

Iconic bridge officially named after Welsh war hero

The official ceremony, held on Monday 21 January, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport Lee Waters unveiled the Jack Williams Gateway Bridge plaque in front of 12 members of Jack's family, including his granddaughter Ann Page.

Representing the Royal Welsh Regiment was Major (Retd) Derek Adams, who was joined by a serving officer and four soldiers.

Transport Minister Ken Skates and principal contractor Costain, who is delivering the A465 'Section 2' dualling scheme stretching 8km from Brynmawr in the west to Gilwern in the east, called on the community for nominations at the end of last year.

Three names were clear favourites:

1. Jack Williams Gateway Bridge
2. Clydach Gorge Gateway Bridge
3. The Bevin Boys Gateway Bridge

Voting on the shortlist, the local community decided to honour Victoria Cross recipient John Henry Williams, who lived in the community in which Costain has worked for the last three years.

Decorated four times for his bravery during the conflict that was to become known as The Great War, local man, John – who was better known as Jack – was born in Nantyglo in September 1886.

A Welsh colliery blacksmith, he enlisted in the 10th Battalion, South Wales Borderers (part of the 38th (Welsh) Division) in November 1914 and was promoted to company sergeant major on 2 October 1917.

In October 1918, he single-handedly saved his company and an entire village from almost certain destruction. For this selfless act of bravery, he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Previously he had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, French Médaille Militaire and the Military Medal and Bar.

The Victoria Cross is the highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. That, along with the other honours he received, makes Jack Williams the most decorated Welsh non-commissioned officer of all time.

Dominating the most westerly part of Clydach Gorge, the largest of the structures on the A465 'Section 2' project is a 118-metre span, thrust arch bridge, crossing from north to south, with the A465 split-level carriageway below. The new bridge also crosses the Gorge, which is considered one of south Wales' most important environmental and ecologically sensitive areas.

Senior Project Director, Costain, Bruce Richards said:

“We are extremely proud to have delivered this impressive structure for the residents and road users in the area. We are particularly pleased that Welsh Government and the public have chosen to name the bridge after local hero Jack Williams allowing his memory to live on in the communities for years to come.”

Jack’s granddaughter, Ann Page said:

“The family is immensely proud of Jack Williams VC and very grateful that the people of Blaenau Gwent share our pride and help to keep his memory alive by supporting memorial events. Naming this spectacular bridge after him will hopefully generate an interest for future generations to explore the reasons why and to understand why his courageous actions during WW1 should always be remembered along with the sacrifices made by so many young men and their families. Jack and all Victoria Cross winners have a special place in our history – as the bravest of the brave.”

Economy and Transport Deputy Minister, Lee Waters said:

“Jack Williams was a true hero and naming such an iconic bridge built in the area he lived after him is a fitting tribute to a man whose name should never be forgotten.

“This connection with Jack will create a lasting legacy for generations to enjoy. That we can do it in the same year Jack received his Victoria Cross from the King in Buckingham Palace – and marking almost exactly 100 years since Jack acted so bravely – is moving.”

[‘This is Not Love. This is Control’ – new campaign launched to help people in controlling relationships](#)

The Welsh Government campaign, “This is Not Love. This is Control” aims to

help people identify coercive control behaviours.

Coercive control is a form of abuse – it can be subtle, making it difficult to identify and to recognise as wrong and abusive. Those experiencing it are often left feeling belittled and isolated.

Limiting a person's access to money, dictating what they can wear and making them cut contact with their friends and family are examples of coercive control.

An estimated 2 million adults in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse last year – 65% women and 35% men.

Coercive control has been a criminal offence since 2015. Last year, 9,053 offences of coercive control were recorded by Police across England and Wales and those being prosecuted faced on average 17 months imprisonment.

'This is Not Love. This is Control' is part of the Welsh Government's long-standing commitment to ending domestic violence in Wales. The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act was launched in 2015 and an information and advice service, Live Fear Free, offers support 24/7 via a helpline and live chat.

At yesterday's launch event (Thursday 17th) at the Riverfront in Newport, the audience heard moving speeches and audio clips from survivors of coercive control.

One of those speaking today was Luke Hart. Luke's mother Claire and younger sister Charlotte were murdered in broad daylight by their father using a sawn-off shotgun. He then committed suicide.

