast broadband thanks to £5m of funding

Currently all schools in Wales have minimum broadband connections of 10Mbps for primary schools and 100Mbps for secondary schools, but some are not able to upgrade the speed of their services to meet ever increasing demand as a result of technical limitations.

In November 2016, £5 million of investment was made available that will cover the installation of new broadband services. This will provide an immediate increase in speed and in line with provision at other schools ensure that connectivity will continue to grow well into the future.

Orders for the new services have started to be placed with the first delivery expected early in the academic year 2017/18.

Prioritising schools’ access to superfast broadband was a key part of the progressive agreement between the First Minister and Kirsty Williams.

Changes to the curriculum mean digital skills will now be developed and taught through all parts of a pupil’s schooling and not just isolated to specific ICT or computer science classes. The Digital Competence Framework means more than just using computers and aims to equip pupils with the digital skills they need and can apply in the real world in the years to come.

Kirsty Williams said:

“I am committed to making sure all our schools have the infrastructure needed to prepare pupils for the modern world. That is why I announced £5 million of extra investment to make sure all our schools have superfast broadband speeds as a minimum and I am delighted 341 schools will benefit from this.

“Making sure every school, no matter where they are based, has access to superfast broadband remains a priority for me. We know demand for broadband speed in schools will continue to increase. It is simply unacceptable for a school to be at a significant disadvantage due to poor internet speeds. I will continue to make sure our pupils have the right environment to develop their vital digital skills and continue to raise standards.”

The Education Secretary has also revealed that the use of the Hwb digital learning platform, which is designed to provide all pupils and teachers in Wales with greater access to a centrally-funded range of online tools and resources, is increasing.

In March Hwb received over 3.2 million page views and averaged over 28 thousand logins each day which has significantly exceeded original expectations. Recent developments to Hwb have delivered an enhanced experience for teachers and learners, giving quicker access to the tools and resources that are most commonly used. The changes were developed following feedback from teachers.

[Supersonic launch for REID Lifting's new facility in Chepstow](#)

The Chepstow based company – which specialises in manufacturing a range of lightweight portable lifting equipment – designed and made a bespoke gantry lifting system for the vehicle to enable the BLOODHOUND team to work on all areas of the supersonic car.

REID Lifting has close links with the project with two of their engineers volunteering as BLOODHOUND STEM ambassadors visiting local schools to talk about the project and inspire the next generation about science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Pupils from Wyedean School and Thornwell Primary will be given a special preview of the supersonic car and a tour of the new factory ahead of the an International Sales Conference for REID's overseas customers and distributors

on Thursday 15 June and the official opening on Friday June 16.

The Welsh Government is providing £680,000 business finance towards the company's new 45,000 sq ft facility on Newhouse Farm Industrial Estate. The investment and expansion has already created 23 high quality jobs, bringing the headcount to 44.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"I am delighted the Welsh Government is supporting this important expansion project which has already created a significant number of new jobs locally. I also applaud their work with local schools encouraging the take up of STEM subjects and wish the company every success in the future."

Managing Director Nick Battersby said:

"The investment in the facilities and the company's future is already paying dividends with significantly increased capacity, shorter lead times and a highly motivated workforce. We are very proud to be able to show off our premises to our international partners, suppliers and local community."

It has seen a 50% growth in sales/turnover in the last few years with forecast growth of 25% in the coming year.

[Preparing for Brexit top issue for 4000 farmers at roadshow events](#)

Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said the positive feedback from the 4,000 plus farmers who attended one of Farming Connect's 'Farming for the future' roadshow events showed how important it was to speak to farmers on the ground about the future of their industry.

Lesley Griffiths said:

"There is a lot of uncertainty for agriculture as we transition from the EU and I am keen to support farmers to become as resilient as they can to any changes that are to come. These events have been an excellent way of communicating with the industry and to highlight the support I have made available through Farming Connect and the Farm Business Grant."

Eirwen Williams, director of rural programmes with Menter a Busnes, which delivers Farming Connect on behalf of the Welsh Government, said the regional campaign had a fantastic response, with capacity audiences at each event already resulting in an increased number of enquiries and applications for services.

“The support mechanisms provided by Farming Connect provide the appropriate support which can improve both technical and business performance to help ensure long term financial viability at this critical time.”

Attendance at a ‘Farming for the Future event allows farmers access to the technical advice now available through the Advisory Service without the need for a business plan. It also enables Welsh farmers to apply for a Farm Business Grant (FBG) which provides one-off grants of between £3,000 and £12,000. The first window will close on 30 June with another due to open in August. Additional events arranged by Farming Connect will be scheduled this summer to enable more farmers to attend.

Platform speakers at each event included representatives from Welsh Government as well as leading agricultural business and financial experts. The line-up also included a number of farmers who had driven forward their businesses with support from Farming Connect.

Wendy Jenkins, director of rural consultancy CARA, was a speaker at a number of the events.

“These events made it clear that alongside any financial incentives, every business must take matters into their own hands now to ensure they achieve optimum levels of technical and business performance and make best use of resources in all those areas they can and must control.

“Making small improvements in a number of key performance indicator areas can reap significant rewards longer term, and the whole raft of services provided by Farming Connect can contribute greatly towards this,”

said Ms Jenkins.

The Cabinet Secretary said in the coming months she would continue to urge all farmers in Wales to consider their long term business objectives, to access the services of Farming Connect and to consider applying for a Farming Business Grant to help them achieve these.

“It is essential to ensure your business is prepared and in the best possible position for the future. There has never been a more important time to find out what is available to you and to make

best use of all support and guidance.”

Following his attendance at the Farming Connect roadshow event at the Royal Welsh Showground, Lloyd Powell, a young farmer who farms with his family at Glanmiheli, Newtown, said:

“I left the meeting with a greater understanding of what my family can do to prepare our farm business for Brexit. We are already tapping into a number of Farming Connect services which have helped us make better use of our soil and crops. Nutrient management planning proved hugely beneficial and has resulted in considerable financial savings by reducing fertiliser costs and improving the quality of our grassland.”