

Minister champions Welsh skills talent at national Skills Shows 2017

Held annually in Birmingham's NEC, the Skills Show – which runs from 16-18 November this year – is the largest skills and careers event in the UK. It also hosts the WorldSkills UK Finals, where Wales has secured the highest number of entrants of all UK regions into this year's competition.

The Finals are used to benchmark excellence across a range of vocational skills areas. They are also used as part of the selection process for the international competitions EuroSkills Budapest 2018 and WorldSkills Kazan 2019.

Around 500 competitors are taking part in the WorldSkills UK Finals, which consists of up to 60 national competitions where entrants battle it out for Gold, Silver and Bronze medals and recognition as the best in the UK. Of that figure, 71 competitors are Welsh, accounting for approximately 14% of the UK total making it the highest regional representation.

In addition, nine talented students have been invited back to compete for a place in Squad UK for the WorldSkills Budapest / Kazan cycle. Sixteen entrants are also taking part in the 'Inclusive Skills' competitions, which have been specifically designed for those with disabilities.

WorldSkills UK will also announce the overall winner of its Local Heroes 2017 award at the Show.

Local Heroes are supporters of WorldSkills UK who drive their organisation's involvement in competitions. In addition to promoting benefits of WorldSkills to students, apprentices and senior managers, they give their time to support competitors, putting on additional training competitors and offering pastoral and moral support.

Six people have made WorldSkills UK's Highly Commended shortlist for the Local Heroes 2017 award and two are from Wales – Darren Collins from Airbus UK (Broughton) and Rona Griffiths from Coleg Cambria.

Speaking at the event, Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Minister, Eluned Morgan said:

"That Wales has almost 100 competitors taking part in this year's Skills Show is a fantastic achievement and testament of our national skills excellence and talent.

"Supporting skills growth and talent development is a key priority for the Welsh Government. Through our various employment and vocational skills programmes – including our new Apprenticeship Policy which places a greater emphasis on higher level skills – we are committed to helping individuals achieve their goals and become

valued members of the Welsh workforce.

“By taking part in Skills Competitions like this we are creating a highly skilled nation that will support our economy, safeguard our industries and improve the prospects of Wales.

“I wish everyone taking part in this week’s competitions the very best of luck and extend my thanks to those who have supported them on their journey for all their hard work and dedication to help make this happen.”