Following the deaths, Luke and his brother Ryan started a project called CoCo Awareness. The pair now spend their time raising awareness of coercive control and speaking out against male violence towards women and children.

Speaking ahead of the event, Luke said:

"'This is Not Love. This is Control' is a vitally important campaign. We grew up under a coercively controlling father and neither we nor anyone else saw the signs for 26 years until he murdered our mother Claire and 19-year-old sister Charlotte in 2016.

"The perpetrator's desire for control lies behind all abuse, we must stop seeing abuse as 'an emotional loss of control' but rather as driven by masculine belief systems, in particular an obsessive demand for power, control and dominance: the perpetrator in fact demonstrates an excess of control, not a lack of it.

"Currently, most people are surprised and shocked by domestic abuse when it surfaces, but this is precisely because we are looking for the wrong things. This campaign will help educate us all on what we need to be looking for."

Jane Hutt, the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, said:

“The ‘This is Not Love. This is Control’ campaign is the next step in our on-going pledge to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales.

“Coercive control had been fairly under the radar until recently. With the remarkable support of survivors and partner organisations, we hope this campaign will raise awareness of this toxic behaviour and empower more people to come forward.”

Gwendolyn Sterk, Policy and Public Affairs Manager for Welsh Women’s Aid, said:

“Welsh Women’s Aid welcomes the Welsh Government focusing on and highlighting coercive control as a form of violence against women and girls. We feel that it is very important to raise awareness of coercive control and to make it known that it is a criminal offence.

“Often, all it takes for a woman in a controlling or abusive relationship to seek help, is to have a conversation with someone who believes them, understands what they are experiencing, and knows where to direct them for specialist help and support.”

Yasmin Khan, Welsh Government National Adviser on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, said:

“Survivors tell us they feel humiliated by the control they’ve experienced and this is compounded by the fact it can be hard for them to prove what’s happening. They describe a ‘drip, drip’ effect of coercive control; a cumulative build up and escalation, often towards physical abuse, over time.”

“Whether someone is experiencing coercive control themselves or witnessing it, we would urge them to get in touch with our free helpline, Live Fear Free, or contact the Police.”

If you’ve experienced coercive control or any kind of domestic abuse, call the free and confidential Live Fear Free helpline on 0808 8010 800 or visit livefearfree.gov.wales to message an adviser 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Deal to bring faster broadband to additional premises announced

The final lot under the successor project to Superfast Cymru for east Wales will provide faster broadband for around 10,000 extra premises. It will be underpinned by over £9.2m of public funding and will be completed by March 2021.

In total, along with the two other lots announced in the Autumn, Openreach will provide 26,000 premises with access to fast reliable broadband by March 2021 at a cost of nearly £22.5m which will be met by the Welsh Government and EU funding.

This is in addition to the 733,000 premises already with access as a result of the Superfast Cymru programme.

None of these premises would have access to faster broadband without the Welsh Government's intervention as the market had no plans to reach them under their own deployment plans.

Lee Waters said:

"These premises would have no access to faster broadband without government intervention.

"While our Superfast Cymru programme has transformed the digital landscape in Wales, with over nine out of 10 premises now able to access faster broadband, there remain premises with no access.

"There is no one size fits all solution to reach all of these premises and a variety of measures will need to be used, including today's contract which will reach 10,000 of those without. The other elements are individual support through our ABC and ultrafast connectivity voucher schemes, and support for communities through our vouchers schemes and community led interventions.

"It is a challenging and complex process but we are working hard on ensuring the final premises will have access."

Kim Mears, Openreach managing director for strategic infrastructure delivery, said:

"We're delighted to be working once again with the Welsh Government in widening access to superfast fibre broadband across Wales.

"Our engineers have already delivered an enormous engineering project that has brought access to fast reliable connectivity to

nearly 95 per cent of Welsh homes and businesses which is helping to enable a digital revolution in the country.

“But we also appreciate that there are those that didn’t benefit from Superfast Cymru and this latest intervention working alongside the Welsh Government will be one part of a suite of measures to bring faster broadband to those that missed out.”

Welsh Government support for Airbus unwavering – Minister for North Wales

That was the message from Minister for Economy and Minister for North Wales, Ken Skates following a visit to the company in Broughton yesterday.

Airbus is the largest employer in Wales with 6,000 employees and Welsh Government support over the last twenty years has helped develop the Broughton site in Deeside into one of the most advanced wing and aerospace manufacturing facilities in the world.

