

“Loneliness and isolation in rural Wales is a ticking time bomb” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Tackling loneliness and isolation is a national priority for the Welsh Government. According to the 2016-17 National Survey for Wales, around 17% of the population of Wales, or around 440,000 people, report being lonely.

People living in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to loneliness and isolation. Farming communities by their nature often are isolated from each other and from mainstream public services. Nearly 20% of the Welsh population live in communities of less than 1,500 people.

During the visit, the Minister will discuss with a range of farming and rural organisations what the Welsh Government can do to help tackle loneliness and isolation in farming and rural communities across Wales, as part of its forthcoming strategy on the issue, which will be published for consultation later this year.

Speaking ahead of his visit, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Loneliness and isolation is a growing issue in communities’ right across Wales. It affects everyone – be it a young person or an older person, a farmer or a doctor, a single person or a married couple, and can potentially lead to a range of serious health and social care problems.

“We want to help secure the best possible quality of life for people in all parts of Wales, including in our farming and rural communities. This is why the Welsh Government has made tackling loneliness and isolation a national priority.

“I’m at the Royal Welsh Show today to hear directly from people who live and work in rural Wales about their experiences, and to learn what we as a government can do to tackle what I consider to be a ticking time bomb.”

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths added:

“The farming lifestyle of working long hours every day of every week, very often alone, means any opportunity for interaction with others is often greatly reduced. Added pressures such as running a business, animal disease and the uncertainties Brexit presents, can often lead to increased feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

“Failing to deal with mental health issues can often lead to further issues. There is a wide range of support available to farmers and rural communities and I urge anyone suffering to not suffer alone and access the help available.”

Contact details for organisations able to provide support are available in the Welsh Government summer, winter and spring updates; [Gwlad E-news bulletin](#) and the Farming Connect Technical Publication.

[Future support for farmers post-Brexit to be talk of the Show](#)

Following the publication of the Welsh Government’s consultation on its new Land Management programme in the weeks running up to the Show, the Cabinet Secretary wants to engage in a dialogue to help shape the ‘made in Wales’ approach.

Over the coming days, the Cabinet Secretary will undertake over forty events at the Royal Welsh Show, hearing the views of farmers, representatives from the food and forestry industries, Unions and partner organisations about the proposals.

The new Land Management Programme will consist of two large and flexible schemes – the Economic Resilience Scheme and the Public Goods Scheme.

Welsh Government officials will hold drop in sessions at the stand providing an opportunity for farmers and the public to come along to find out more about the consultation and give their views.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“This year’s Show is without doubt the most important for a very long time. It will be the last Show before we leave the European Union and one of the last major opportunities for me to engage with farmers and partner organisations on a mass scale ahead of it.

“I want to use this year’s Show to speak to as many people as possible and have a national conversation about the consultation I launched two weeks ago on our proposals to support farmers and land managers after Brexit.

“Brexit means we will all have to do things in a different way. Put simply, maintaining the status quo is not an option.

“The way we manage our land matters especially if we are to produce

outcomes of importance to everyone in Wales. The current CAP does not help us achieve these outcomes and is not designed to realise the full value of our land.

“We now have the opportunity to put in place ‘made in Wales’ support systems to deliver wide- ranging benefits. Our proposals will keep farmers farming and position them to thrive in a post-Brexit world.

“Now is the time to forge a new consensus on the role of farmers in Wales. This is a 16 week meaningful consultation which will inform our plans. I want to hear the views of individual farmers and land managers across Wales and would encourage everyone to have their say over the coming months.”

At the Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) breakfast today, the Cabinet Secretary will announce £9.2m of funding from the Rural Development Programme to support HCC’s Strategic Initiative the ‘Red Meat Development Programme’.

To complement this work in the red meat sector the Cabinet Secretary will also announce £6.5m of funding to deliver two projects to increase the profitability and resilience of the Welsh dairy sector.

On Tuesday at the Show, the Cabinet Secretary will meet the UK Government’s Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and call for urgent clarification on future farm funding for Wales.

Cabinet Secretary added:

“During the referendum campaign, we were promised Wales would not lose a penny as a result of leaving the EU. Two years on, unfortunately we still have no clarity on this.

“I will again be raising this with Michael Gove when I meet with him at the Show on Tuesday. The UK Government must urgently confirm Wales will maintain its current share of funding. This is only fair and will provide much needed reassurance for the industry.”

Signs positive for Better Jobs scheme

Better Jobs Closer to Home aims to create opportunities and sustainable jobs by utilising the spending power of public procurement. This is achieved through the use of innovative commercial approaches and, through the use of reserved contracts, using that lever to create jobs in areas of high

employment need.

Four Better Jobs Pilots are currently being tested across the South Wales Valleys area and, if successful, similar interventions could then be replicated in other parts of Wales.

Julie James was in Ebbw Vale yesterday to visit EBO Quality Signs, one of the pilot projects. EBO are a social enterprise that employs local people with disabilities, and the Leader of the House was keen to see what progress had been made so far, and what the future may hold for success of the programme.

She said:

“EBO is already an excellent enterprise in its own right, which we felt was well suited to this special kind of intervention. Our team have worked with EBO to increase the hours of work by brokering discussions between the unit and supply chains across Wales to place further orders with them.

