

[Carwyn Connect heads to Brecon](#)

The Carwyn Connect event will give local people the opportunity to meet the First Minister and ask him questions on any issues which affect them or their local community.

The session will take place between 6pm and 7.30pm at Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon (Canal Wharf, Brecon, LD3 7EW).

People are encouraged to register their interest in attending the free events online at the following link: [Eventbrite](#)

Questions can be asked in a number of ways – they can be submitted when people arrive at the venue when doors open at 5.30pm; in advance via email on cabinetcommunications@wales.gsi.gov.uk or via Twitter using [@fmwales](#) with the hashtag [#carwynconnect](#).

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones said:

“Over the past 2 years, I have travelled the length and breadth of Wales to hear the views of local communities and answer people’s questions.

“I am pleased to announce the next event will take place in Brecon. I would like to see as many people as possible at Theatr Brycheiniog, so if you have a question for me, want to raise issues affecting your community or have a great idea to make your home town a better place to live, please come along.

“A wide variety of topics have come up in previous events. You can ask me anything from questions about local issues such as schools or hospitals, to big issues like Brexit or government policy.

“This is your chance to meet and speak with me in person. I’m really looking forward to meeting you all.”

[Minister discovers why there’s more to Green Man Festival than meets the eye](#)

During a visit to the Welsh Government supported event last month, the Minister met with event organisers and saw first hand how the festival is supporting science and skills development through the various creative projects it runs.

While there, in addition to exploring Einstein's Garden – an interactive learning environment that aims to promote science and innovation in an engaging way to event-goers – Julie James met with individuals involved with the festival's Merthyr Project.

Established by Green Man seven years ago, the Merthyr Project is a personal growth and development programme supported by the College Merthyr Tydfil to help people from the area develop their skills and enhance their employability opportunities.

Part intervention, part training and part social development, the project is part of a wider range of work experience and training opportunities Green Man supports throughout the year.

The project culminates with those involved having an opportunity to put their new found skills and experience to good use at the annual festival.

During her visit and joined by Green Man's Director and Owner, Fiona Stewart, and Nicola Ebdon who is a Film lecturer from the College Merthyr Tydfil, the Minister met with Ben Willshee (19), Ryan Speck (21), and Rebecca Hopkins (22); three apprentices who took part in this year's project and helped to support the successful delivery of the sell out and award winning festival.

Both Ben and Ryan are currently studying for their foundation degrees in Film at College Merthyr Tydfil and have recently started their second years.

Rebecca studied the same course and has just completed her third year at the Cardiff campus topping-up to a full Bachelor's degree. Her experience over the last three years on the Merthyr Project helped her to secure a place at University of South Wales, where she has just started a post graduate Public Relations Master's degree.

All three have credited the project with helping to build their confidence, understanding of the industry and gain valuable skills and training.

Explaining how the programme works, Fiona said:

"The Merthyr Project consists of two parts, with the first phase focussing on job application skills. It gives those involved a taster of the sort of production roles and responsibilities available across the creative industries before getting them to complete a CV and go through an application process where mentoring and feedback is provided.

"The second phase focusses on immersive and sometimes challenging experiences, including skills training and equipment handling. Those involved get to experience first hand film production and editing, stage set-up and what it takes to successfully deliver a festival.

"The project's aims are wide ranging but skills training and personal growth sits at the heart of it. Building core and

transferable skills such as confidence, resilience and interpersonal skills are as important as the wider industry specific training individuals receive. It is an intense experience, requiring dedication and commitment from everyone involved but the benefits offered can be incredibly rewarding.

“Green Man is a genuine community and we all work together to help each other. Ultimately, this project aims to provide an opportunity to those in greatest need of support to access the industry and develop their social skills so they can adapt and be more resilient and successful. We are forward looking about the skills we want to develop with our apprentices to make sure that they will still be relevant in a few years time. There is no point teaching people things that won't help them or be relevant in the real world.”

Explaining how the project has helped him, Ben said:

“It is an amazing opportunity on a different scale. We all work together like a team, helping and supporting each other to learn and develop because we want to bring the talent out in each other. Sometimes all it takes is a simple comment like ‘you’ve done a good job’, that can be very validating. The project has helped to build my confidence.”

Commenting on her visit, Julie James said:

“From its interactive areas to encourage more people to explore science, to its skills and training projects which provide young people with an opportunity to develop their core skills, Green Man is not your average festival and this visit certainly showed why there is more to it than meets the eye.

“It was great to hear more about the Merthyr Project, especially from those who have benefitted from it directly. Listening to Ben, Ryan and Rebecca speak so passionately and confidently about their time on the project and then demonstrating to me some of the practical skills they have learnt was really inspiring.

“As the largest contemporary music and arts festival in Wales, I am pleased the Welsh Government has been able to support Green Man's growth and I look forward to seeing what 2018's event has to offer, both on and off the stage.”

Welsh Government support drives increased exports

Laser Wise Solutions in Treforest, OsteoPlus and Energist in Swansea and Airbond in Pontypool have all seen significant increases in their export business after receiving support from the Welsh Government's EU supported Export Assist programme.

Speaking about their success the Economy Secretary said:

"Exporting really does have the potential to transform a business and take it to the next level. Companies such as Laser Wise Solutions, Osteoplus, Airbond and Energist are all great examples of just what can be achieved when companies looking to increase their exports have access to the right advice, guidance and support.

"And increasing the value of exports and the number of exporters in Wales is even more important than ever as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

"The Welsh Government is keen to work with companies looking to build up the exports arm of their operations and offer them the right support for wherever they may be in their business development.

"I want to help them replicate the sort of increase in exports already experienced by companies like Laser Wise Solutions and would urge companies interested in growing their exports to get in touch for more information on the programme of tailored support on offer."

