

Press release: UK Government Minister calls for urgent progress to address rural Wales' mobile 'not spots'

The time has come to put all four corners of Wales on an equal footing when it comes to the standard of its mobile infrastructure, Wales Office Minister Guto Bebb will say when he visits the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show today (25 July 2017).

One year on since the Minister rallied the cries at the Showground for cross Government and industry action to address mobile connectivity issues in rural Wales, Mr Bebb will take the opportunity to amplify the calls for the Welsh Government to use the levers at its disposal to ensure more remote communities in Wales can enjoy a good mobile experience.

UK Government in Wales Minister Guto Bebb said:

The UK Government and businesses have been clear about the importance of good mobile connectivity for the future prosperity of Wales' rural economy.

Since taking office, the Secretary of State for Wales and I have made it a priority to pull partners together to tackle the very real issue of mobile 'not spots' across the country. That is why we hosted an industry summit at the start of this year to address the challenges and to find a solution to the problem. We now need action.

The planning system plays an important role in supporting service providers and communities to ensure that the infrastructure for supporting mobile connectivity is delivered in the right locations in a cost effective manner.

The UK Government has introduced mobile planning reforms in England which came into force in November 2016, which included new rights to build taller masts.

Mr Bebb added:

The UK Government is working to create an environment where the consumer can expect high quality connectivity where they live, work and travel.

And while we will not relent on that ambition for Wales, we cannot achieve this goal in isolation. Although I am pleased to see that the Welsh Government has been undertaking research in respect of telecoms masts and permitted development rights in Wales, it is now

time that they bring forward their own mobile planning reforms to support mobile infrastructure roll-out in Wales which are long overdue.

During his visit to the Royal Welsh Show, Mr Bebb will also meet with Young Farmers, the Welsh Language Commissioner and meet with farming unions to discuss the issues and challenges facing the sector as Britain prepares to exit the EU.

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MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Wales Office Minister Guto Bebb will visit the Royal Welsh Show on Tuesday 25 July and will be available for interview on request.

Please contact Lynette Bowley at the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales on 029 2092 4204 to arrange.