“I was delighted to visit and see the operation up close and hear more about the new orders coming in. I was especially pleased to learn more about the immediate benefits of working with our team and which intervention in particular they believe would work elsewhere in Wales.”

Jonathon Bell, Director at EBO said:

“We were delighted that the Leader of the House was able to find time to visit our site at Ebbw Vale this week and see the manufacturing operation.”

EBO Signs produces traffic and commercial signage such as highway signs, street nameplates, safety signs and hoarding boards.

Extra demand for their products has already resulted in orders placed with the factory with two local authority main contractors, and the Assembly Commission. Transport for Wales has also stipulated the use of this factory for their signage requirements, and meetings are currently underway with Keolis/Amey for opportunities during the mobilisation stage of the new train operator contract.

The four pilot programmes are being led by the Valleys Taskforce, of which Julie James is a member, and are contained within the recently published delivery plan Our Valleys, Our Future.

£6m Welsh Government and Development Bank investment to redevelop Cardiff Bay landmark

The Corys' Buildings is a five storey Grade Two listed building on the corner of Bute Place and Bute Street, built in 1898. The dilapidated buildings will be redeveloped into a mix of residential and retail space.

Cardiff Council has been awarded the £1m Town Centre Loan funding to support the Merchant Place regeneration which they will use to support the development by Sky View Estates Ltd. The project is also supported with £5m funding from the Development Bank of Wales. It is the largest property development deal ever completed by the development bank.

Rebecca Evans said:

“Our £27m Town Centre Loans Fund supports local authorities to regenerate town centres across Wales. Once the loan is repaid, the money is used again to fund new loans, as is the case with funding provided by the Development Bank of Wales.

“Together we are working to bring derelict sites in towns back into use and support activities that increase footfall on our high streets, tackle empty sites and help businesses grow and prosper.

“The Corys' Buildings are part of Cardiff Bay's historic past, but I'm looking forward to seeing them revitalised and creating jobs and homes in the near future.”

Cenydd Rowlands, Property Director for the Development Bank of Wales said:

“With funds to aid residential, mixed use and commercial developments in Wales, we are focused on supporting small and medium-sized developers who want to breathe new life in to local communities. The rejuvenation of attractive, landmark buildings is an important element of local regeneration.”

Nicola Crocker led the deal for the property team at the development bank. She added:

“It has been particularly pleasing to work with Sky View Estates and the other funders to bring forward Corys' Buildings as an iconic and historical landmark in the heart of Cardiff Bay. At £5m this deal is a reflection of our commitment to the property market

in Wales.”

Economy Secretary committed to working with business to make Wales' economy stronger

Speaking at an event at Money Penny, which brought businesses from across North Wales together, the Economy Secretary said he wanted – in collaboration with the business sector – to find new ways of working that break down traditional barriers and borders.

The Economy Secretary said:

“My Economic Action Plan sets out a clear blue print of how we can drive inclusive growth and future proof the economy in all areas of Wales.

“With the plan now published, our Economic Contract and Economy Futures Fund now launched, and our Fair Work Commission and Expert Panel on Automation in operation we have made excellent progress on the first phase of implementation on the plan.

“My focus now is on delivering the wider objectives of that plan and part of this is finding new ways of working that break down traditional barriers and borders such as the ones between government departments, between local authorities, between governments and across borders.

“For me, the next phase of devolution in Wales has to be about helping businesses to trade, invest and develop their people in creative ways that promote new collaboration and new relationships across borders.

“This is a challenge for Government and it is one I am committed to taking on, with business, over the coming years in order to make our economy stronger.

“I also want to continue my focus on supporting the rise of Wales' regions in order to stimulate new opportunities and growth.

“We know a “one size fits all” approach will not give us the economic growth we need and this was very much in my mind when I visited Stena Line in Holyhead, BioComposites in Gwalchmair, Bee Robotics in Caernarfon and Siemens Healthcare in Llanberris to

hear their views on the real opportunities and challenges facing North Wales.

“I want to build a genuine partnership approach that will enrich and empower the local economy and overcome obstacles. A partnership approach like the one shown between the Welsh Government, Wrexham Council and Glyndwr University this week through our collective plans for a business and transport hub at Wrexham General that will open up new and exciting opportunities for jobs and commercial growth.”

The Economy Secretary also said the Welsh Government would be looking at how it could develop indicative budgets for economic development and infrastructure in the regions across Wales.

In thanking Moneypenny for hosting this business event, Ken Skates added:

“Our Economic Action Plan is all about public investment with a social purpose and helping business to prepare for the future.

“Moneypenny, in the way they support their employees, the way they bring new talent into the business and the way they are planning for the future is a great example of a business doing things the right thing and I am grateful for their co-operation and hospitality.”

Rachel Clacher, co-founder of Moneypenny, the world’s leading outsourced communications provider in Wrexham said:

“We were delighted to host the Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, here at Moneypenny and hear about the plans to work more closely with businesses to encourage trade, investment, and development of people in Wales. We look forward to continuing to strengthen our relationship with the government and local businesses to help further improve everyone’s future.”