The company has also been confirmed as the first tenant of Wales’ new flagship Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility which will be managed by The University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC). The Welsh Government is investing £20m to develop the first phase of the facility and Airbus has a longstanding working relationship with the AMRC.

The Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility, which is being constructed just off Chester Road in Broughton, will be vital in helping increase productivity, commercialisation, innovation and skills development across a range of sectors including Aerospace.

Brexit was a key topic of discussion during the visit and Ken Skates stated the Welsh Government’s continued commitment to give the company a sustainable future and keep good quality jobs in the region.

The Minister also complimented Airbus’ Apprenticeship programme during his visit which has provided opportunities to hundreds of individuals in a range of roles.

Ken Skates said:

“Airbus is a vitally important company in North Wales and makes a huge contribution to the Welsh economy financially, through significant employment, skills development, fantastic apprenticeships and supply chain opportunities. The difference the company makes to the region and the country as a whole cannot be

underestimated.

“We are continuing to work collaboratively and constructively with Airbus and I am pleased they will be the first company through the door of the new Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility. The aim of the facility is to provide a real step change in business support to encourage and increase collaboration between industry, academic partners and entrepreneurs and it is predicted that the first phase of the facility alone could drive up Welsh GVA (gross value added) by as much as £4bn over 20 years.

“Brexit was of course a topic that was high up on our agenda and while the UK Government’s approach to leaving the EU means businesses are still left with uncertainty and unanswered questions, I reiterated the Welsh Government’s absolute commitment to continuing our longstanding partnership with Airbus and doing all we can to support them. This was demonstrated in September when we allocated the company £3 million from our EU Transition Fund to help with its preparations for Brexit.

“Let me be clear that the Welsh Government is not standing still because of the Brexit dilemma. We will continue to nurture our close relationship with Airbus and will do all in our power to maximise employment opportunities, create new jobs and support the company in growing its base in Broughton.”

European commission recognises importance of Compound Semiconductors by unlocking up to €1.75 billion for industry research and innovation

The plan will unlock €1.75bn of funding for research activities, will bring in up to €6bn in private investment and will ultimately help bring new technology innovations to market.

The project is the first integrated research, development and innovation IPCEI programme to be approved by the Commission, highlighting the European importance of microelectronics and compound semiconductors.

It is expected to benefit both the Welsh and the wider UK economy by establishing South East Wales as the leading centre of compound semiconductor expertise.

The UK element of the pan-European joint microelectronics research and innovation project was driven by the Welsh Government and involves three Welsh companies: IQE, Newport Wafer Fab and SPTS Technologies (an Orbotech company), along with Manchester based ICS Ltd.

Economy Minister, Ken Skates said:

“Wales’ semiconductor cluster and its contribution to many of the technologies that are so prevalent in our modern everyday lives is a real source of pride, and I am delighted Wales has taken the lead on behalf of the UK in co-ordinating this project that will drive vital research and accelerate innovation work across Europe.

The EU’s decision to approve the plan is huge news for the sector and of course for Wales’ wider economy, paving the way for up to £6 billion of private investment throughout Europe and enabling our own semiconductor companies to work alongside international giants in their field.

We look forward to working closely with our European partners and IQE, Newport Wafer Fab and SPTS on this exciting work and will do all we can to deliver the very best outcome for Wales.”

Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, in charge of Digital Economy and Society said:

“Every connected device, every modern machine, all our digital services depend on microelectronic components that become smaller and faster with time. If we don’t want to depend on others for such essential technology, for example for security or performance reasons, we have to be able to design and produce them ourselves. The decision to approve the project is a result of enhanced cooperation and shared European vision.”

Compound semiconductors are widely expected to revolutionise twenty-first century technologies as the silicon chip changed the latter half of the twentieth century.

The UK is already home to a number of state of the art businesses and research facilities in the compound semiconductor space with a particular concentration in Wales.

The South Wales semiconductor cluster – branded as CSconnected, is rapidly being recognised as a leading centre for enabling technologies powered by compound semiconductors.

It is further supported by the surrounding region which boasts a range of facilities and businesses that support high-tech supply chains, from research and development through to innovative solutions .

As a result of the ruling IQE, Newport Wafer Fab, SPTS Technologies and ICS Ltd will collaborate with partners across many other countries on the Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI) that will focus on first deployment and innovation activities.