Laser Wise Solutions design and manufacture laser stripping systems from their base in Treforest. Following support from the Export Assist programme, including participating in Welsh Government led trade missions to the US, they have seen their businesses grow from a £1.5m turnover in 2016 to 2.2m in 2017.

Since accessing Welsh Government support the company has won £791.5k worth of business in the USA, £31.2k in Mexico, £71k in China and £84k in the Philippines.

In Swansea OsteoPlus, a company that designs and develops surgical instruments, has secured an additional £130k of business from the USA, while Energist, the UK's leading developer and manufacturer of advanced light and laser technology systems for use in medical and cosmetic procedures, has picked up £725,000 of business from the Far East.

In Pontypool, Airbond, a manufacture of composite materials for the aerospace and automotive industries has won £11,000 worth of additional business from the Far East.

OsteoPlus, Energist and Airbond all received support from the Welsh Government and EU funded Export Assist programme which ran between 2009 and 2015.

The programme supported companies looking to export through a mixture of mentoring and training, advice on trade and choosing the right market, trade missions, exhibitions and overseas business development visits.

[Red route gets green light as part of major Deeside infrastructure investment](#)

The scheme, which aims to modernise and relieve pressure on the stretch, will see increased capacity on the existing A548, with a new road linking the A55 and A548 just after the Flintshire Bridge. It forms part of over £650m of Welsh Government infrastructure improvements in North Wales, with Deeside in particular benefiting from unprecedented Welsh Government investment.

Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I’m delighted to announce the red route as my preferred option to address the congestion problem in the Deeside Corridor, A55/A494/A548, area.

“Having taken full account of the technical, social, economic and environmental aspects of the scheme and listened to the consultation responses, I’m confident that this significant investment will address the existing problems and compliment improvements across the Deeside area.

“The next steps will be to develop a preliminary design, which considers the environmental and engineering issues in more detail and looks to address some of the issues raised during the consultation.

“I’m hopeful that this can all be completed quickly, with businesses and commuters feeling the benefit of this project at the earliest opportunity, strengthening the social and economic links across North Wales, the Deeside Industrial Estate, Chester and beyond in the process.”

The Economy Secretary also announced he would be progressing the delivery of the A494 River Dee Bridge Improvement scheme to investigate options to resolve the existing traffic bottleneck and overcome issues with the existing bridge.

On rail connectivity he said he would be commissioning further work with Network Rail on a new Deeside Parkway and the co-location of Shotton High at Shotton Low at a new integrated station. This would enable a seamless interchange for passengers wanting to change between the Wrexham – Bidston line and the North Wales Coast mainline.

In conjunction with Flintshire Council and Network Rail we will develop a scheme for a new Deeside Parkway station to improve access to the business park, including the introduction of park and ride provision. Facilities for road freight traffic will also be considered.

This builds on the over £1m awarded to Flintshire Council in March to improve bus services and encourage walking and cycling in Deeside. Part of this money will be spent on developing bus interchanges, bus priority measures on the B5129 Shotton Corridor and bus infrastructure on Deeside Business Park, while the remainder will support the introduction of active travel routes within the Deeside Business Park.

This is all in addition further investment of £4.7m to support the Northern Gateway and continue with building additional road infrastructure to open land for development and attract further businesses to locate at the site.

He said

“The investment and initiatives I have outlined will go a long way to address the barriers to accessing jobs in the Deeside Hub. They will also form one of the building blocks that will deliver a North East Wales Metro vision of a well-connected and high quality integrated transport system, which maximises active travel opportunities, something which will provide huge benefits for the region.”

New plan for national mission to raise standards – Kirsty Williams

The Education Secretary has revealed details of a plan to continue to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.

Objectives also include introducing a new accountability model and ensuring strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence and well-being.

The plan sets out the actions the Welsh Government will continue to take to keep improving the education system, including:

- Reducing class sizes
- Reforming teacher training
- Strengthening support for learners with Additional Learning Needs
- Establishing a national approach to long-term career development for teachers
- Establishing a new National Academy for Educational Leadership
- Reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for teachers
- Investing £1.1 billion to upgrade the quality of school buildings.

The Education Secretary also set out a revised timeline for introducing the new Curriculum for Wales, with statutory roll out to schools now set to begin in 2022 to give the teaching profession and schools more time to help develop, and prepare for, the changes.

The new curriculum will be introduced from nursery to Year 7 in 2022, rolling into Year 8 in 2023, Year 9 in 2024, Year 10 in 2025 and Year 11 in 2026. All schools will have access the final curriculum from 2020, to allow them to move towards full roll-out in 2022.

Kirsty Williams said:

“We are entering a fast-changing world that is increasingly competitive, globally connected and technologically advanced. Schools have to prepare our young people for jobs that have not yet been created and challenges that we are yet to encounter. Education has never been more important and, working with the teaching profession, we will continue our national mission to raise standards.

“Our plan is aimed at ensuring every young person in Wales has an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards and their full potential. We can’t achieve those ambitions if we just stand still. Teachers and educators across our system are working together to raise standards and reduce the attainment gap. It is an exciting time to be involved in education in Wales.

“We all share a responsibility to inspire and challenge the next generation. That is why we will support teachers with continuous learning and development, better support and identify our leaders, and reduce class sizes so that we can raise standards for all.”

Commenting on the new curriculum, she added:

“Since becoming Education Secretary I have visited schools across

the country, spoken to a range of teachers, parents and experts and held talks with unions.

“It’s the right decision to introduce the curriculum as a phased roll-out rather than a ‘big bang’, and for that to start in 2022. This approach, and an extra year, will mean all schools have the time to engage with the development of the curriculum and be full prepared for the changes. As the OECD have recommended, we will continue our drive to create a curriculum for the 21st century.”