

# Carmarthenshire and Newport to host opening stage of Tour of Britain

It will mark the first time that the race has visited Carmarthenshire with the county set to welcome the strongest ever line-up in race history, with reigning Tour de France and Giro d'Italia champions Geraint Thomas and Chris Froome competing for Team Sky.

The city of Newport last hosted the Tour of Britain in 2004, while the final stage of the 2017 race passed through the city on its way to the overall finish in Cardiff.

The first stage of Britain's biggest professional cycle race will be put under starter's orders by Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford. Speaking ahead of the race, Professor Drakeford said:

"I am delighted to be opening the first stage of this iconic race. Pembrey Country Park is an impressive venue for the Grand Depart, not only because it is a very popular visitor attraction but also because it has recently invested in cycling facilities, including the first national closed road circuit in south Wales.

"The Tour of Britain has become a key event in the Welsh sporting calendar and I am pleased that the Welsh Government has been able to support this event once again this year.

"The Welsh public has always given the cyclists a really warm Welsh welcome and I'm sure that with Geraint Thomas amongst the starting line-up, people from across south Wales will come out to support the cyclists as they travel from Carmarthenshire to Newport on the first day of the race."

Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council, Cllr Emlyn Dole, said:

"We are delighted to be hosting Stage One of the Tour of Britain in Carmarthenshire for the very first time. We have made no secret of our ambition to become the Cycling Hub of Wales and this prestigious event coincides with a huge investment to cycling infrastructure in Carmarthenshire, including off road tracks and circuits, active travel routes and cycling trails.

"This event seals Carmarthenshire's reputation not only as a growing visitor destination, but also as a first-class location for major events.

"We are overwhelmed by the huge support we have had in recent weeks and especially grateful to our communities who have worked together

to give riders and visitors the warmest of welcomes.”

Councillor Debbie Wilcox, Leader of Newport City Council, said:

“We are looking forward to welcoming the Tour to Newport and cheering them across the finish line of stage one on the first day.

“Newport boasts such a diverse landscape which lends itself perfectly to events such as the Tour – from flat, urban routes to challenging climbs and descents through beautiful countryside. I’m sure the cyclists, supporters and spectators alike will enjoy the leg and their time in our city.”

Race Director Mick Bennett said:

“Following the fantastic victory of Geraint Thomas in the Tour de France this Summer it is fitting that we can welcome him, along with the reigning Giro d’Italia champion Chris Froome, to the opening stage of this year’s OVO Energy Tour of Britain in Wales. We are looking forward to our first every visit to Carmarthenshire and think it will be a very special occasion for everyone involved with activities planned across the route to celebrate the occasion.

“In this of all years it is fitting that we finish our opening stage in Newport, the home of Welsh Cycling, and are looking forward to an exciting finish on Usk Way in the city.”

Welsh Cycling CEO, Anne Adams-King said:

“Welsh Cycling is pleased that Wales is hosting the Grand Depart for the 2018 OVO Energy Tour of Britain profiling our beautiful countryside and showcasing the City of Newport town centre.

“It’s fantastic for people to see 4 welsh riders in the peloton alongside some of the best riders in pro-cycling. An exciting start to the tour that will inspire a generation of youngsters to experience cycling.”

The OVO Energy Tour of Britain is British Cycling’s premier road cycling event, giving cycling fans the opportunity to see the world’s best teams and riders competing on their door step, taking place between Sunday 2 and Sunday 9 September 2018.